

NIKETU IRALU

*Through his people's struggles*

# *A Naga Speaks*



*telling truths for all our societies*



NIKETU IRALU

# A Naga Speaks

The best of a collection of his thoughts  
expressed for Nagaland – and the world

**Printed for 'A Weekend with a Statesman – Niketu Iralu'  
5th to 8th December 2019  
at *Asia Plateau*, Panchgani, India**

*Cover photo: Niketu Iralu in front of their beautiful home  
and popular gathering place 'Kerünyü Ki' - House of Listening*

## **Abbreviations**

NNC	Naga National Council
NSCN (IM)	National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isak- Muivah)
NSCN (K)	National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Khaplang)
FGN	Federal Government of Nagaland
FNR	Forum for Naga Reconciliation
NMA	Naga Mothers' Association
NBCC	Naga Baptist Church Council
NSF	Naga Students' Federation
NPMHR	Naga People's Movement for Human Rights
GPRN	Government of the People's Republic of Nagaland

# CONTENTS

AWARD CITATIONS	1
INTERVIEW	3
ENDURING MESSAGES FOR THE FUTURE	15
UNDERSTANDING THE NAGA STRUGGLE - I	30
RECONCILIATION - I	112
PERSONAL JOURNEY	135
THE WORLD MATTERS	150
WOMEN	178
TRIBAL ISSUES	192
ETHICAL AND SPIRITUAL CHALLENGES	224
BUILDING A NATION	262
THE NORTH EAST - I	300
UNDERSTANDING THE NAGA STRUGGLE - II	356
RECONCILIATION - II	390
TELLING TRUTHS	428
THE NEEDED LEADERSHIP	457
ELECTIONS	471
THE NORTH EAST - II	484
CORRUPTION AND EXTORTION	535
EDUCATION	561
REMEMBERING INSPIRING FIGURES	597
TO THE EDITOR	615
MEDIA INTERVIEWS	628
INESCAPABLE TRUTHS	636

## Assam

NIKETU IRALU:  
CITATION of LOKAPRIYA GOPINATH BORDOLOI  
AWARD for NATIONAL INTEGRATION 2005.

An illustrious son of Nagaland, a worshipper of humanity, Shri Niketu Iralu is an outstanding personality and an exception to the time and clime to which he belongs.

A personality with a different mould of mind, a social activist of exceptional standing; he has embarked on a journey to usher in hope and moral strength amongst the people of North East India.

A lifetime Trustee of the Friends of Moral Re-Armament (MRA) now called Initiatives of Change (IofC) spreading over several countries, Shri Iralu has travelled widely across the globe to spread the messages of truth and humanism. His activities amply reflect the quality of his mind.

The Government and the people of Assam take immense pride in conferring the prestigious "Lokapriya Gopinath Bordoloi Award for National Integration" for the year 2005 on Shri Niketu Iralu in recognition of his high ideals and outstanding contributions to public life.

May he live a long life of peace and tranquility.

(Tarun Gogoi)  
7th February 2011, Guwahati. Chief Minister, Assam

## Bodoland

CITATION: Upendra Nath Brahma Soldier of Humanity Award, 2011.  
To, Mr Niketu Iralu, Nagaland  
By Upendra Nath Brahma Trust (UNBT)

Respected Sir,

It is a proud moment for the UNB Trust to declare your name for the 8th Upendra Nath Brahma Soldier of Humanity Award, 2011 for your invaluable service for peace and harmony to the society in general and to the North East in particular. Being a man of extraordinary talent with a dynamic personality, you have served not only in India but in different countries around the world as a representative of peace and reconciliation among the people entrapped in conflict. Following the footsteps of Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation, you made special efforts to restore peace in the trouble- torn Nagaland, the entire North Eastern region and elsewhere.

Dear Sir, it is divine will that mankind should rely more on the power of peace and non-violence as an instrument of healing and reconciliation in the society. When a large number of people lost confidence in its efficacy during India's freedom movement, Gandhiji held on to this successfully to prove to the world that it works. No force in the world, not even the strongest military power, has ever put to rest the problems of human conflicts better than the healing effects of the principle of peace and non-violence. The UNB Trust highly appreciates your strong conviction for the well being of humanity through the transformation of individuals of the society.

In recognition of your commendable work in the said area with genuine concern for the problems of human society in general and the North East in particular, the UNB Trust hereby confers upon you the Upendra Nath Brahma Soldier of Humanity Award, 2011, on this day of 24th July 2011. Let peaceful society that acknowledges human dignity grow at the healing touch of hands like yours.

Wish you good health and a long life.

Krishna Gopal Basumatary  
Chairman

Ajit Kumar Brahma  
Power of Attorney

Upendra Nath Brahma Trust

*A Naga Speaks*

## An Interview:

Niketu Iralu speaks about his life and the chequered history of the Naga struggle...

Appeared on 8 August 2017 in the *Thumb Print*. On 31 October 2017 in the Assamese daily *Amar Asom*

**B**orn in Phek, Nagaland in 1935, Mr Niketu Iralu is a prominent intellectual and preacher of peace and non-violence. The son of Dr Sevilie Iralu and Vituno Iralu, Niketu started working full-time with Moral Re-Armament (MRA), which is now known as the Initiatives of Change (IofC), in 1957 while he was still a student of Madras Christian College. A widely-travelled person, Niketu Iralu extended service to MRA not only in various parts of India, but also in different countries in Asia, in the Pacific region, in Europe, North and South America. He served as a trustee of Friends of Moral Re-Armament (India); member of International Council of Initiatives of Change; chairman of Naga Reconciliation Commission; chairman of the Peace Committee of Nagaland Baptist Church Council.

He was also the first manager of Mount Gilead Home, Zubza, Nagaland, for counselling and rehabilitation of drug and alcohol addicts. Mr Iralu is currently a trustee of Centre for North East Studies and Policy Research, New Delhi and Guwahati. A renowned social activist who has been working relentlessly to bring about lasting peace to Nagaland and other parts of the North East, Mr Niketu Iralu is now settled in Sechü-Zubza, Nagaland. Both Niketu and his wife, Christine are carrying on their work for IofC in the North Eastern India.

Mr Niketu Iralu was interviewed by Hemanta Barman and Gautam Kumar Bordoloi to learn about his unique experiences of life and also his thinking on a number of burning issues of the society he belongs to.

### **Q. How do you recall your association with the ancestral village Khonoma? What are the changes that you notice in the village?**

**NI:** I did my first years of schooling in my village Khonoma, where an elder sister of mine was the Head Mistress. She was paid Rs. 30/- per month. The village church gave her rice and firewood free. The experience of starting life as a boy in Khonoma put into me a deep love for my village, its glorious history and traditional ways of solving problems. I learned



that problems considered too difficult by children born in towns and cities were not all that difficult or frightening, e.g., going to the forest and collecting firewood, wild vegetables, trap birds (I am against hunting birds and animals now), always walking barefoot and in winter on frozen stones and earth, stepping on thorns at times, and so on, as my friends did without fuss. Leeches are not to be feared, just look at them and get rid of them! And what have you! Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood, said Marie Curie!

What I notice most in my village is that so many, entire families, have now shifted to Kohima, Dimapur and other places leaving behind scores of vacant sites. The sense of security and confidence the villagers gave to one another because they lived and solved problems together has inevitably weakened, given the impacts of the relentless changes.

**Q. You must have had quite an eventful childhood as the family had to move to different places along with your father Dr Sevilie Iralu, who belonged to the first generation of doctors among Nagas. Tell us how and where you grew up as a child.**

**NI:** After getting his LMP (Licentiate Medical Practitioner) from Berry White Medical School in Dibrugarh my father's first posting was in Tenning, Zeliangrong District of Peren. He served also in Phek, Wokha, Mokokchung and retired in Kohima. I was born in Phek. 'Jeepable roads' started to connect the different townships only in the late 50s. So we walked to Kohima to school and back to wherever our parents were during vacations. My father was lame in one leg and so he rode on a mule. My mother walked every time they were transferred. For the first transfer from Tenning to Phek she walked for nine days. By the time they reached Phek her soles were bleeding as she walked barefooted. She carried our eldest brother, 3rd child, on her back all the way. My father's postings in the different places meant our family was given the opportunity to get to know the various tribes of what was then Assam's Naga Hills District.

**Q. It was reported somewhere that your father – a thorough gentleman and apolitical person – had to suffer imprisonment in Nowgong jail for a year just on the basis of suspicion that he lent his support to the Naga separatist movement. How do you remember those turbulent days of the 'dark fifties' of the last century in your youth?**

**NI:** Soon after he retired my father was arrested and sent to Nowgong Central Jail as a 'political prisoner', not because he had done anything political, but because his wife was A Z Phizo's elder sister. He wanted to know why he was in prison. The Jail Superintendent showed him the IPC clause which stated: 'For waging war against the Republic of India ....' Father asked: 'Do you believe this is what I have done?' The officer smiled and told him not to worry. When he fell ill he was sent with armed police escort by train to Dibrugarh for treatment. Father was greatly amused as some people must have thought he was a dangerous prisoner who could do some harm to India!

I was in Madras Christian College (MCC) to do my BA.

The crisis I faced was intense because some of my close friends like Mowu from my village who rose to be the legendary guerilla leader, Isak Swu Chishi, who became Foreign Minister of Federal Government of Nagaland and finally Chairman of National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah), and others had gone 'to the jungles' to defend the Naga cause. My crisis was intensified by a combination of plain cowardly selfish fear of dying early in the sudden upsurge of the struggle and a compelling thought that I was meant to live and find another way to help my people. Wrestling with the search I gradually came to see that I was meant to concentrate on finding out how my people just emerging from our isolated past of centuries were to survive and 'succeed' with others in the modern world. It was at this time that I came across the ideas of the movement called Moral Re-Armament.

**Q. How do you assess the philosophy and work of the legendary figure and 'Father of Naga Nationalism', Angami Zapu Phizo who happened to be your maternal uncle?**

**NI:** Before coming to his philosophy and work something else about him needs to be told. The name Zapu Phizo given to him at birth by his family means 'May his name be repeated very much on and on.' His grandfather, great grandfather and uncle were warriors and leaders well known among Angamis and some neighboring tribes. They were at the front of the fight against the British attack on Khonoma in 1879, the last Naga battle to resist the British invasion of their land. The oft-narrated leadership roles of his forebears shaped his understanding of what makes history and his thinking of his own role because of their legacy.

Family and neighbours' accounts about him point to the seriousness of purpose with which he started to think and live very early in his boyhood years. His father, said to be the most widely travelled Naga trader of his day, died when Phizo was still very young. It made him think all the more of his responsibility. All this played a decisive part later in the bold rallying by him of the Naga tribes to come together as a people. His sense of history was his strength. It enabled him to envision the common future the Nagas should claim and develop together when the British Empire would end in South Asia.

In 1935, the year I was born, he went with his wife to Burma after his business venture flopped rather badly. His younger brother Keviyalie joined them a year later. Phizo returned with his family to Kohima in 1946, a year after the Battle of Kohima had ended. The next year the British left their empire in South Asia. He had thought through what the response of the Nagas should be to the departure of the British who had defeated them in 1879. The stage he anticipated and had prepared for was set. He was ready to articulate what he believed was the right of the Nagas warranted by the facts of their history.

Historian Arnold Toynbee said what people do in response to the challenges that changing situations bring to them produces their society and their history. When the British, while consolidating their eastern frontier, trespassed across their village lands, the Nagas fought them with all they had. 50 years later in 1929 the British Parliamentary Commission headed by Sir John Simon came to them also to ascertain their views on 'reform measures'. The Naga memorandum to the Commission stated Nagas claimed their right to be left alone to decide their own future in the event the British, whom they had fought and were defeated by, decided to leave their Empire. They emphasised they were not giving anyone other than themselves the right to decide that. After a series of meetings clarifying their position to the British government in Delhi and the Indian leaders who would run independent India - on 14 August 1947 - the Nagas reaffirmed the position they had stated 18 years earlier in 1929; they declared their independence.

The statement to the Simon Commission and its reaffirmation on 14 August 1947, revealed how much the Nagas had thought about themselves and their history ever since becoming a part of a foreign empire for the first time in their history of hitherto uninterrupted isolation. Phizo was 25 when the Commission came and knew what the elderly Naga signatories stated.

It would be correct to say that the 14 August 1947 declaration was largely because of his insistence, a measure of his clarity on what makes history, and with which he had returned from Burma determined to play his part. The well-known Plebiscite of 1951 and the complete boycott by the Nagas of the 1952 Lok Sabha General Elections demonstrated what the August 14 declaration represented. Both were conducted by the Naga National Council and they were the fruits of his clarity and drive.

When Delhi too preoccupied with the Partition's monstrous chaos and dislocations to notice what was happening in a remote district on the frontier became aware of what the Nagas had done to defend their reading of their history, the response was the start of the Indian Army operations. The creation of the State of Nagaland in 1963 showed the extent of recognition by the educated Nagas of the sheer impossibility of defeating the Indian Army. But it did not mean those who had cooperated with Delhi to create the State had given up their identification with the position the NNC had proclaimed and defended, barring perhaps two or three, as Nagaland today has turned out to be.

**Q. You spent almost four decades of your service with Moral Re-Armament (MRA), now known as the Initiatives of Change (IofC), working in many countries across the world. Tell us about your experience of that important period of your life.**

**NI:** I think one important lesson I have brought back from working with IofC is that we, individuals or a people, must not overestimate or underestimate ourselves. No one is more than what he or she is. This can be depressing! But he or she is not less than what he or she is or has become. This is the important point to be happy about. Then learn to build on it truthfully. The Japanese doctrine of *kaizen* is wise on this. It says – keep on improving whatever you are doing. This comes to what Gandhiji followed strictly: keep the process clean, the outcome will be right. To decide to make this doctrine the basis of one's life is to get on the road to change and become a responsible human being.

In the 50s and 60s, the deep suppressed fissures of history were beginning to surface exposing terrible festering wounds as the curtain started to come down on European Empires worldwide. The ferocious, hot World War II had ended and the Cold War was taking over and rapidly getting hotter and hotter as for millions of disillusioned people Marxism-Leninism, said to be 'the wave of the future', was no longer the future. Its

time had come.

Soon after joining MRA, I came across Gandhi's *My Experiments with Truth*. I couldn't put it down. I saw that I justified selfishness and dishonesty in the way I lived but criticised that in others and that this was the reason for the bitterness and hatred of others running my life. This clarity started to deal with the shaky doctrine of life with which I was facing the world. I saw that Marxism, though monumentally important for understanding the injustices of history, to change those injustices it needed to include the changing of human nature in its program. I was deeply challenged by Gandhi's definition of his position: 'The still small voice is the only tyrant to whom I bend my knees' – is the missing factor in revolutions of the left and the right.

In the people I met giving their lives to demonstrate the ideas of MRA I saw the truths Gandhi lived and fought for. I saw experimenting with truth through listening to 'the still small voice' by everyone should be the responsibility of everyone if solutions are to come for the problems we create with such abandon. I understood why MRA gave listening to 'the still small voice' by everyone the central place in its modus operandi. I found it to be so simple, so difficult, and so right and therefore not ignorable.

The first steps of obeying 'the still small voice' I took, were naturally tiny and tentative. I wrote to my father in Nowgong Jail and got honest with him about the times I had cheated him for which I was deeply ashamed and asked him to forgive me. I wrote to a Nepali hospital compounder in Kohima and apologised for jealousy that his family was richer than our family because they owned a shop from which we bought most of our things. My doctor father was his boss. I had wished at times some 'anti-social elements' would make them feel insecure or worse. This acknowledgement of prejudice, jealousy, resentment and selfishness and saying sorry to them and keeping the whole thing simple revealed the path I was setting out on.

The tiny steps did not change Nagaland and the huge global wrongs, but I was discovering what Aldous Huxley pointed out: 'Those who crusade not for God in themselves but against the devil in others do not succeed in making the world better.' Those who say they do not believe in God may say they have no problem with this insight. But if their conscience is not dead the observation holds true for them also. These initial steps taken and shared with others in diverse situations in different nations convinced me that I was on the path I was meant to walk on to help my own people and

the region I love deeply. I have participated in programs of MRA/IofC in all states of India except Jammu & Kashmir and Tripura as well as in various countries of Asia, the Pacific, North and South America.

**Q. Finally you returned to the North East, especially to take up the burning issues of your state – Nagaland. Is it a fact that the family of the former Meghalaya Minister, late Stanley Nichols Roy extended significant help to you and your wife to resume your work from Shillong?**

**NI:** Yes indeed. Stanley Nichols-Roy and his wife were the warmest and most generous of friends to my wife and me whenever we came to Shillong. By the time we planned to come and do something in our region after being away for many years, Nichols-Roy had died. While we were searching for a base for our work that would be more easily accessible than my parents' home on a steep hillside in Kohima, Helen Nichols-Roy and their four children offered their beautiful home in Shillong to be our home and base till they found a plan for it. For 15 years, we lived in unforgettable *Whispering Pines*. We paid no rent at all. They said they believed in the same values of MRA/IofC with us. This was an instance of 'Where God guides He provides' that we had heard often. It moved us profoundly. 'It is certain my conviction gains infinitely the moment another soul will believe in it.'

**Q. From the formation of Naga National Council (NNC) and Naga Federal Government to National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) – also from signing of a number of accords to the efforts put in by all the Peace Missions and the Naga Hoho (Assembly), an all-acceptable solution to the Naga imbroglio is yet to be achieved. You too have been playing a prime role in bringing back lasting peace to the region. Can we expect good news soon?**

**NI:** The process of the Naga struggle has been so damaged by ourselves — 'underground and 'over ground', the Government of India and a host of unscrupulous traders and contractors in various cities of India and their equally unscrupulous Naga accomplices, down the years, it will be impossible for the outcome to be heavenly. I believe this means the 'stakeholders' of the struggle, the Nagas and non-Nagas, are the problem, not the struggle.

I hope even at this stage the NSCN (IM Isak-Muivah) will be able to

*A Naga Speaks*

show the statesmanship they are more capable of showing than any others to enable a settlement to be found that can be made to work because it is acceptable to all sides. Even then, the new child of the Naga struggle, if it is born, will demand all Nagas to accept changes in their vengeful distrust of one another to care for it to grow and take the Nagas forward. If the recognition that all of us have damaged the process is sincerely maintained, we may inspire one another by our truthfulness. Will Delhi continue to show the understanding of the human essence of the crisis it seems to be showing now? More elaboration is needed, but let's keep it for future.

**Q. Disputes often crop up between Assam and Nagaland and also Manipur and Nagaland concerning border and other ethnic issues. What steps need to be taken to live as friendly neighbours?**

**NI:** First of all, we should be aware of the truth that love is blind but neighbours are not! The need for our different communities to come together to understand one another better is felt by all of us. The meetings must be honest conversations showing greater interest in finding mutual understanding, which will make easier the search for solutions. Otherwise, each side is soon driven by their respective agendas and the meetings become fruitless exercises that do more harm than good. We have to follow the *kaizen* doctrine!

**Q. As a peace activist, how do you assess the role of all the religious bodies in maintaining harmony among different communities in the North East?**

**NI:** Before the different religions of our region start to develop toxic prejudices against one another imitating what seems now to be accepted as normal, inter-faith dialogues that encourage transparency, understanding and harmony and build trust which all understand to be crucial should be increased. We must guard ourselves against thoughtless imitation of other regions where relationships that have failed for centuries have produced destructive, populist ideas and slogans.

**Q. Observers often point out that following the 'struggle for self-determination', the Centre has released financial assistance to Nagaland adequately and liberally for overall development of the State. However, the general perception is that barring a few, the economic condition of the majority of Nagas is far from satisfactory.**

*A Naga Speaks*



## **What are the major problems stalling the economic growth of the State?**

**NI:** Yes, what you have said about abundant funds coming from Delhi enriching only a few is true. Everyone knows the major problems stalling the economic growth are: an inexperienced society's unfamiliarity with the processes and ideas of management, governance and other details essential for developing a modern society, corruption, thoughtless irresponsibility of all indulging in reckless instant gratification without caring for the consequences, and so on.

## **Q. In addition to dealing with other social issues, you have also strived relentlessly for controlling drug and alcohol addiction in Nagaland, bringing about lasting peace to Nagaland through proper solution of the issue of Naga nationalistic aspirations, and also for achieving inter-tribe reconciliation among Nagas. Are you satisfied with the outcomes so far?**

**NI:** One of the lessons from history is that societies grow properly only by responding correctly and adequately to the challenges that changes bring. This is the most difficult thing to do. Most ethnic nationalities like us, the Nagas and others in North East India and Northwest Myanmar are emerging societies that have remained unaffected by global changes for centuries. We have been exposed to the wider world only recently, and we are discovering just how unprepared we are to respond adequately to changing situations. Our experiences of coping with new challenges are severely limited. We should not be surprised that our 'solutions' are increasing our problems! The first Foreign Minister of Papua New Guinea, Albert Maori Kiki, wrote about this heart-breaking problem of his people having to enter modernity – many of them still in the Stone Age, so aptly calling his autobiography *10,000 Years in a Life Time*.

I came to understand the implications of this huge reality, our crisis of response, for the Naga struggle. Part of this reality is that our human aspirations to be a people and nation are natural and legitimate. They cannot and must not, be denied or suppressed. But our selfishness, pride, fears and the accumulated resentments in our inter-tribe relationships will destroy us and our aspirations unless we learn to change these destructive passions and make them our common strength by learning to help one another to do what is right instead of accusing one another for not doing what is right.



I became convinced that was the most relevant thing to do and what I yearned most to do with my life. Taking initial steps of change that dealt with selfishness, pride, fear, jealousy and resentment in my own life convinced me and set me on the path I decided to take. I am satisfied and at peace with the decision and what I have tried to be and to do giving whatever I had to help my people and region. I can only pray for the outcome and the coming generations knowing that the results are God's business.

**Q. How important is the battle of Khonoma in 1879 historically in the context of Naga spirit of freedom?**

**NI:** I believe it was Phizo's sense of history and his unyielding commitment to the nationhood he envisioned and articulated for the loosely related Naga tribes that led to the Naga National Council going to the extent of declaring Naga independence on 14 August 1947. And if the story of the heroic resistance against the British invasion of his village and the village's subsequent defeat in 1879 had not so deeply shaped young Phizo's search for the stand the emerging Nagas should take on the departure of the British, the 14 August 1947 declaration reaffirming the position the Nagas had taken in 1929, would perhaps not have been made.

Phizo's memorial stone in Kohima declares his rallying call and commitment:

*Our land is our heritage,*

*To no one shall it be surrendered;*

*As whetstone our opponents sharpen us.*

In his language it is: *Urra uvie, Urra khapie miatsülielho; Ungumvümasü upecütsiezo*. The importance of the battle of 1879 is revealed in these words.

**Q. Do you think that the ideals of the moderate thinker T. Sakhrie have any relevance in the prevailing socio-political scenario in Nagaland?**

**NI:** T. Sakhrie and Phizo shared the same sense of history and understanding of the moral, political and historical legitimacy and authority of the Naga struggle. Sakhrie was the brilliant articulator of the Naga struggle. The memorandums he wrote outlining and defending the ideas that had launched the Naga struggle are masterpieces of expression with clarity and passion.

Sakhrie knew the Naga position was fully justified from every consideration. But he also knew the government of the new India would defend with force the integrity of the map the British had bequeathed to independent India and the futility of a violent conflict. His view that the NNC needed to go to the people of India to enable them to first understand the historical and legal facts of the Naga position and the attempt he made to reach out to the people of India were rejected vehemently by Phizo and the decisive majority of the NNC.

The Nagas were massively caught up in the throes of preparing themselves to confront the Indian security forces' operations that had started and quickly turned severe. I believe Sakhrie's position was right and his killing that followed his condemnation was wrong and tragic. I also fully understand the response from Phizo and his group given the compulsions and momentum at that stage of the struggle the leaders had launched together. Sakhrie said what needed to be said at that crucial time.

He was killed in the resultant crisis that went out of control. 50 years later in his village of Khonoma, Phizo's clan elder apologised to Sakhrie's clan acknowledging that although Phizo had not ordered it, his condemnation in the heat of the moment eventually led to the killing of their clan hero and reputed Naga leader. The apology and its gracious acceptance were both equally costly. It opened an unexpected but desperately needed door for the village trying to heal itself to restore damaged relationships for the sake of the coming generations. The direction Sakhrie tried to give to the struggle for which he gave his life is most relevant today and I believe the Nagas are beginning to understand it. And I have no doubt Phizo and Sakhrie are happy together in heaven for the initial steps their families have taken to help one another to do the right thing for themselves and for the village.

**Q. Is it a fact that there is a growing sense of resentment among people owing to regional imbalances in development within Nagaland?**

**NI:** Yes, it is.

**Q. Looking at the recent spate of violence in parts of Nagaland over the issue of 'reservation for women', can we say that women there are truly emancipated?**

**NI:** Women in Nagaland are not emancipated in the sense the term is

used. But more problems of existence are handled and solved by women in Nagaland than by men. Women suffer more than men because most of our women instinctively consider it their responsibility to wrestle with problems with whatever they have to solve them because of their fierce love for their children. This suffering and this love produce great human beings although as in Assam too I am sure we do not read about them in our newspapers.

The love must continue but the unjust suffering should end through proper legislations. The recent chaos over the issue of 'reservation for women' in which two young men died showed how unprepared Naga men are to respond properly to challenges of change and how dangerous it is for anyone to be more interested in their hidden agendas than in what is right for our whole society.

**Q. You have received many laurels and generous affection of so many people across the world because of your dedication to the cause of humanity. How would you like to sum up your life's journey so far?**

**NI:** I am humbly grateful. I can look back and say I decided to stay true to the path I started to see to be the right path for me. I am astonished by the sheer goodness and patience of so many comrades along the journey who helped me to stay true.



## Enduring Messages For The Future

*The cost of what is not right turns out too high for society.*

An Appeal To Men Of Power Among Nagas	16
Peace Is People Becoming Different	18
The Role Of A Student In Revamping Society	21
What Kind Of Legacy To The Future?	27

## An Appeal to Men of Power among Nagas

Issued on 29 July 1995 by *Initiative for Conscience Restoration in Society (INCRIS)*  
a voluntary body formed to work for the mending of Naga society

**F**or Nagas money and guns have become the sole measurement of power and leadership. Our thinking is shaped and enslaved within the suffocating barriers of this reality. This appeal is therefore addressed to all Nagas who have become powerful in one way or another, overground or underground.

It is not an accusation, but a call for sanity. A cry from the heart to fellow Nagas to use your positions of power to redirect our wounded society towards healing initiatives before it is too late. We may yet prevent tragedy if we will reject what we know in our conscience is wrong. What is not right may be regarded as 'normal expedient politics', but as we know the costs always turn out to be too high in terms of resources, time and lives.

Recognising your unique positions of advantage to destroy or take us forward, we appeal to you,

**NOT TO** treat people as mere political raw material to be used to achieve personal ambitions. The people are the reason for politics. To enable them to rise to their fullest potential is the divine purpose of politics. Abuse of this sacred function results in rampant corruption, violence and instability. Politicians and revolutionaries become men of destiny if their statesmanship liberates and ennobles, rather than degrades their people.

**NOT TO** exploit our weaknesses and prejudices for unworthy aims. It cheapens us and destroys your moral authority making you ineffective. Why not, by example, challenge and stretch us to become a people who will work and sacrifice for their own progress? 'Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil', is the people's full mandate to you. It is also the unchangeable pre-condition for economic development and freedom. Can you dare to stick to it and win trust and respect? Then money and guns will not be needed to buy votes and extort support for worthless power.

**NOT TO** be persons who chase power by wrong methods, ignoring dangerous consequences. We need leaders to whom the purity of the method to achieve a goal is as important as the goal itself. Such leaders set satisfactory standards for nation building. No people on earth have ever

*A Naga Speaks*

escaped the terrible consequences of achieving noble goals using wrong means.

**NOT TO** be examples of easy success by using unethical shortcuts or doing the minimum. But to set standards of integrity and excellence in all you do, so that the public will be ashamed to be selfish, irresponsible and dishonest. 'He who takes more out of society than gives to it is a thief.' Should not this ancient saying judge our conduct? Responsible leaders cannot ignore the connection between the example of their lives and the worsening behaviour of the public, especially the youth.

**NOT TO** make hasty agreements or accords with Delhi without sufficient consultation with the people. Nagas know questionable 'quick fixes' - whatever the motivation or reason, produce distrust and unending bloodshed. The Naga question can and should be solved on the basis of facts of history, supported by the united wisdom of all Nagas and the goodwill and the understanding of the Indian people. Facts do not disappear by being twisted, bribed or blasted.

Solutions imposed by ignoring facts never work. Northern Ireland is an example. The right way may take time as it is not to suit personal desires or schemes. The wrong way may seem to succeed quickly but it instantly kills freedom, making way for oppressive lies to destroy society. Like a tree seedling, if freedom is planted properly, its growth is natural and unstoppable.

We believe our call reflects what Christ would require from you - to give us, and yourselves 'bread, not stone; fish, not serpents'. We betray you and ourselves if we should expect anything less from leaders at this crucial juncture. On our part we pledge ourselves to be what we want you to be. Unitedly we can and must prevent collective suicide by our people.

William Penn, the great pioneer of democratic freedom, said, 'Men must choose to be governed by God or they condemn themselves to be ruled by tyrants.' We are all to blame in our different ways for some becoming tyrants over the rest. The selfishness on both sides is equally wrong and unacceptable. If we are not to be crushed by what we have created together, our irresponsible ways have to change. Leaders who lead have to find God's superior wisdom and obey it. It is always available to all who will humbly listen. It corrects our errors, no matter how serious, and directs us, forgiven sinners, as His instruments to rebuild society.

Nagas are hungry for a way that will work. Do not give them high-

sounding party or factional slogans, which now only produce cynicism and inter-tribal destruction. Why not involve them in the difficult but essential task of evolving the thinking and living that will begin to demonstrate freedom and economic self-reliance today, not some time in the future? Show every Naga how to progress from abusing to building freedom. You will be surprised by their response to your truthful leadership and high vision for them. Do not waste your chance.

God and future generations will then bless your leadership.

(*INCRIS* was thought out and launched by Rev Lhousohie Mhasi, Viyalie Tsürho and Niketu Iralu in 1995).

### **Peace is people becoming different**

In response to an Award from Peace Channel. Dimapur. 23 September 2012

*F*rom all that you have heard and discussed during the past two days you will have found out that 'Peace is not just an idea. It is people becoming different,' as said by Frank Buchman, the founder of Moral Re-Armament, (now Initiatives of Change, *IofC*), the organisation with which I work. He also said, 'There is enough in the world for everyone's need, but not for everyone's greed. If we care enough and share enough, everyone will have enough.' Without such a standard demanding the best out of everyone in the world, can mankind survive the worst we give one another so much of the time?

You will have seen that peace, unity and co-operation which make development possible will be built only if we the citizens in our thousands and millions are willing to pay the price of change in our lives as individuals. These wonderful things do not just happen because we have seminars and festivals for them, shout for them and go out in processions for them. Each one of us has to pay a price for them. Nagaland is the land of splendid slogans also, not just of festivals. There's nothing wrong with our slogans. But something vital is missing in our thinking and living, and our relationships, so that our society is in serious disorder.

I propose to focus mainly on where you and I can, and should start the change we want for our society.

G K Chesterton, the English writer said, 'What is wrong is wrong

*A Naga Speaks*

even if everyone is doing it, what is right is right even if no one is doing it.'

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Russian Nobel laureate for literature, wrote and fought fearlessly for the recovery of the soul of his people. He said they who took on to change the Soviet Union had to decide this to be their position: 'The lie may come into the world and even dominate it, but not through me.'

These are two fundamental observations for building 'sustainable peace for a sustainable future'.

Supposing Peace Channel Members from all the schools represented here were to declare a definitive position they will take on a few issues and pledge to stay true to them into the future, as their first steps towards giving leadership in building a sustainable peace for a sustainable future?

1. That they will not cheat in exams in any manner. And if they have cheated before, go and get honest about it with their teachers or principals. Why do this? Because cheating in exams is wrong even if so many in Nagaland are cheating in so many ways!
2. Naga College students whose parents' incomes are below a certain level are entitled to get tribal scholarships. When you go to College, if your parent's income is above the stipulated amount, suppose you and your family will not apply for tribal scholarship for you! Many Naga students who are not entitled to receive the scholarship apply for it and get it. Then, horror of horrors, misuse of money on drinks or for picnics! What does such fraudulent exploitation of opportunities do to the individuals concerned and through them, their society? When after high school our son got into College, he brought forms for the Scheduled Tribe Scholarship. We discovered that although we are unsalaried voluntary workers the income made available to us by relations and supporters put us above the level, which precluded him from the entitlement. So we did not apply for the scholarship. It was not an extraordinary thing we did. But our son later thanked us for our decision saying it also helped him to understand when to be truthful. This meant a lot to us also.
3. After graduation you, staying true to your commitment for life, will not adopt unethical, illegal practices to get jobs or any other gains for yourself at the expense of others.

*A Naga Speaks*



4. Return books to friends or libraries, garments, DVDs, mobile phones, pay back money borrowed or stolen, etc... and say, 'Sorry, please forgive me?'
5. On your return home from this Peace Channel festival, or during the next days, how about finding the time to ask your parents, or one of them, to sit down with you and say to them: 'I want you to help me to grow up properly. Please tell me exactly where I need to change in the way I live at home? I need to hear this from you. Have patience with me and I'll try to change?'

These are a few areas where practical steps can be taken by those who are serious about building peace in our society. You will find the initial steps you take to be very awkward and you are likely to fear what others will say and think of you. Also, the small steps of change you take will not make a big impact for change that others will see. But, the most important point here is that you will no longer be saying things, which have no reality in your life.

You will gradually learn to act and live out your life with an experience and understanding of the eternal battle between good and evil. The understanding will go deeper into your life and take hold as you grow up. What I have suggested for you to do I have had to do myself to put things right in my life when I started out in my life work. Of course it will not be easy. But you will find God does not fail anyone who will not turn back.

Mahatma Gandhi called his autobiography *My Experiments with Truth*. A journalist once asked 'What is your message Gandhiji?' The quick reply was, 'My life is my message.' On another occasion he said, 'The only tyrant I accept in this world is the still small voice within.' His experiments with truth were experiments in obeying the still small voice in everything he did. The world trusted the message that his life demonstrated.

If you will accept such a life for the sake of making the world what it is meant to be, your life will never be dull or boring at all. For all those who are serious about building peace, you do not need to doubt the stand you will take for your convictions. 'Do your duty and leave the results in His hands.' You can put your fullest trust in this truth from the Gita. It has been vindicated right through history.

Finally, Dimapur is Nagaland in miniature. It is amazing how all Naga tribes have now come together in this growing city to go forward as a

people. If in all the schools in Dimapur members of Peace Channel will start to make being truthful and responsible the normal way to live in our young emerging society, starting with seemingly small changes in their own lives, and keep raising that level of character and integrity in their schools and out into our society, Dimapur will be shaken and Nagas will start to solve their own problems and give hope to the region and the world.

Peace is people becoming different

### *The Role of a Student in Revamping Society*

To the Western Angami Students Union. 15 January 1997

*F*irst of all, whether young or old, we have to learn to think and live in a manner that will be adequate for the challenges we face as a people. No one can do this for us. So much of our energy, time and resources are wasted in dealing with endless unnecessary problems that our thoughtless, irresponsible living creates for ourselves, our families and our society. The result is that the really important issues and tasks that matter in our own lives as well as for our society are not examined and tackled. Worn out by the meaningless problems that keep increasing in all our families, we are not developing the skills, mental attitudes and moral and ethical fibre that are essential for proper growth.

Our theme requires us to understand what the aspirations that drive us so strongly will demand from us if we are to achieve them. Our aspiration for freedom as we understand it comes from our history and geographical situation. Nagas were being truthful to themselves and their history when they made their position categorically clear to the British Simon Commission that came to Kohima in 1929. And they were being consistent when they made their declaration of independence on 14 August 1947, that is, before the British left their Empire in South Asia which became India, Pakistan and Burma. We will be regretting much more today if our elders had not spoken as they naturally felt at the time, whatever the future may turn out to be.

For over 50 years now Nagas have struggled and demonstrated the depth of their beliefs. So our position is clear, and legally- and historically different from all the other liberation movements in India that started after 15 August 1947. But we must not underestimate India's position vis-à-vis

*A Naga Speaks*

Nagaland. After all, India has to defend the territorial integrity of the map she inherited from the British despite our declaration of independence on August 14th. This is an immensely complicated matter. I have given this background because ultimately Nagas will have to talk to the people of India, and with their understanding and goodwill, the Indo-Naga question will have to be settled taking into consideration the positions of the two sides.

And you must realise that your role in revamping our society has to be considered against the implications of this central challenge facing our people, namely, reaching the thinking of the Indian public. Unless we start to achieve this with the Indian people by talking to them as neighbours to neighbours, the Naga issue will continue to be dealt with by bureaucrats in Delhi as a mere law and order problem. We cannot blame bureaucrats for dealing with us at the level of money or guns only.

To be prepared to die for what we believe is admirable and we salute all those who have died to launch the Naga struggle. By their sacrifice they have given us not only a struggle but a story as well. Both are priceless legacies and assets which are very important for the development of a people. But the time has now come when we must decide to live for what we believe to be right to build the society our people need. I shall now give the views of three non-Nagas about the Nagas and their struggle.

A respected Assamese educationist in Guwahati told me two years ago, 'We have observed our neighbours for some years now and we know Nagas cannot be frightened into surrendering their beliefs. Naga courage is important for all of us. But we have also seen that Nagas can be destroyed by their inter-tribal divisions and their inability to see the larger realities which they must confront with discipline and unity.'

Last year I travelled with a Bengali editor of a daily paper. He said, 'I respect the aspirations that Nagas and others in the North East are fighting for. It is natural and important for people to struggle for what they believe to be right for themselves. I am for your people to achieve what they long for. But don't misunderstand me, you should realise that the human element in all the struggles going on now in the region is dangerously weak. The thinking of the leaders and their followers is shortsighted. The refusal to consider the tough challenges to survive in the modern world is dangerous.'

Thirdly, a North Indian research teacher at Kohima Campus of NEHU. He observed, 'I fully respect the tenacity and daring with which

### ***A Naga Speaks***

the Nagas have fought for what they want. I want them to be independent and free. But the Nagas are already the freest people in India! They get their salaries at the end of each month even if they do not work with any discipline or seriousness. They are under nobody's control today. If they were to become a republic tomorrow they will lose the freedom they enjoy today and work hard to survive like others in the world. I doubt they are prepared for that.'

The State of Nagaland is the biggest political, socio-economic project we Nagas have undertaken so far. There are conflicting views about the creation of the state. Let us leave aside the controversies and stick to the fact that we have had the chance to run a full-fledged state for about four decades. Today it employs roughly 90,000 Nagas, about 10% of the population of the state. It has been estimated that Delhi has sent more than 30,000 crores of rupees to get the state to function, and that in per capita terms more is spent for administration in Nagaland than anywhere else in India. The verdict after all this is that Nagaland is one of the most corrupt and mismanaged states of India. This is the reputation that we Nagas in the state have achieved. I do not know how the Nagas of Manipur would have fared if they were to be in our position.

Now consider our second major project - the Nagaland University that has just come into being. Would it be unfair to say that there are already disturbing signs that we are about to do to the University what we have done to the state project? We know about many other lesser developmental projects of the state whose scandalous failures have created deep cynicism in us.

If we were to become an independent republic tomorrow, it will be run by those we call 'underground national workers' and the rest of us. The question is will it be different from the frightening examples of the African republics of Rwanda, Burundi, Zaire, Liberia, and so on?

Both the overground and the underground will be able to make a list of excuses to explain away our failures. Nagas are not worse than others. But the question remains. - What is our weakness that we destroy every project we take on like spoilt children who smash their toys and demand for more, totally devoid of any sense of the cost their parents have to pay?

Soon after our struggle for independence started, Delhi realised that Nagas had in fact a legally defensible case and they would not easily give up their claim. So statehood was granted to dissuade the Nagas from

*A Naga Speaks*

pursuing their political struggle and join the 'mainstream'. Delhi need not be condemned for calling the Naga fighters for their political goal 'hostiles' and 'misguided insurgents' and accusing them of being stooges of foreign missionaries. Any other nation in India's position would have said the same things. But Delhi's attitude of contempt, annoyance and distrust and the understandable inability of the Nagas to get the Indian public to think of them beyond Delhi's official line about them have produced a bruising stalemate that has dragged on for decades.

Meanwhile, the money that started to flow down from Delhi to Kohima was regarded as political or pacification money and treated as such by all concerned. If those who had collaborated with Delhi and accepted the state had shown farsightedness and self-restraint, and honestly used the money to develop Nagaland, they would have not only shown how to run a government for the good of all, but also won the trust and support of the people to solve the Indo-Naga problem. They would be the first to acknowledge the missed opportunities of statesmanship.

But to be fair to them, if other Nagas were in their places would they have done any differently, given the insatiable demand from the public for easy money and the character weaknesses which we have all demonstrated? Today Naga addiction to easy money has reached a critical level. We will cheat, extort, murder to get it. How do we reverse our suicidal irresponsibility?

What is our weakness? Is it not in our inadequacy of thought about the meaning and purpose of life on earth, so that our sense of responsibility does not go beyond what we want to get; and we are like people living on a landslide who keep building their houses on it without first tackling the landslide, or searching for alternative sites? We do not ask moral and ethical questions about our intentions and actions in our day-to-day situations. The selfishness and irresponsibility produced by this way of living breeds injustice, violent hatred and hopelessness, the greatest obstacles to nation building.

One example of the inadequacy of our thinking is the limited concept of freedom and independence we have pursued for so long, like some other developing societies elsewhere. It has caused much damage and frustration to us. Is it not true that when we think of freedom we think mainly of political freedom? We forget that political freedom by itself is a false god we worship in vain. I am not saying it is not important. What should be emphasised though is that it is only a part of something larger

***A Naga Speaks***

and we must search for this larger totality if we are not to be disappointed.

Our concept of freedom seems to be limited to possession of a flag recognised by other nations: having a seat in the UN; and having our ambassadors representing us in capitals of other nations. Remember, the African nations mentioned earlier are possessors of all these status symbols of independent nationhood. And yet life has become a horrible nightmare for their citizens. What these nations are learning today is that if the struggle for freedom leaves out the battle for moral and spiritual liberation and growth in individuals, human tyranny and exploitation are the inevitable outcome.

Spiritual liberation and growth in me means I learn to sacrifice my selfishness for my people instead of sacrificing them for my selfishness; it means giving my best instead of my second or third best, or my worst, in whatever I do and in all my interactions with my fellow humans: giving fish instead of serpents, and bread instead of stone to others, as Christ put it, because my purpose in life is bigger than my own success and glory. It means to want what is best and right for all more than the success of my own selfish plans for gain or revenge.

If we accept this kind of inner moral and spiritual growth in ourselves, many of our socio-economic problems will be solved today even if we do not yet have a flag or a seat in the UN! So, freedom is a process of difficult, steadfast and enriching growth in us, not a finished product like an ice cream that somebody gives to us for our instant enjoyment, which we forget soon after! The process can, and must, start today, if freedom in all its aspects will be ours in due course. If the process is thus clean and truthful, the outcome will not disappoint us.

What is true of freedom is also true of salvation and economic development. I thought of salvation mainly in terms of eternal peace and rest in heaven after my death. This view is so limited it cannot be right! Salvation is a process of unyielding, all-out cooperation with God starting right now, leaving what it will be like in heaven to Him! So is economic development. It is much more than loans and subsidies we get which we misuse carelessly and selfishly. It is hard work, discipline and intelligent planning which produce wealth. Economic development therefore is part of a larger process, which includes moral and spiritual growth in people. Our error is that we think only of the wealth created and our enjoyment of it, forgetting the full process of its creation.

The role of a student in revamping society is therefore first of all to

***A Naga Speaks***

learn to grow fully. Full growth means:

1. Physical growth
2. Mental growth
3. Moral and Spiritual Growth.

Physical growth happens automatically. And life can become unsustainable and burdensome, leading to early biological deterioration if the mental, moral and spiritual dimensions of our personality remain idle and barren because of lack of purpose and meaning to live and struggle for.

Growth in our mental, moral and spiritual dimensions takes place when we live according to the sensitive promptings of the still small voice within. Learning to hear it and obey it is the most important responsibility of every person if the world is to have peace and growth not endless warring and destruction. American psychologist, M. Scott Peck has put this holistic principle of growth this way, 'Mental health requires that the human will submit itself to something higher than itself... Mental health is an ongoing process of dedication to reality at all costs.' He points out the dangerous consequences of lopsided growth in our personality in this striking sentence. '*Evil is Live* spelt backwards.'

If this total growth is taking place in people, it is a significant part of the process that produces freedom and independence and what is needed to sustain it. It is like a small tree sapling growing. The sapling is not yet a full-grown tree, but it will become one. Only when all the trees in a forest grow to their full stature we get a healthy forest! Cardinal Henry Newman of England said this of growth: 'To live is to grow. To grow is to change. To grow fully is to change often.'

I want to conclude with this: After 50 years of struggle for our goal, it is important we evaluate ourselves correctly. I suggest we do it this way: We are not more than what we are. So we don't need to waste our energy and time complaining about what we are not! But we should be happy and grateful we are not less than what we are now, or what we have become and wisely build on what we are? This way we will grow on sure foundations.

For your reflection I give the following points that a Japanese friend has written in response to my request to write for me what he thought were the qualities that have enabled the Japanese to succeed. He writes:

1. Steady sense of responsibility in any task undertaken.
2. Loyalty to the company or organisation.

***A Naga Speaks***



3. Group spirit rather than individualism.
4. Appreciation of harmony avoiding dispute.
5. Decision by all Japanese to work hard and in unity to rebuild their nation from the defeat of World War II.
6. Strategic way of thinking to compete with other nations.

### What Kind of Legacy to the Future?

What is the legacy we are passing on to the coming generations? Do we care at all whether or not it is a workable one?

After centuries of remaining unseen and unknown to the world we suddenly exploded into the open, so to speak, as we started to respond to the changes from outside that had reached us also. The last century of our story is well known to us now.

Today we have become known more for our passion to call one another the worst names and even eliminate one another, than for the things we have been justly proud of. How easily so many lives have been eliminated over the years.

Assad Chaftari, a militant Christian Lebanese urban guerilla fighter said, after he decided to reject violence and reached out to his Muslim opponents to create a common path that would require both sides to change to rise to a higher honourable alternative, 'Nothing political is important enough to kill a human being or cause him harm.'

Today our situation has become very grim indeed. W H Auden described the atmosphere and spirit in Europe just before World War II:

*In the nightmare of the dark  
All the dogs of Europe bark,  
And living nations wait,  
Each sequestered in its hate.*

Is this not a description of our relationships today? Can the 'advanced' tribes who passed on Christianity to the 'less advanced' ones be honest about their roles in bringing about today's nightmare of Naga society?

We have to ask fundamental questions about our main realities,

***A Naga Speaks***



namely our tribal plurality and our desire to be a people. Are they our glory or our bane and curse? These questions did not arise with our ancestors because the different tribes did not have to act together. Today we have to act together or we will not succeed in the modern world.

Did God make a careless mistake when He allowed Nagas to emerge as so many tribes? Was giving us our common desire to be a family and a people His second mistake? Did God make these irreversible mistakes or are we Nagas resisting the plan He uses with all peoples for their growth, namely, to learn to sacrifice one's selfishness for the common good, and develop trust, goodwill, compassion and vision for one another? By asking and answering these questions we will find the needed understanding to solve our problems of existence, growth, politics and everything else in our situation today.

Looking back on the centuries of suffering of his loved, deeply wounded people, W B Yeats wrote,

*Out of Ireland have we come,  
Great hatred, little room  
Maimed us at the start.*

We Nagas are at the start of our journey to be a people by a bold choice we made. The space within which we too are responding to the tough challenges of the journey is little and confined. We should not be surprised we too have maimed one another in our different ways. What will be the consequences of this reckless maiming at the start? It is the urgent question those who care for the legacy today's generation will pass on to the coming generations should ask.

For those who believe in God, their experience is that He gets us to grow fully by challenging us to walk out of our comfort zones or ruts of fears, prejudices, greed, vanity and pride and learn to cooperate with Him to build His kingdom on earth? For those who don't believe in God it will be building the just society on earth. Our diversity and differences are not meaningless burdens. They are God's very formula for our growth and development. He gives us an adventure that demands everything out of us and changes us. He told Isaiah, 'For my thoughts are not your thoughts and my ways are not your ways. As the heavens are high above the earth so are my thoughts and my ways higher than your thoughts and your ways.'

In making us into so many tribes God must have a high vision for and confidence in the Nagas. This does not mean we are better than others

### ***A Naga Speaks***

at all. It simply means as we too allow Him to change our selfish ways He will use us also to show how different people can work and grow together. This is the key challenge in the world today.

Why did God bring the white Europeans and the black Africans together to populate the wide expanses of the lands that belonged to the 'Red' Native Americans of the New World? To the natives it was the most dangerous thing to happen to them. Many of the Europeans could think only in terms of taking over the good lands of the Native Americans and driving those who were still alive into the badlands called Reservations. The blacks were slaves who toiled for the enrichment of the white race. It was the cruellest possible beginning for the black people. Their bafflement and sufferings produced jazz, soul music, the haunting spirituals and much else to gradually but surely humanise the aggressive, efficient, highly organised white people. If the white people alone possessed the immense riches of the North and South American continents, unhampered by the presence of the needs of the other races, would they have become too dangerous for the world? Did Hitler in Germany demonstrate what a completely white New World would have become?

God's way of building His kingdom on earth is by getting us to reject our selfishness which makes us so unhappy and cruel. Our souls are thirsty for the freedom of living for something greater than ourselves. Oscar Wilde said, 'There are only two tragedies in this life: the first is not to get what you want, the second is far worse, to get it.'

Let us be honest about what is really driving us and decide lest the second tragedy becomes our fate!



# Understanding The Naga Struggle – I

*The wrongs we have done to one another are linked to our difficult attempt to adjust to a situation that has changed too fast for us.*

Framework Agreement: Outcome Of A Damaged Process	31
Reality And Prospect For The Naga	33
Naga Politics	48
Emergence Of The Naga Political Movement	53
Essentiality Of Talks For The Negotiations	62
Thoughts For The Ceasefire	74
Assessment Of The Present Political Scenario	79
The Naga Logjam	89
Leave No Group Out	97
Sanity from Tungjoy	98
To Heal And Restore The Naga Story	101

**FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT: OUTCOME OF A DAMAGED PROCESS**

21 June 2018

*(The Naga movement initially started under the umbrella of the Naga National Council (NNC). It is today splintered into four groups: NNC-Walling; NNC-Adinno; NSCN (IM) (National Socialist Council of Nagalim – Isak Muivah); and NSCN (K) (led by S S Khaplang, a Hemi Naga from Burma). The IM group is the strongest group in terms of manpower, intellectual competence and the arsenal and money it has at its command - Editor)*

The NSCN (IM) – Government of India Ceasefire was signed in 1997. 18 years later in 2015 the Framework Agreement, said to be 'Preamble' to the soon-to-follow 'final settlement' was signed. This is 2018. The negotiation/Peace Process has dragged on for 21 years now. The question is, why?

Why the negotiation talks have gone on for so long is a question we should all answer truthfully and responsibly together if the journey ahead will take us up, not down.

This will very likely be derided as coming from a mind incapable of knowing how politics operates to solve problems. There is some truth in the criticism, I am sure. But why the talks have gone on for so long, leaving the other factions of the struggle completely out in the cold, is deeply bothering all Nagas now. I am equally sure of this.

If NSCN (IM) had decided to be simply truthful and transparent because they had come to see that their manipulative tactics had turned the public, I believe the majority, against them, they would have surprised and won the trust and good will of all Nagas. The result would have been a common position thrashed out by our national workers and an honourable, acceptable and workable settlement working out perhaps 10 or 12 years ago. If I were one of them and had taken the struggle with them as far as they have, I too would most probably have just gone along with the position they have taken.

A reason known perhaps only to the top leadership would not let them venture beyond the red line they had drawn to creative possibilities that would have united the Nagas. Will not history say it paralysed them? I believe the Framework Agreement and all else they have negotiated, though known only to them, will be much more than what any other group or faction would be able to achieve as they are without doubt the most

*A Naga Speaks*

able negotiators among all Nagas. I believe 'Shared sovereignty' is not the problem. Dishonesty about it due to various reasons is the problem.

Acquiring the skills and capacity to solve problems resulting in proper growth in all dimensions of life is the main part of sovereignty. But for us sovereignty has come to mean only becoming a member of the UN and so we have to beat around the bush when discussing sovereignty! Failure to venture beyond the limited, unexamined definition of the S... word has resulted in mental, moral, spiritual and therefore political bankruptcy. Is this not true?

There is something similar with Shillong Accord also I should say. I have come to see that the Accord was not really the problem. Dishonesty of those who defended it and those who opposed it was the problem. How much destruction, dishonesty about the Accord has brought upon the Naga family.

NSCN (IM) leaders know God requires and wants them to answer the question truthfully for the sake of the Nagas who have done the waiting, paying a very heavy price doing so. And they know they should do it for their own sakes too. God and history do not keep things vague or hidden for too long. And I believe history will reveal that although to them, their doctrine of revolutionary politics justified their tactics they themselves knew deeper down in their consciences, the popular doctrine misled them and failed them.

Those of us who know or suspect why the talks have gone on for so long and blame them only will fail them and sabotage the Naga people's precious journey into the future, if we will not admit that they alone are not to blame and claim ownership of what we too have contributed. The truth is the Naga struggle they inherited or took by force, as those at the receiving end of their methods insist, was already a mortally damaged process.

It is foolish and just a waste of time to continue arguing about who has done the greater damage. On a boat in danger of sinking the one thing to do is to repair the boat, the accusing of one another can come later – if the boat has landed safely.

And let us not forget the occasion when the Pharisees, to trap Jesus, brought the poor woman caught in the act of adultery to him and asked if they should stone her to death as enjoined by Jewish law or let her go. Jesus looked at them and after a time of magical silence he had created for all

present said, 'Let him who is without sin, cast the first stone at her.' He did not get into an argument or discussion.

In the moment of silence the hidden truths about their own lives spoke clearly to them. One by one they went away, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. He asked 'Woman where are they? Has no one condemned you?' When she said, 'No one, sir,' he said, 'Then neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin.'

Dare we say what Jesus showed that day is not speaking directly to us today? If we can be Christian enough to honestly admit that we too have contributed to the poisoning of the process that has produced the society we have today, God will find openings through which He will be able to enter our crisis and do what we cannot do.

'How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given! So God imparts to human hearts the wonders of His heav'n.' as the Christmas hymn reminds us every year.

### **Reality and Prospect of the Nagas**

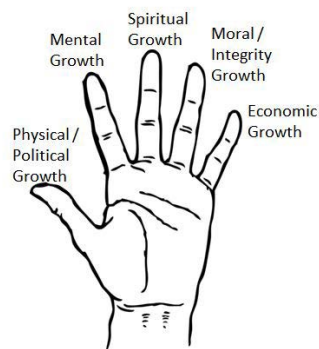
In the Silver Jubilee Souvenir, Tangkhul Christian Fellowship,  
Shillong. 12 October 2002

What is the future of the Nagas, judging by what we are today? I thank the Committee for inviting me to take part in discussing this urgent question. I should add that I have touched on some of the sensitive issues with hesitation because I am aware of my limitation. But I have decided we should discuss the subject risking being wrong. I hope and pray my intention will not be misconstrued leading to negative results. I propose to start by stating my convictions about the Naga story and then try to explain why.

1. Our pioneer leaders did the right thing when the British started to leave South Asia. They decided to stand by the facts of their history, no matter how unequal they found themselves to be to match the overwhelming implications of their decision. By their daring and sacrifice they have given their people a clear legal, political, historical basis for their struggle for their identity and aspirations. Had they not fought, as they believed, due to a lack of a sense of history, or other reasons, our people would have regretted it forever?

***A Naga Speaks***

2. Our struggle represents our people growing by responding to changes in the world impacting them. It is our common crisis of growth.
3. Our long heroic and costly struggle has clearly established our position. Our battle now is to learn from our mistakes, heal our wounds, and unite our people so that what has been achieved may be consolidated, not wasted through our division.
4. Our struggle has revealed our strengths and weaknesses. Our ability to fight for our beliefs is our main strength. But our purpose and meaning of life is not geared to the changing and remoulding of our multi-tribe society into a new identity that will be able to respond effectively to the changes coming from all directions. This is our main weakness. We think mainly of getting what we want for instant gratification. This is true of me. Sometimes we think of what can be done. But we seldom think of doing what needs to be done. The accumulated problems created by our selfishness are destroying us. Will our leaders and we create the thinking needed to develop the wider identity we now need?
5. If any solution is to work we have to help one another to heal the wounds that have frozen our hearts. Frozen hearts produce murderous politics. If we let Him, God will do it through each one of us. Without healing of the wounds in our relationships, the Naga struggle also will collapse into a futile, self-destroying venture as has happened with so many other struggles elsewhere. To ignore history's lessons results in needless tragedy.
6. Nagas cannot have a viable future unless we start to think also of working out with our neighbours a common stability for the whole North East.



I find it is helpful to take one of my hands, with the thumb and fingers fully spread out, as the model to teach me what an individual's life, a people's struggle, a nation's growth, or a civilisation should be. The whole hand, fully spread or closed, represents the totality of life. And balanced growth is needed in all dimensions of life. Let the thumb represent politics and all that it means. Let the four fingers represent mental growth, spiritual growth, character/integrity growth and economic growth, in that order.

### *A Naga Speaks*

The pressures of events are such that developing societies like ours find we are compelled to concentrate almost entirely on the thumb, i.e., politics, giving little or no attention to the other dimensions of life. The result is our politics has become oppressive and destructive, both underground and overground, because our sense of responsibility which makes possible creation and sharing of wealth, is growing too slowly. Our politics cannot be better than our thinking.

Wealth is created, and resources shared justly, when there is growth of moral integrity and character in us. Moral integrity and character are the result of spiritual growth in us. And spiritual growth is the result of our intellect discerning the guidance of the still small voice of our conscience and soul and obeying it truthfully. This is how I have understood the battle going on in me moment by moment. Anyone who experiments with obedience or truth finds that when our mind (obviously part of our soul, conscience and will) obeys what it understands or 'hears' from God, liberation and growth of the mind and spirit take place producing spiritual growth. The whole chain of growth starts with mental/intellectual clarity and honesty.

The thumb of power and the last finger of wealth receive all our attention. The three bigger fingers in between are left to grow on their own. A few enjoy manipulated or arbitrary power and wealth without honest sweat. The majority are bitter because they are valued for their votes only. What we call our economy or wealth is mainly what comes from Delhi and vanishes while trickling through the top layer of politicians and civil servants and their collaborators. Those lower down fight to get their share. We fight for consumption of uncreated wealth given to buy our co-operation.

We give no attention to creation of wealth while chasing the easy money coming from Delhi. The result is our hopeless collapse into corruption, despair, extortion, addiction, hatred of self and others and uncontrollable killings. It is said, 'He who takes more out of society than gives to it is a thief.' That's what we all end up doing because our mental and spiritual growth has not evolved a convincing vision of the society we are to build where power and wealth will be our servant, not our master.

Therefore, after the wielders of power and influence have grabbed more than they should, from which the underground collect their share, what is left is used up for salaries of government servants. So our 'economy' is mostly distribution of development money from Delhi by the



State Government to itself and its relaxed employees.

Critical words about the Naga struggle will not be liked by those who are involved in it. Those leaders and their workers who are sincere, dedicated nation builders will be right to be annoyed. They will be right to feel no one who has not sacrificed and suffered like them has the authority to say what is going right or wrong with the struggle. But they cannot deny that the Naga struggle, reflecting our society, is also exhibiting its serious shortcomings, just as the State is doing.

As both the underground and overground are caught in a larger crisis of a paradigm shift, the author hopes what is said objectively here will be considered in the spirit in which it is said. Titus Livius, Roman historian in the first century said of his decadent, collapsing society, 'We have reached the point where we cannot face either our vices or their cures.' This is true of our society also. The conviction and motive behind this attempt at analysis is that all those who care from all sides will act together to bring about the needed cures to our vices and wounds before they kill us.

'A nation's thinking is in ruins before a nation is in ruins.' Frank Buchman said this while initiating the battle for moral and spiritual recovery as World War II started and the materialist philosophies of the right and the left, Fascism and Marxism, competed to replace the Christian values of Western civilisation. What can we say about our thinking?

Our crisis requires us to solve so many problems in such a short time. The challenge is so frustrating because our knowledge, experiences and skills for solving problems are so inadequate. But we too have no choice but to learn to handle it. The ancient Chinese taught that crises are not to be feared or avoided. They should be responded to correctly because we change and grow only by wrestling with continuous crises. So the Chinese word for *Crisis* means *Danger* and *Opportunity*!

'A life that is not examined is not worth living.' This observation by Socrates is well known. A struggle that is not constantly examined also soon ceases to be worth sacrificing for. It quickly goes wrong and starts to destroy itself and the people for whom it was started. History has repeatedly shown this. A people's struggle produces a huge crisis for them. If its opportunities are abused or ignored, its dangers take over and it can become uncontrollably destructive. Is this not true of the Naga story, underground and overground? We are to answer this common destructiveness.

***A Naga Speaks***

As we look back we see much to be proud of. But we also see serious inadequacies and wrongs we hide or justify. We are so afraid of admitting our mistakes and failures; we seem prepared to even sacrifice our people to prove we are right? The folly is suicidal.

We Nagas are not more than what we are. But we are neither less than what we are. This assessment is dependable. It can be the foundation on which to build ourselves up. It is true we are way below many other advanced societies that have become stable by learning from many tough trials and errors spread over centuries. We do not need to be discouraged. An adolescent child does not need to worry that he/she is way below those who are grown up!

We need to know and be grateful that we too have covered some distance in our journey as a people however short it may be compared to some others. We must not overestimate what we have achieved. But we must not also underestimate it. And we dare not also be casual about the relentless efforts we have to make to keep growing. Our main achievement is our fight for what we concluded to be fundamentally important for our integrity and honour as a people. Let us look at this achievement.

A good deal of what we are is revealed in the historical facts of our struggle. The British came and took over our land when they were consolidating their hold over our region of Asia and to exploit the economic potential of the Brahmaputra valley. They arrogantly treated the land of the Nagas as if it was uninhabited space as they had treated the lands of the native peoples in North America, Australia and New Zealand as '*terra nullius*', empty land. The valiant stand by various Naga villages against the British invasion is well recorded. Superior armour and resources decided the outcome here as elsewhere in the Western hemisphere and Australasia.

Subjugation by the British was to prove to be the beginning of the growth of Naga national consciousness. The trauma of defeat made the Nagas think beyond their traditional village identities to develop their tribe identities. This marked our first crisis and growth.

Jadonang Thiudai of Puilon village understood the crisis of his people and showed by his life how to respond to it. The spiritual and earthly dimensions of life were both equally real to him. His strength came from his loyalty to both. In his vivid dreams God instructed him how he was to live for the salvation of his people. He spoke with passion and authority because he saw and thought clearly and acted truthfully without fear. 'He walked his talk', as the people of the First Nations of North America would

### ***A Naga Speaks***

say. A man of action, he roused his Zelianrong people to awareness and action to redeem their honour and dignity. His prophetic vision expressed in compelling poetic words dared to see Nagas waging their struggle and winning on the strength of their mind and spirit. One of his songs declared,

*Creator God! The time is here.*

*Grant us the age buried under the earth, good God.*

*When my time comes mouth and mouth fight will be.*

*There will be no more dao and spear.*

*Write the victorious scripts when I am put out.*

*Who can defeat the God of heaven?*

*In God my father I shall not fear!*

The British hanged the young pioneering reformer and nation builder in 1931. He was only 26! They cruelly snuffed out a candle whose bright flame promised so much. That only his followers knew of the daring stand of the Rongmei braveheart and mourned him showed Nagas had barely embarked on their journey to become a people. But the political ferment that produced him was widespread. Nothing was going to stop it. The failure to achieve the objective in his lifetime does not need to cause regret. Jadonang's fight established the point that Nagas would act according to their thinking. The candle adds light and grandeur to the story of the Naga struggle.

In 1929, the British Simon Commission came to Kohima. What the Nagas said then was their first declaration in writing asserting their right to decide their own future on the basis of their history. It showed Nagas had started to think beyond their tribes.

The next decisive moment was the departure of the British from their empire in South Asia. Nagas faced a truly historic moment. Naga National Council (NNC) had come into being at the initiative of C R Pawsey, the Englishman who was Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills District of Assam. Pawsey's intention was to enable Nagas to respond to the coming changes as a people. He was doing with the Nagas what Alan Octavian Hume, another Briton, had done elsewhere in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in initiating the process that led to the formation of the Indian National Congress of Tilak, Gandhi, Nehru, Patel, Azad, Rajagopalachari, and so on.

Had Hume lived he would most probably have disagreed with the politics of these Indian freedom fighters. But that would not have mattered.

The NNC too soon became a body that went way beyond what Pawsey had envisaged for it to do.

It was inevitable because its first leaders had to decide the position Nagas were to adopt on Britain's departure keeping in mind all that Nagas had done earlier consistently to defend their land and identity. The decisions and position adopted by NNC starting from its first President, T. Aliba, were all consistent with the position the Nagas had adopted up to that time. The most significant decision was to declare Naga independence from Britain on 14 August 1947, after the talks over the proposals of the Hydari-Naga Pact were unilaterally terminated by Delhi.

Judging by the written records and personal accounts of surviving veterans from those days, A Z Phizo's arrival on the scene at this juncture was soon to decisively end all hesitations and ambiguities of strategy and take NNC in the direction of implementing the August 14 declaration. He became the 4<sup>th</sup> President towards the end of 1950. In May next year the Naga Plebiscite was held.

The massive response the Nagas gave to Phizo's all-out leadership indisputably produced the most decisive shift and upheaval in the lives of the Nagas in their history. Equally demonstrated is the leadership competence of Isak Swu and Thuingaleng Muivah following the formation of the NSCN (IM) after Shillong Accord. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Ceasefire and the present negotiations with Delhi are a measure of their ability and their team's courage and commitment for the Nagas.

The NSCN split into the IM and Khaplang groups in a manner that suggested inter-tribe distrust and rivalry. The special role S S Khaplang and General Kholi and their close group of tribes have played in consolidating an extensive strategic region of the Naga homeland and making it a part of the Naga story and struggle cannot be matched by anyone. What Nagas owe to them for their unique contribution cannot be overstated.

The story of the Naga struggle is familiar to most Nagas. So what has been briefly outlined will serve our purpose. Our assignment is to consider where the present trends are taking us and what we are to do.

The future prospects for the Nagas will be decided by our truthfulness about our past and our present reality. This depends on what philosophy of life we live by. Do we have one? The courage and sacrifices of those who have fought for our aspirations have given us a priceless heritage, namely, our identity as a nation. But we cannot go further unless

every Naga will decide to think out the meaning and purpose of his/her life and live it out fully. The heritage can become a curse from the past, like the proverbial albatross around our neck, instead of a dependable foundation on which to build our future. What has gone wrong along the way has to be put right now. The curse will then be replaced by life-giving hope. May our leaders see the battle this way.

Nagas have started to vigorously discuss what has gone wrong in our story. This is a welcome change. It shows Nagas want to be responsible instead of being helpless or indifferent. Blaise Pascal said, 'Man is only a reed, the weakest in nature, but he is a thinking reed. All our dignity consists in thought. It is on thought that we must depend for our recovery.' May this be true of us also.

On 18 August 2001, in Kohima, Melhupra Vero, President of Naga Hoho, opened a meeting of leaders from all Naga areas by restating the central theme of Naga Hoho, *Nagas Are One*. His speech was warmly applauded.

Later during the discussions, M C Konyak, said, 'Mr President, we applauded you when you said, "Nagas are one". We all like the idea and we have no choice but to be truly one and solve our problems in order to survive and grow like others. But we must be honest about our situation. Are Nagas one? Can we be one? From our experiences, we the weaker, less developed tribes have drawn conclusions about our Naga family. It was said the State of Nagaland was created for the equal development of all tribes of Nagaland. But we know which tribes have benefited and which tribes have not. We feel insecure and distrustful. We know what has happened in the Naga struggle for sovereignty also. Now a new settlement will most likely come. We are apprehensive of the treatment we will receive when it comes. If we are sincere to be one people these fears and doubts must not be treated lightly. Let us be honest and realistic.'

No applause greeted his words. But there were many heads nodding and serious reflection was visible in the eyes of all present. The questions reveal what we have to tackle.

I suggest that most of the wrongs we have done to one another are linked to our difficult attempt to adjust to a situation that has changed too fast for us. Are we not coping with a comprehensive shift from a tribal paradigm to a wider identity that we are compelled to develop to survive in a fast changing world? The crisis compels us to break out of our safe comfort zone of the past, and all that is familiar, for a stage of growth that is

### *A Naga Speaks*

unknown and perilous. It is not surprising we are insecure.

Here we need to take an objective look at the power of tribalism in our politics. It is fashionable to condemn it just as it is fashionable to condemn caste and racial prejudice elsewhere. But these prejudices are psychological defenses and so they are immensely strong. Therefore condemnation does not work. I believe honest acknowledgement is the answer. We cannot deny that a good deal of the destructiveness in our society and politics is coming from what I think can be called 'tribal narcissism' hidden inside us.

The word comes from Narcissus, the name of a beautiful youth in Greek mythology who fell in love with his own image reflected in a pool. He wasted away from unsatisfied desire, unable to get out of his obsessive self-admiration. He was finally transformed into the flower that came to be called narcissus. So narcissism in psychoanalysis means 'self-love, ego-centrism, total admiration of oneself, being a normal condition at the infantile level of personality development.'

One of the fascinating mysteries of God's plan for life is that selfishness, the normal condition at the initial infantile level soon starts to be rejected by a personality development process in a growing adolescent which results in a mature person capable of caring and sacrificing for others. What is the meaning of this spiritual process, or personality development from total narcissism to altruistic, selfless caring for others? I think it is this – It is God's plan that we start with self-love and self-preservation instinct only.

We should not condemn it because it enables us to get launched in life. But we are required by life to grow out of our initial comfort zone in order to develop the exact opposite, - a stronger, more open and resilient personality needed by us to go through life. To refuse to do so, results in mental, spiritual and physical retardation or worse.

We should not condemn our tribalism. It is, as in infantile narcissism, the self-preservation instinct that has brought all the different tribes up to where we are today. What is essential is to understand that tribalism has served its purpose. We should grow by building on what it has given us without letting it control us anymore.

A helpful imagery can come from today's space exploration. The immensely powerful booster rockets fall away after they have put the satellite with its payload of highly costly and sensitive scientific

instruments into orbit. After they have completed their assigned task they become dead weights. They must be discarded for the safety of the mission. But without their initial explosive thrust the space rocket does not leave the ground. So tribalism, the booster force that has brought all of us thus far, too has to be discarded, not with condemnation but with gratitude, for what it has done for us. We will then learn to harness the powerful force in tribalism to strengthen our common identity.

Tribalism is an intense, restricted love. God requires us to stretch that love to His love and passion for all. Either God was careless in giving a common aspiration to so many different tribes, who are sorely tempted to exclude one another, or He had a high purpose for them. And He will help them to rise to it by showing them how to find humility and strength from their differences. Discovering God's meaning and purpose for us, and deciding to fight for it, is our only hope. To reject it for anything less is to create hell without intending to.

Now I want to share something from my own search and experience in the battle for reconciliation. As the Convenor of Naga Hoho Co-ordination Committee I am advocating well-known truths on the subject. But I find I need to be sure I live the truth I talk about. With fellow workers I travel frequently to meet leaders of different tribes and of the Naga struggle. These close interactions have been, and are being attempted to establish a human connection at the level of conscience – or to create a level ground of transparency and objective understanding among all members of the Naga family. These 'journeys of conscience' are internally to our own people and externally to the Indian people, for understanding, friendship and peace.

The concept of the journeys of conscience is expressed in the Pledge the Presidents of all tribes took at the launching of the Naga Reconciliation Process on 20 December 2001, in Kohima. It said, 'I (President of my..... tribe) affirm that we will go beyond seeing only where others have hurt us and be ready to see where we too may have provoked them to hurt us, so that forgiving and being forgiven may become possible.'

When I arrived in Bangkok for the second consultation organised by NSCN (IM) I found what honest conversation entails. I accepted the invitation because I believe honest conversation is the key to healing. After I arrived I found I had no wish to say anything because of unhappiness in my heart. After a sleepless night I got up to find out what God would perhaps say to me.

### *A Naga Speaks*



As I sat down to listen with pen and paper the following thoughts came to me:

‘You are unhappy because you are trying to avoid facing your jealousy. The Tangkhuls and Semas have done something you deeply wish Uncle Phizo had done – bringing Nagas together to thrash out the issues facing the Naga struggle. Whether the NSCN (IM) will go beyond consultations with the Naga public like this and sit down with their rival factions to evolve a consensus for negotiating with Delhi is yet to be seen. That would be the honest-to-God, statesmanlike thing for them to do after all that they have said and done following Shillong Accord. But these consultations are in the right direction. You are unwilling to appreciate what they have done.

‘Remember what Muivah told you on a previous discussion when you told him where you felt Tangkhuls needed to be different. After listening intently he said, “There is truth in what you have said. Thank you. But can you see what others see and experience with Angamis also? There is no dispute at all about the unique contribution by Uncle Phizo and other Angamis in launching the Naga struggle. Without Uncle Phizo’s political clarity, far-sightedness, his courage and total sacrifice, Nagas will not have the glorious struggle we have today. We are privileged to continue it today and we can speak with complete authority to India and the world because he made the Naga struggle historically, politically and legally unchallengeable. But what is so hurting and unacceptable is that Angamis don’t appreciate the sacrifices and contributions of others. They seem to think Angami sacrifice alone is of value and Angami leadership alone is right.”

‘You saw how our attitudes and prejudices must have hurt and provoked some of the terrible things others too have done to us. We feel they have gone too far in their reaction. But God sees our share in their wrongs to be equally important because we dare not deny we too provoked them to do their worst. He wants us to admit our share which may touch others also to see where they too went wrong.’

Uncle Phizo failed to call such consultations largely because he had no money and he was too far away from his people. The difficulties he faced were immense. The educated Nagas in Nagaland went for State Government jobs. This must have hurt him deeply; especially the unwillingness of the educated Angamis to stand with him after Sakhrie and Jasokie took a different course, which they had come to see as right in the



changed situation. Tubu Kevichüsa was the significant exception years later. Anyone in Phizo's position would have felt what he must have felt. Those who cooperated with Delhi were dealt with as betrayers. Thus provoked, they too did their utmost to destroy the Naga struggle and with Delhi's help they succeeded at that stage.

Had they gone on to integrate all Naga areas of Assam, Manipur and Arunachal and vigorously developed the new State justly to give our people a sense of progress towards their aspirations, they would have morally justified their decision to collaborate with Delhi, which had shattered the dreams of their people. But the vigour and passion with which they developed themselves, some of them to excessive proportions, instead of the State for their people, is something I believe they regret. It showed what they wanted immediately was more important to them than the total growth of their people, just as what the Naga freedom fighters wanted in their lifetime was more important to them than the total growth of the Nagas.

The integration of the Naga areas into one unit would have been achieved if the creators of the State had told Nehru they had risked their lives to collaborate with him. They could not accept Naga Hills District alone as the State of Nagaland as the Federal Government of Nagaland was fighting for all Naga areas. All that they had to do was to say to Nehru they had no choice but to return and tell the Naga Peoples' Convention Nehru could not give Nagas what was rightly theirs. Their decision not to pursue the matter showed there was no vision or thought to restrain the temptation of instant enjoyment of power. Their failure illustrates clearly what happens to anyone of us when we think only of what we want instantly, not what needs to be done. What needed to be done was found to be difficult and left untried.

Misunderstanding rapidly grew and divisions deepened. And it was not surprising at all that something went wrong at this stage in Phizo's touch with his people at home. It would have happened with anyone in his place. What went wrong should be acknowledged. That will not damage or erase the great things Phizo had achieved.

The coterie of those trusted got narrower. Those not trusted increased and they naturally began to react in resentment. Communication became seriously defective and misleading, which produced distrust and insecurity. Phizo could not and did not call such a meeting to review the whole situation with his colleagues at home to evolve a common mind for

the next steps. I fully understand his extraordinary difficulties. But this was a mistake, as was his failure to give a clear public statement on his position on Shillong Accord. His total rejection of the Accord was known. But many Nagas expected him to 'roar like a tiger' to reject the Accord as he did in condemning the Co-operation proposal earlier by T. Sakhrie and his colleagues.

What was his reason for keeping silent? Had he concluded Muivah had decided to oust him? Was his suspicion wrong? What would have happened if Phizo told his younger colleagues, 'I understand your ideas, doubts and fears. I too have my own. Arrange a meeting soonest for a comprehensive assessment and planning. I salute the courage and steadfastness in each one of you. Nothing must divide us. Kuknalim!' What would have happened if Isak and Muivah had called for such a meeting despite all that they felt because of their perception about Phizo's attitude that had hurt them? Would Phizo have agreed to meet if they had tried? Would those advising Phizo have welcomed and helped for such a meeting? God can handle the answers to these questions even now. Nothing we have felt, schemed or done is hidden from Him, or beyond His cleansing, healing and forgiving.

Whatever the reasons, his silence in the context of the tense crisis at the time was a costly error. I say this without condemnation but with respect and understanding. The issues he and his team faced were overwhelming. Acknowledging a failure does not damage his historic stature in any way. And from my experiences of frank talks with him, I am convinced he would have rectified his mistakes and taken the right initiatives, if someone had risked enough to help him see the whole picture.

I am clear Angamis, like others, have much to be proud of. But I am also fully conscious that certain effortless attitudes in us have deeply hurt and enraged other tribes.

A Zemi youth leader told me, 'It was like walking through fire for me every time I had to walk through Khonoma as a student at Don Bosco School. Even the children made fun of us as they liked and they seemed to think they were doing nothing wrong to taunt us. Khonoma attitude towards us is so hurting although I have the deepest respect for the rare qualities of your village. Just ask the other tribes what they have felt and seen and they will tell you.' If with God's grace and greatness of heart we will listen to them and change we will be liberated to play our rightful role for Nagas.

I shared some of these thoughts at the Consultation meeting when I was asked to give my view. I could not share all because of shortage of time. I said I was trying to 'walk in the light as He is in the light' so that the blood of Jesus Christ may cleanse me and others, producing trust and understanding. I apologised for my jealousy and selfishness.

I added that the NSCN (IM) leadership, in my view, was the most competent to negotiate with Delhi at this time but that the heart of many Nagas had grown frozen cold, fearful and hateful towards the group because of the perception that the group does not value life and this would result in serious consequences. This perception must not be treated lightly.

I reiterated the conviction shared by the majority of Nagas, I am sure, that NSCN (IM) must achieve an honourable and workable settlement by boldly including the other national groups in finding a common position for negotiation with Delhi if they are negotiating for something other than the original Naga stand. They need not tell the public the terms they propose for negotiation. But they must find a way of including their former comrades in what must now to be achieved together. The Naga public will prevail upon their rivals to cooperate for the best interest of the Nagas, as they know NSCN (IM) will fight for the maximum possible.

NSCN (IM) must not underestimate the long-term consequences of taking a course that suits them only, forgetting what they have said and done accusing others. Nagas expect them to be truthful. They do not want to be manipulated even if NSCN (IM) thinks it is for their ultimate good. Achieving a settlement by winning their rivals, though it will be extremely tough, will prove to be NSCN (IM)'s lasting gift to the Nagas. To achieve it by deepening the wounds would prove to be NSCN (IM)'s tragic contribution to be added to those already inflicted by the other groups.

I spoke with trepidation and feeling 'poor in spirit', because I know my human feelings, not God's wisdom, easily guide me. But what concerns me most is that if we do not risk causing displeasure in order to establish a connection at the level of our conscience when the veterans are still with us, the coming generations will be condemned to repeat in our land the nightmares of Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Somalia, Sierra Leone and Cambodia where unexamined tribal distrust and vengeful hatred of one another became the deciding factor. I do not believe this should be our gift to our children.

Leon Trotsky, next to Lenin in the Bolshevik hierarchy, and the Communist theoretician as well as the founder of the Red Army, said at the

### ***A Naga Speaks***

beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, 'If anyone born in this century thinks he has come to relax, he should realise he has come in the wrong century.' Trotsky saw clearly the turbulent years ahead for the world. We too should see what lies ahead with realism and complete willingness to do what needs to be done. 'Arm me with a willing spirit.' (Psalms 51) should be our humble prayer.

There are so many tough issues we need to resolve together to enable our society to function successfully. Opportunities are vanishing fast and time is precious. Who is right is futile leading us nowhere. What is right for all Nagas can unite because it will require all to change equally. The logical conclusion of elimination and exclusion of one another is total instability.

We need to draw the best instead of the worst from one another to build the future together. Some may say this is idealistic nonsense to be indulged in only in heaven. The reply is we create hell on earth immediately if we follow any other doctrine of life. And the geopolitical instability of our whole region of Asia is such that to relax and pursue our own selfish interests is like painting one's cabin on a sinking ship.

Tribal narcissism is the toughest reality we have to transform together. It is tough because it is a strategy for survival guided and shaped by fear and insecurity. It comes from the fact that it is so much a natural part of us. God will show us how we are to change this common threat into our common strength, because He is the one who has given us the idea and the desire to be a people.

The prospect of Nagas need not be in doubt if we will show more interest in caring for the health of the growing Naga tree than in its fruits. We need to become men and women to whom caring for the health of the tree is more important than enjoyment of its fruits.

I shall end with the thought of a dear friend from my village who asked God what he was to say to a man from another tribe he had wanted to kill in revenge. God said, 'You are too sensitive to where others have hurt you but too insensitive to where you have hurt others. If you can have the courage to kill a man why can't you have the courage to love him enough to make him a different man?' As a guerrilla fighter he was ready to die for his people. He decided to live for them by first apologising to the man he tried to kill. He became free from hate and God has used his obedience since then as a bridge builder.

## Naga Politics

Past, Present and Future and Reconciliation.

Naga Students Union Shillong & Naga Post Grad Students Co-ordination  
Committee. 1 October 2002

*I* am aware that we have non-Naga guests in the audience. Your presence is appreciated. We do not see ourselves as others see us. I hope at some point we will hear from some of you, among other things, what you see that we do not and cannot see but should see, helped by you.

The subject given to me is broader than I am capable of. What can be broader than the past, the present and the future with reconciliation added!

I am speaking not as a scholar on the subject, but as an ordinary citizen who is trying to constructively respond to the consequences of our politics, if that is the right way to put it. I am therefore going to speak with a sense of freedom from certain expectations that this learned audience will probably have from a scholar!

Allow me to say something about my lifework at the outset because it will have some bearing on some of the points I shall be making. Straight from Madras University where I went to study, beginning from 1957, I have worked with Moral Re-Armament (MRA), now called by a new name, Initiatives of Change.

My real interest, my purpose of life, with all my shortcomings, is to help create a world that will work, beginning every day in my own life and my family. I try to do this by trying to find the inspiration and guidance of God by listening to what Mahatma Gandhi called 'the still small voice within'. It means to live out in my life what I want my society, my people and the world to be. It meant making a beginning by putting things right in my life by getting honest with my father whom I told lies to frequently when I was in college, then with a high school teacher for cheating at exams in his subject, and apologising to some friends for some jealousy and hate, and learning with God's help to appreciate and care for others, something that goes against my selfish nature. It, of course, also means staying completely open with my wife and family about myself so that no shadows or distrust exist in our relationships. I find that if I simply change where I am wrong, in the most honest, practical way, without making excuses, others also start to think, 'If a rascal like him can change, there is hope for

*A Naga Speaks*

me also!' Honesty and change generate hope.

After being away for about 35 years working in various parts of India and the world, I started to come back home first to help my family deal with an overwhelming crisis of drug and alcohol addiction that has seriously affected 15 nephews and 2 nieces. Two nephews have died due to addiction. In due course I got involved in the larger battle against addiction in Nagaland, and with the Naga Mothers' Association, helped to start and run Mount Gilead Home in Kohima, the first professionally run centre for counseling and rehabilitation of addicts in North East India. I am still associated with the Kripa Centres in Shillong and Kohima as an advisor.

To wrestle with the crisis of addiction is to come face to face with our society's mental, spiritual, moral, philosophical bankruptcy. Our bankruptcy in these dimensions is not because we are worse than others, but largely because we are having to, in a very short time, understand and solve gigantic problems of existence complicated by rapid changes, what many other societies we try to imitate have solved over a long period of time. I have said all this because it is from this perspective of my personal conviction and commitment that I am going to share my thoughts on Naga politics.

I think a people's perception about themselves is moulded by their geography, the resources of their land, their cultural, religious and racial traditions and linkages with their neighbours. Their history and politics are the products of these influences.

The politics of a people represents their conscious decision and action to develop their identity and position in the family of mankind according to their thinking and perception about themselves. This is how I think about the development of Naga politics also.

Apart from the fact that I am not qualified to do so, I think this is not the time and occasion to go into the details of our politics of the past.

The main historical facts that have produced today's Naga politics are:

1. The position Nagas declared to the British Simon Commission in Kohima in 1929.
2. The Naga response to the proposed Hydari-Naga pact as the British started to leave their empire in South Asia.
3. The declaration of Naga Independence by NNC on 14 August 1947, from the British Empire, one day before India's independence.

### *A Naga Speaks*

What happened up to the August 14 declaration established the legal, historical, political legitimacy and validity of the Naga case for their struggle that followed. The plebiscite of 1951 that the NNC under Phizo and his team conducted, and the all-out upheaval of Nagas to uphold the position they had taken resisting the armed might of India to suppress them, established the political and moral authority of the Naga case.

Nagas made their thinking and position abundantly clear before the British left that they would not be a part of the new India. The Naga struggle therefore was not and is not for secession nor is it anti-India separatism. Because to Nagas, they are not trying to secede or break away from a union they had agreed to be a part of by their own volition. Nagas have therefore fought without any sense of guilt of treason against India. This is the main strength of the Naga struggle and because of this it has continued for over half a century.

Nagas have fought with the attitude that says to India, 'We are very small and weak compared to you but we deserve to be treated as your honourable neighbour, not 'hostiles' who are unreasonably and unlawfully making trouble for you. Let us solve the problem between us by you recognising and respecting the facts of our history.'

We do not need to, and should not overestimate the 1951 plebiscite, but it should not be underestimated also. Considered in the context of the situation in which it was conducted it was no mean achievement. It certainly demonstrated the fierce commitment with which our leaders launched our struggle. The best evaluation of its political and historical significance can be made from the fact that the Government of India got its Intelligence supercops of the day to organise the Naga Peoples' Convention as a stratagem to nullify the plebiscite in order to give political legitimacy to the creation of the State of Nagaland. I shall not go further into this at this stage. If there are questions on this and other related issues, they can be raised later on during the discussion time.

It would be correct to say that the Naga struggle produced the State of Nagaland, the Ceasefire of 1964, the Revolutionary Government, the Shillong Accord, the factions and the factional rivalries and killings. We have to ask why both the Naga struggle underground, and the State overground, have started to destroy themselves and the people for whom they were begun. I believe to understand and answer this common destructiveness is of utmost urgency now.

The conflicts that resulted from Shillong Accord showed the depth

### *A Naga Speaks*



of distrust, resentment and inter-tribe prejudices that had already taken over the Naga struggle. Those who signed it refused to be open with the Naga people due to pride and resentment over the circumstances that led to their defeat. NNC was split when Isak, Muivah and Khaplang formed NSCN. Both sides went all out to destroy one another. In due course NSCN and NNC both split again so that today we have four factions opposing one another.

Sani Darhü from Tungjoy village was one of those who signed the Shillong Accord. He recently said, 'Shillong Accord could never be the final solution because it was not our choice or plan. But signing it was the only way to respond to the situation as it was then. I am clear about this. All other areas had surrendered to the extremely severe repression the Indian Army had unleashed on our people. ... Our people were too tired. We could not let them continue to bear the excessive burden any longer. We signed the Accord not seeing any other way. We did it for the good of our people at the height of the crisis.'

I suggest that most of the wrongs we have done to one another are linked to our difficult attempt to adjust to a situation that has changed too fast for us. Are we not coping with a comprehensive shift from a tribal paradigm to a wider identity that we are compelled to develop to survive in a fast changing world? The crisis compels us to break out of our familiar, safe comfort zone of the past, for a stage of growth that is perilous, and we are insecure.

Here we need to take an objective look at the power of tribalism in our society and politics. Today it is fashionable to condemn it just as it is fashionable to condemn caste and racial prejudice elsewhere. But these prejudices are psychological defenses and so they are immensely strong. Therefore condemnation does not work. I believe honest acknowledgement is the answer. We cannot deny that a good deal of the destructiveness in our society and politics is coming from what can be called 'tribal narcissism' hidden inside us.

We should not condemn our tribalism. It is, as in infantile narcissism, the self-preservation instinct that has brought all the different tribes up to where we are today. What is essential is to understand that tribalism has served its purpose. We should now grow by building on what it has done for us without letting it control us anymore.

Space exploration provides a helpful imagery. The immensely powerful booster rockets have to fall away after they have put the satellite



with its payload of highly costly and sensitive scientific instruments into orbit. After they have completed their assigned task they become deadweights and must be discarded for the safety of the remaining crucial part of the mission. But without their initial explosive propulsion the space rocket does not leave the ground. So tribalism, the booster force that has brought all of us thus far, too has to be discarded, not with condemnation but with understanding and gratitude, for what it has done for us.

We will then learn to harness the powerful force in tribalism to strengthen our common identity. Tribalism is an intense, restricted love. God requires us to stretch that love to His love and passion for all. Either God was careless in giving a common aspiration to so many different tribes, who are sorely tempted to exclude one another, or He had a high purpose for them. And He will help them to rise to it by showing them how to find humility and strength from their differences. Discovering God's meaning and purpose for us, and deciding to fight for it, is our only hope. And of course it is the most exciting challenge we can ever have. To reject it for anything less is to create hell on earth without intending to.

As Darhü said, facts must be acknowledged. NSCN (IM) has serious mistakes to put right. But their great achievements should be fully recognised. The refusal to do so by the Adinno and Khaplang groups is not justifiable. It helps neither them, the NSCN (IM) nor the Nagas.

The new ceasefire achieved in 1997 by NSCN (IM) and the talks with Delhi are achievements all Nagas can be proud of. After five years of talks people now want to know what is going on. I do not agree with the demand by some that the IM leadership should, at this initial stage, tell the public the terms of their talks. But I believe they should now boldly call upon the other factions to sit down with them to work out the common position Nagas should take for a negotiated settlement with India.

It will be essential they evolve a common consensus with the other factions at this stage if they are negotiating for something other than sovereignty. They must not underestimate the fact that many Nagas have died for sovereignty and they have eliminated many by proclaiming that they alone were the true patriots fighting to bring sovereignty. It is clear Nagas will be happy for their leaders to negotiate for any settlement that will be honourable, acceptable to Nagas and India, and therefore workable. But it must be the consensus of all Nagas.

The Churches and Naga Hoho have taken on to facilitate the rival groups coming together. The task seems impossible. But Nagas have no

***A Naga Speaks***

choice. I want all present here to carefully understand the meaning of the Pledge the Presidents of all Naga tribes took at the launching ceremony of the Naga Reconciliation Process in Kohima on 20 December 2001. It asked each tribe to do introspection about where they too have hurt others and ask to be forgiven.

This is the basis of the present search by Nagas for reconciliation through transparency and healing. I believe it goes deep enough to address all our wrongs that have wounded and divided us. All of us have a part to play in this. So please understand what the pledge may mean for you also.

I do not know what kind of a settlement will finally be achieved. Whatever it may be we cannot do without healing of our wounds. I am committed to this task, today and tomorrow.

Let us become people who are more interested in the health of the tree than in the enjoyment of its fruits. If the tree is healthy, we do not need to worry about its fruits.



### **Emergence of the Naga Political Movement; Future Perspective**

Naga People's Movement for Human Rights 20<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY.

Makhrai-Rabu, Manipur. 14 December 1998

**M**akhrai-Rabu makes us think with awe of the journey of the Nagas from the dim past to the present, of the distances we have travelled geographically, and in our thinking and experience. This historic village certainly is the right place for us to come together and take a hard look at the future on the basis of what we have gone through. In this striking amphitheatre-like setting we feel as if our ancestors are watching us from those ranges on the horizon as we discuss our future.

The seeds of the present Naga struggle were sown during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the Naga encounter with the British began. The encounters were mostly violent, sporadic and un-coordinated. But they started to develop in the Nagas awareness and sensitivity that they were a people. The conflicts with the British occurred because the latter tried to consolidate their hold over Manipur and Assam by transgressing through the hilly terrain of the Nagas. Their aim was to exploit the vast economic potential of the Brahmaputra valley. Nagas stoutly opposed the intrusion

*A Naga Speaks*

through their land. After almost 50 years of intermittent resistance the Nagas were subdued. Thus, they became a part of the eastern periphery of British India – their first experience of being ruled by a foreign power.

Thus, began Naga awareness of the vulnerability of their traditional ways, their land and its resources in which are rooted their sense of identity and security as a people. Their consciousness of their imperiled future was further sharpened when the Japanese tried to march through their land in 1944 to invade India. The historic changes reshaping Asia had started to reach them. It was, as someone put it, history exploding in their villages and fields.

The statement Nagas made to the Simon Commission in Kohima in 1929 was their first assertion in writing that they retained their right to decide their own future as a people once the British decided to leave. The statement showed the extent to which they had thought about themselves.

The next decisive landmark in the Naga story was the formal declaration of independence by the Naga National Council on 14 August 1947, one day before India became free. The declaration, that the Nagas were reclaiming the status they held before the British came, was sent to Delhi, London and the UNO.

It was not surprising the declaration did not impinge sufficiently on anyone in Delhi. India was about to celebrate her historic achievement of freedom the next day, in addition to being preoccupied with the trauma of the partition and the massive bloodshed that followed.

But to the Nagas, the validity of their case, legally, historically and politically, stands on the fact that they had unambiguously made known their position before India became independent. They have fought with heroism to defend their position with a free conscience, not hampered by any sense of being treasonous towards India, because theirs is not a secessionist movement. This is the heart of the Naga case.

The Naga declaration marked the beginning of a new political movement in South East Asia, namely, the fight by smaller groups to assert their identity because they found themselves lumped together, without their consent, with more powerful groups in the new nations that had become free from European powers. The new Asian rulers found themselves having to suppress liberation struggles within their own borders. From 1948 onwards, the various liberation movements of Burma started, namely, those of the Karens, the Kachins, Shans, Chins, Mons,

and Arakanese. The Timorese and the West Irian people of Papua also in due course launched their fight for freedom from Indonesia. In India, in the following decades, the Mizo, Meitei, Sikh, Assamese, Bodo, so on movements started.

From the outset the Union Home Ministry took the view that foreign missionaries were inciting the Nagas. In 1948 or '49 the police raided and searched the residence of the American Baptist Missionary in Kohima and the home nearby where A Z Phizo, the emerging leader of the NNC, was residing with his family. The police found from the garage of the missionary a short length of copper wire, a few empty rifle cartridge shells, and one or two fuseless hand-grenades. *The Assam Tribune* reported what the police had found and suggested that America was supplying arms to the Nagas! The report was quoted by Kailash Nath Katju, the then Home Minister, in answering questions in the Lok Sabha. The reporter and Mr Katju were obviously unaware that the famous Battle of Kohima had ended only three years back and the place was littered with piles of guns and ammunitions of all types. Thus, started a view that Delhi wanted to believe about Nagas, and the general public of India too came to believe it.

The prejudice was further strengthened when Rev Michael Scott came to Nagaland in the '60s invited by the Nagas. A Naga teaching in Chicago, my elder brother, had written to Scott after reading his impassioned speech at the UN attacking apartheid policy in South Africa. Scott was requested to take up the Naga case.

Scott helped Phizo reach London via Pakistan. Eventually Scott arrived in Kohima and informed Pandit Nehru that he had been asked to be a member of the Nagaland Peace Mission, with B P Chaliha and Jaya Prakash Narayan. Because of his long association with Krishna Menon and Nehru in the campaigns against South Africa, Scott was not immediately ordered to leave Nagaland. He was not the usual missionary of the Gospel. He was Menon's and Nehru's South African chicken coming home to roost! Scott was finally sent out because the Anglican human rights warhorse could not be allowed to act in Nagaland as if he was in South Africa.

I have digressed to deal with the oft-repeated lie about missionaries inciting Nagas. It has done immense harm to all concerned. When Nehru and his advisers expressed suspicion that missionaries must have written the Naga memorandums, Phizo was reported to have replied that this 'insult to Asian intelligence' would one day be regretted. Delhi's attitude that Nagas could not think for themselves resulted in policies

that regarded the problem as merely a law and order one to be contained by using inducements to divide and overwhelm, or smashed by bullets. This insensitive and superior attitude of politicians and bureaucrats has been too costly. The result has been the mutually damaging and wasteful confrontation between Nagas and Delhi for the past five decades.

India has understandably used her military power to suppress the Nagas on grounds of defending the territory she inherited from the British. But the Nagas view the creation of the State of Nagaland as a decision by India implemented with the use of superior military might, violating the legality of their position already stated. Four Indian Prime Ministers starting with Deve Gowda have agreed for unconditional talks with Nagas, giving recognition to the fact that the Naga problem is yet to be solved. This reveals Delhi's evaluation of the creation of the State - that it was essentially an interim provisional device to administer an area legally claimed by India, but equally legally disputed by the Naga people.

Sovereignty as a goal for the Nagas is a conviction that has cost them dearly. But the following two questions and the simple answers to them indicate exactly where the Indo-Naga question stands:

1. Can Nagas be expected to give up their fight and forget all that they have sacrificed and achieved? The answer is 'NO'.
2. Can India be expected to recognise Naga sovereignty and leave Nagaland? Nagas believe India should do so. But for India, the answer is 'NO'. For a host of reasons.

The past fifty years have seen the launching of the Naga struggle – its fiery rise like a rocket into the skies and after some time its failure to maintain flight altitude. If we do not pay immediate attention to it and remedy the defect the machine will go out of control and crash.

Nagas acted as one and did a magnificent job in launching their struggle. Countless people sacrificed all they had to establish the Naga case. What our elders and pioneers achieved was no mean feat, but it was a simple programme, comparatively speaking. It was geared solely to declaring their goal on time, and rallying the people to fight for the idea. At the beginning the sense of advancing somewhere was such that many of our people believed freedom was just around the corner! But before too long the rocket began to lose thrust and momentum because of fundamental inadequacies. I humbly submit that the reasons for the crisis have not been sufficiently examined with the result that the

problem-ridden flight threatens to end in disaster. The half-century mark is the appropriate time to get down to what has gone wrong and start the restoration.

The first part of my subject calls for much more than what I have covered so far. But as the facts of how the political movement has emerged are known to all of us, what I have said will suffice for today.

The creation of the State of Nagaland; the ceasefire reached between Delhi and the Nagas in 1964; the formation of the Revolutionary Government in 1968 and its dissolution less than a year later; the signing of the Shillong Accord in 1975; the condemnation of the Accord by Isak Swu, S.S.Khaplang and Th Muivah in 1976 on behalf of NNC/FGN (Naga National Council/Federal Government of Nagaland); the formation of NSCN by these three leaders in 1980, necessitated, in their view, by the absence of an adequate public rejection of the Accord by Phizo; the formation of the NNWC (Naga National Workers Conference) in 1981 'to promote understanding and unity by rejecting Shillong Accord'; the attempt to reorganise the NNC in 1990 by NNWC and abrogation of the Accord the next year; and the stand taken by the signatories of the Accord and their colleagues remaining unchanged from the beginning; - all these developments, as we know, will be viewed differently and passionately by different groups.

The reasons for the factional conflicts are real. But the simple fact is, Nagas cannot afford to lose more lives over which group is more right than the others. What is clear is that by the end of the 1964 ceasefire, and the talks that took place with Delhi at the time, the remarkable cohesiveness and comradeship of the struggle of the earlier years gave way to deep distrust of and disgust with one another at the personal and tribal levels because of genuine misunderstandings caused by the pressures of the struggle as well as due to avoidable mistakes and insensitivities in the ways we treated one another.

Our struggle has brought out the best as well as the worst in us. The extent to which Indian Intelligence Agencies must have exploited our weaknesses will be known only to the agents who have operated and continue to operate in Nagaland. We do not need to get worked up over this. All governments use secret agents to serve their policy objectives. But Delhi should now recognise the need to discern the wider, longer-term perspective beyond the regular intelligence reports from Kohima, so that further damage to India herself is not done. Solutions that corrupt some

and enrage others harm all in the end.

Now the future perspective: the second part of my talk. The first question we have to ask here is 'Is the Naga struggle right?' In my view it is right because our aspirations truthfully reflect our history, and a people cannot grow without fighting for something they deeply believe in. Our elders therefore did the right thing at the beginning in taking the stand as they naturally felt. What is important is to make sure our struggle for our beliefs is free from personal motivations.

This may be considered to be too idealistic. But what about the exorbitant price the people so often pay for the blind ambitions of their leaders? The ideal struggle produces in people all-round growth in mind, spirit, character and wealth through steadfast adherence to excellence and integrity. Political struggle without simultaneous growth in our thinking and character inevitably ends in tyranny.

In talking about the future, I believe, we are really asking what will happen to the Naga struggle and what it will achieve for us. I propose that we start our discussion with this assessment: the Naga struggle has started to destroy itself and the people for whom it was launched in the first place.

This assessment directs our attention to the fundamental issue in the struggle, namely the quality of the people, you and me, the purpose and meaning that really run our lives. What really interests us in life? If everyone thinks and lives like me, what kind of a society or struggle will the Nagas have?

Yes, the quality of the human element is our toughest challenge now. The future will be one of hope and growth, or one of despair and destruction, depending on whether, we can, with God's help and our deliberate decisions, change and revolutionise the human element in our struggle.

Titus Livius, Roman historian in the first century A.D. said of his decadent society, 'We have reached the point where we cannot bear either our vices or their cure.' Is this not the truth about us also? And will we fail to find the united wisdom and will to break out of such a fate as this? Let no one hastily conclude such an assessment is directed at a particular group or party only. Our common weaknesses have become our vices because we have justified and accepted them instead of tackling them.

Fierce and violent factional divisions have fragmented the Naga family. Real mistakes and errors have produced the different positions.

### *A Naga Speaks*



But I submit that all of us are concentrating on the controversial political divisions and ignoring the common enemy that is at the root of our divisions. Our common enemy is our shallow, inadequate philosophy of life with which we are dealing with the challenges of life. Can we deny our selfish and irresponsible philosophy of life has weakened our underground struggle, and sabotaged the running of the overground State government? Can our politics be different from what kind of people we are?

The NNC and NSCN have both told our people to stay loyal and wait for the national workers to bring them sovereignty for them to enjoy. We have come to think that all we need to do is wait loyally, collect money to finance the struggle, criticise other groups and even kill them, so that our goal may be achieved. We know money is needed for the struggle. But how many of us now are not suspicious of those who collect money and not disillusioned and angry against forcible collections?

Now let us turn to our overground politics. From the beginning of the State, the different parties have told our people at election times, 'Vote for us and all else shall be added unto you! You don't need to do anything. If you vote our party to power, everything you need, will be provided. We will bring plenty of money from Delhi to develop Nagaland!' Is the slogan different in Manipur?

So we have come to think that while we wait for freedom, Delhi will provide for our enjoyment. And when freedom is achieved, much more money will automatically come from other sources in the world! Nagas have become a waiting, expecting, dreaming, demanding, bad-tempered people whose imagination and creativity has been perverted to scheming how to grab what they have not worked for.

Is it not true that for many of us politics is achieving power to accumulate wealth for pleasure and fame? Such a limited and materialistic concept of politics of course allows adoption of even the crudest, most dishonest methods to satisfy one's greed, lust and ambition. Is it surprising extortion, stealing and cheating are raging like an uncontrollable epidemic?

This observation is about all of us. If we are interested in becoming a people, we cannot aim for less than creating a just and dynamic society where everyone will have enough because everyone cares enough. For a people at the beginning of their journey, we will not get far if we are to adopt a cheaper philosophy of politics and nationhood.

Our people have been given too little to do. But we the people have



just lived on without bothering to think out by ourselves what each one of us should do so that our struggle may go forward on sound foundations. Struggling to become a nation is like constructing a building. We the people are like the foundation stones. If our struggle is to take us towards the building of a nation that will survive in a fiercely competitive world, we have to now deal with the weaknesses in the human element. If the quality of the foundation stones is poor we know what happens to the building. We have to now bring the big issues and problems down to our individual lives and learn to change the ways in which we ourselves are part of the weaknesses that are destroying us today, instead of just blaming others.

Mikhael Gorbachev sacrificed his position of supreme power over the Soviet Union by choosing not to try to prop up the unjust and collapsing USSR. He could have plunged the world into a nuclear holocaust. He has showed truly admirable freedom of spirit and character by admitting and discarding what was wrong and taking on a most urgent global task. He has founded the *International Green Cross* to prevent the destruction of our planet. In a recent interview on BBC he was asked, 'What is the greatest obstacle?' He replied, 'It is human mentality. If we do not clean up our hearts and minds nothing will happen to reverse the process destroying our world. Marxism failed because its materialism left out the needs of our hearts and minds. Politics needs philosophy in order to find a new kind of politics.'

What would Gorbachev's point mean for each one of us? Allow me to share a little from my own experiments, which I started as a student at Madras Christian College in 1956. As a Christian I prayed regularly for what I wanted from God. This is of course important. But when I asked what He had to say to me He seemed to tell me to deal with the seemingly small things that had kept my life selfish, corrupt and ineffective. I had to write letters to put things right. To my father for the many times I had cheated him and pretended to be what I was not. I was so ashamed of some of the things I had to tell him. To a Nepali family, apologising for my hate and for wanting harm to come to them. Later I got honest with my arithmetic teacher for copying in exams! I also said sorry to a friend for being jealous of his success in a number of things, and to my hostel warden for misusing a certain college property for my own benefit. My warden said, 'Well done. Keep it up!' My father wrote, 'I do not know what Moral Re-Armament is. But if it makes you honest it must be a good thing.'

I started to write down the thoughts that came to me in my times

### *A Naga Speaks*

of daily listening for God's guidance. This made a real difference. The notebook revolution! After all, as the Chinese say, 'The palest ink is stronger than the strongest memory.' What is written down challenges you to be practical in obedience. For a lazy, casual person like me, without this kind of practical discipline no change takes place. Truths come and go as beautiful temporary insights producing no change.

The first steps of change in my life did not change the world. But what happened was that I started to fight for right against wrong in the world, beginning at my level. I began to understand that the Cross means crossing out my selfishness and pride to follow God's will and guidance. In fact the first thought I wrote down during my first quiet time was, 'You are a very selfish man. You hate others because of your selfishness'. I was quite stunned as I read what I had written!

We are fighting for freedom, human rights, peace and economic development. All are vitally important. But one catastrophe we have to prevent at all costs is the kind of massive collapse of our society into uncontrollable violence and destruction that has befallen Cambodia, Rwanda, Somalia, Sierra Leone, and so on. The total collapse in these nations occurred in gradual, imperceptible changes the way a landslide or an avalanche occurs. Nobody quite thought their situation was so dangerous. The distrusts, vengeful hates and heartlessness that had slowly destroyed the foundations of their societies had not been recognised and tackled in time.

Everybody was painting their own cabins not knowing that the ship was sinking. Our fierce inter-tribal distrusts and rivalries have reached a critical level. We Angamis know and imagine the worst about the other tribes but pay little attention to the worst in us that others see and hate! I believe the attempts being made by the Church, Naga Hoho and other NGOs to bring Nagas together to resolve our differences are crucially important in view of the dangers mentioned.

We must become mature in handling our mistakes and wrongs, which we all knowingly or unknowingly commit because of our sinful nature. If we can be less defensive of our mistakes and our ways, and more ready to accept that others may have made their mistakes in reaction to our errors, constructive dialogues will become easier than we think. We will be showing real Christianity. The opposite of dialogue leading to transparency is mutual elimination for domination.

It will not be too difficult to make a list of all the mistakes in our

***A Naga Speaks***

story so far from Phizo's time to today. The next step will make us realise that we desperately need one another's understanding, compassion and forgiveness to put right the grievous wrongs we have done to one another. We need one another in equal measure to create for our children a future they will be able to build together. Our mistakes will become our common strength if all of us can show genuine transparency. Doing the right things, especially the right things, God's way not our way, is the great battle ahead.

In concluding I want to make two points. Firstly, the battleground of the Naga struggle has now shifted from the one we have been used to in the villages, jungles and highways with guns to the heart and mind of every Naga. The all-important question of the quality of the human element in our struggle will be decided by the battle between right and wrong fought in our hearts. No one fights this for you.

Secondly, the whole of India must become our battleground in the sense that we have to now reach and engage the hearts and minds of the Indian people to solve the Indo-Naga problem. We are and should be grateful for the sympathy being shown to us by people in other nations of the world. But let us not make the mistake of thinking that we will be able to find a solution without the fullest understanding and friendship of the people of India. From now on the present generation of Nagas needs to prepare their minds and hearts to go and meet the people of India. India is much more than the Government of India operating in the buildings in New Delhi. I believe interacting all-out with the people of India will change us, and purify and restore our struggle to one that will produce the right result for both sides. It will also help India immensely.

This is the challenging perspective before us.

*There is no human failure greater than to launch a profoundly important endeavour and then leave it half done.* - Barbara Walters

## **The Essentiality of Talks for the Negotiations**

Consultative Meeting, Niuland. 2 June 1999

*I* propose to start with this question - Why is it that every project, whether political, economic or social, that we start becomes destructive? What is the missing factor in the human element that is responsible for the destructiveness?

***A Naga Speaks***

And I want to make an appeal at this crucial juncture that we agree on the following to achieve a common ground:

- a. We all recognise and admit that we have all made mistakes - all factions, parties and tribes. 'All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.' (Rom.3:23)
- b. We all recognise that some of the mistakes and wrongs we have done to one another cannot be put right at this stage. They are too difficult and too complicated. So we agree that one day they will be put right, as we must, with God's help and one another's understanding. For the moment let the tigers and beasts of our wrongs sleep undisturbed.
- c. We all agree not to add any more wrongs to the excessive burden we already have. This comes down to agreement that no one will be killed anymore because of his or her views and beliefs, and there will be complete freedom of thought and expression. This traditional right of the Nagas must be restored and the insult to it ended.

Today I want to speak from my heart throwing all caution of fear and faithlessness to the winds because we are here to find a solution, and equally important, to create a society that will work. From the meetings yesterday it is clear that deep feelings control our thought processes and inter-Naga relationships. And let us thank God that the feelings are slowly coming out.

I am reminded of what an Irishman in Northern Ireland once said. We talk of our Naga struggle being 50 years old. That's a long time indeed. But the Irish problem that we read about is almost 500 years old. At a time of widespread violence in Belfast because of IRA bombings and counter attacks by the Protestant nationalists, a journalist came from a London paper to report on the crisis. The journalist asked an Irishman he was interviewing, 'Well, what are the facts behind these bombings?' The Irishman exploded, 'To hell with the facts! Don't you know in Northern Ireland, feelings matter? Facts only confuse the issue!'

I believe this says something important for our situation also. The Kilo Kilonser Mr Raising yesterday said, 'We are dealing with human beings.' and I say 'Amen'. We need to understand the feelings in human hearts that control our politics.

I am here to share my thoughts because I believe inter-Naga conversations in every manner, at all levels, have become our most urgent need. I want to thank you for inviting me. I have come believing that God

can and wants to bless and use your decision to return to our people. The Nagas are giving the highest interpretation to your intention for this consultation. So, make no mistake, this is no ordinary gathering of the Naga family. It is meant to be a defining event in the history of the Naga struggle. But if it will be that, you and I know we have to recognise and honestly address the feelings that have pulled us apart, and the wounds and hurts we each have in our hearts.

We like to believe we have gone way beyond tribalism. It is politically correct to condemn tribalism. But let us not underestimate that its grip over us as a primitive instinct to achieve domination or to resist domination in order to survive is as wild as ever. I think tribalism is to Nagas and many tribes in Africa, what communalism is to India today. The Constitution of India prohibits communalism, and all parties condemn it. But casteism and communalism decisively control Indian electoral politics, as tribalism does in Nagaland.

I need to share a personal difficulty here. If my participation is to serve any purpose, I have to be vulnerably open. In coming here for public participation, I am deeply conscious of my violation of traditional code of honour and the hurt I have caused to the feelings of some of my villagers and relations whose family and clan members have been intimidated into abject compliance, making false statements against themselves, some recklessly condemned and beaten or liquidated because they were arbitrarily judged to be wrong by those who took upon themselves to be judges and executioners.

I know many of you here are also hurt and aggrieved equally because of the loss of your own dedicated comrades and loved ones, many of them at the hands of fellow Nagas who too acted as judges and executioners exercising illegitimate, arbitrary authority. I do not know how we are to cope with our respective dilemmas, which are all equally cruel.

I have said what I have said because my speech on talks for negotiation should start from the battles I fight in my own heart. I need to simply say I deeply mourn those who have died, and I share the humiliation to their humanity and their grief for their loved ones. My humble search with fellow Nagas for a better future for our people should, after all, be without ambiguity and suspicion, grounded in reality and transparency.

Present on this occasion are fighters and workers who, for their passionate beliefs for the Nagas, have risked and given all that human beings hold dear. Not physically present, but powerfully present

***A Naga Speaks***

nonetheless are all who died in one way or another, and for diverse reasons, but all because of the Naga struggle. Their moral and spiritual presence is all the more real because their deaths and their giving speak so unmistakably to us, brooking no judgment from us the living. And in our hearts and the consciences of all of us, in our midst, and watching over all our deliberations is the unseen Guest in Niuland - God, the Lord and arbiter of history whose will and ways govern the rise and fall of peoples and nations.

I am keenly conscious of all these as well as of the fact that I am giving my views on the Naga struggle that has been established and sustained by the heroic and unflinching sacrifices of Nagas like yourselves right from the beginning to today. So I have asked honest questions about myself. I know there will be questions in the minds of many why someone like me, who, in their view, have not experienced the 'blood, sweat and tears' of active struggle, can presume he can say anything at all about the struggle that others have built up with immense sacrifice. I fully understand this kind of feeling. All I can say is that:

- a. I am here by invitation to contribute my thoughts;
- b. My conscience is clear I have lived and fought for the values that I perceived have to be the foundation of the nation we want to be, applying them in my own life first;
- c. I am equally clear I am not looking for anything for myself in what I consider to be God's fight to remake the world of which Nagaland is a part.

My interest is in helping to draw God's eternal battle line for our society, accepting it in my own life every day in every situation. As we know, this sharp battle line between right and wrong, God's way and our human ways, goes through your heart and mine, not between factions and tribes and parties. It is the ultimate battle that decides the fates of peoples, nations and civilisations, and therefore to be ignored or casually treated at our own peril.

The subject given to me is 'Essentiality of Talks for Negotiation.' I have understood it to mean this: the essentiality of talks between/among Nagas to create a sufficiently satisfactory consensus to explore various options acceptable to Nagas for negotiation with Delhi. It is abundantly clear that the Naga public are with you on this. They are saying in every way they can, to please rise to your destiny and use your present passing

advantage to include all the Nagas in your talks.

You have already indicated what you have in mind to propose to Delhi for negotiation to find an acceptable solution. Your recognition of India's insurmountable difficulties on the Indo-Naga issue has also been made clear. This is something Nagas must understand if we are to make any headway with India.

Discussion of today's subject will inevitably bring out again yesterday's points. If you will bring full sovereignty, which you have repeatedly asserted you are the only group fighting for it, you perhaps don't need to bother about the other national workers. But if you will need to propose something else for negotiation with Delhi, the public will keep telling you the most obvious point that you have to first win all the other groups to a common, indisputable consensus before you proceed further. This insistence comes from recognising the reality of our continuing tribalism and what has produced the violent conflicts of today. People's memories are proverbially short, but not that short that they will forget all that you have said to condemn others, not to mention the charges made by Khaplang when you and they split, accusing you of being after something other than sovereignty.

A calm, sober examination of the kind of proposal you obviously have in mind for negotiation will reveal that sovereignty is only postponed to a future date, not surrendered. I believe many in the public feel that it would be the wisest, correct thing to do at the present juncture, and you should go ahead. But the accumulated distrust and resentments are now so strong, there will be no proper examination of the actual details and facts, but outright, gleeful condemnation that your proposal is for 'another notorious accord', a 'sell-out', a 'perfidious betrayal', and worse.

Nagas have read all that you have said and published to demolish your opponents. You must not underestimate the destructive consequences that will follow if you would decide to casually take for granted the pent-up feelings in people over the Shillong Accord and sovereignty issue. I am not defending the Accord. I am simply calling for truthfulness and consistency.

It is quite possible that with your obvious superiority and advantage over the other groups in brains, organisational and strategic competence, military hardware, financial resources and committed cadre, you will be able to do as you like and win according to your plan. But will it be a victory that all Nagas will be able to survive? There is the story of King Pyrrhus of Epirus of ancient Greece, who won a victory over another

### *A Naga Speaks*



kingdom. The cost of his victory was so high his nation collapsed. Since then such victories that result in self-destruction have come to be called Pyrrhic victory. Let us be fully aware of this possibility in our situation also, given our seriously damaged relationships.

All participating here welcome the clarification made by the Chairman, the General Secretary and the Kilo Kilonser asking the public to make their 'sincere contribution' towards evolving the right proposal. All who have spoken have said that the proposal, whatever it may be, is not going to be the real problem. But all are apprehensive that our condition will worsen if a sufficient consensus is not first achieved among all the national workers. The public share belief in the good sense of our people after all these years of suffering. So they are convinced of a positive outcome if the national workers will come together and start to talk to one another.

The public greatly appreciate this consultation. They are appealing to you to go far enough to reach the other factions so that the needed result may be achieved. They sense that this consultation is an opportunity where something very right and wonderful can start, or something very wrong and destructive can be born, God forbid, given the context in which we are meeting.

We are all greatly encouraged by the manner in which our views are being freely exchanged. This is the only way to develop the right idea. I believe in the vision and conviction the Dalai Lama of Tibet declared at an international conference last year, 'The 20<sup>th</sup> century has been a century of terrible destruction and bloodshed. The 21<sup>st</sup> century must be one of dialogue, understanding and growth for all mankind.' Why not with Nagas?

Now let us look at some observations about the Naga struggle to get a better understanding as to why it has become so difficult to go beyond a certain point with Delhi.

Our people rallied together in a most remarkable show of spontaneous response to a deeply felt aspiration. But quite soon after, our serious inadequacies of thought, experience and resources for keeping the rocket on course became evident. Our original slogans correctly and honestly declared what we decided was our position in keeping with our history and geographical location. The slogans brought us together.

But today we face a vastly changed situation. The questionings and adjustments in our thinking have produced the present confusion and



divisions. To make matters worse, the most visible example of success within the very narrow confines of our society have made everyone, especially our youth, think that to succeed by being selfish, mean and totally irresponsible is quite normal, indeed to be otherwise is stupid.

As the generous use of money by Delhi to solve the Naga crisis has meant abundant flow of easy cash, the havoc caused to our social fabric and community values by this corrosive but hard-to-resist element has also made our struggle all the more complicated and uncontrollable. We have become addicted to instant enjoyment without work and discipline.

What stands out about our struggle is that all along Nagas have spoken and stood for what we honestly and naturally felt was our rightful position. We would have been untrue to ourselves if we had not taken our stand as we felt.

That our ancestors were defeated was not as important as that they fought to defend their honour as they understood it. There, our elders did the right thing again in 1946-47 and all the way down to where we are today. Despite distracting temptations and immense difficulties, we have tried to be natural and truthful to ourselves. This I believe to be supremely important for our development into the future. The problems that stem from not speaking out and paying the needed price for doing so are far more serious than the problems produced by daring to be truthful.

Not too long back the Naga Students Union in Shillong conducted a debate. It was won by two ladies who spoke for the motion that 'The Naga struggle has done more harm than good to the Nagas.' At the end of the program an Indian professor said to me, 'The young ladies won because they spoke more fluently. And the examples they cited of serious damages being done in the name of the different factions are true. But your youths should be asking what the Nagas would be like today if your pioneers had not fought as they believed. Nagas may not be aware of how much they have gained in their spirit. What you can and should do is remedy your shortcomings and do better.' This is from an outsider who wishes us well.

In a secret letter to Assam Chief Minister Bishnuram Medhi on May 13th, 1956, Pt Nehru wrote, 'I feel that we have not dealt with this question of the Nagas with wisdom in the past. We must not judge them as we would others who are undoubtedly part of India. The Nagas have no such background or sensation and we have to create that sensation.' (*Strangers of the Mist* by Sanjoy Hazarika). Nehru recognised the reason which had made the Nagas fight.

### *A Naga Speaks*

Prof Udayan Misra has written that the Nagaland Peace Mission admitted, 'The Nagas never formed part of the Indian mainstream' and quoted Jayaprakash Narayan, one of the early members that 'There can be no doubt that the struggle led by the Naga Federal Government cannot be regarded as a mere problem of law and order. It is most certainly a struggle for national freedom. It does not aim at overthrowing a government, but it aims at throwing out a government, namely, the government of India which it regards as established here by force... the Naga people are unquestionably a nation. While there can be no doubt that the Naga problem is not a law and order question but a question of freedom for the Nagas, I've also tried to show that the Naga freedom movement may take a different character if it is placed in the context of a union of governing States.' (*The Naga National Question*)

Referring to the disastrous meeting between Morarji Desai and Phizo in London in 1977, R. Vishwanathan in his essay, *Untamed Tribes on the North East Frontier* (1978) wrote, Desai 'admonished Phizo at their London encounter treating him as a political truant rather than the respected leader of an entire people. Mr Desai's failure is also the most tragic Indian failure; to sympathise with the emotions of a people who had never submitted to the British power and who nursed their own brand of nationalism with a passion unknown to most Indians.'

A Marwari industrialist and tea planter in Assam has often said to his Naga friends that he has read everything written about the Nagas and their struggle. He says that the Naga demand for freedom is historically valid, with indisputable legality, and India should solve the issue without twisting the historical facts to suit India. This will be in the interest of both India and the Nagas. He respects the Nagas for fighting for their deepest convictions. 'I naturally want Nagas to be a part of India,' he says, 'but they cannot be forced against their will. What is happening now saddens me. Others from outside are not going to defeat the Nagas. You are defeating and destroying yourselves. Nagas are solving the problems themselves.'

We are at the point where Nagas cannot be expected to forget all that they have sacrificed and achieved and give up their fight. But India too cannot be expected to recognise Naga sovereignty and leave Nagaland. No power in India's position can do that.

No Indian leader or party in Delhi is today strong enough to say yes to Naga sovereignty and continue in power for even a day. We Nagas must understand this stark political reality about today's India. Only Pt Nehru

could have taken the final decision. But in his time he assessed that the carrot of Statehood with the stick of Army suppression would be sufficient.

There are indications that during the rounds of talks that took place between Ato Kilonser Kughato Sukhai and his delegation and Mrs Indira Gandhi during the 1964 cease-fire, there was some chance to reach a settlement that would be the equivalent of 'at first a retaining wall, something achieved at some level above the present one, so that it would be possible to build further to a higher level,' as the late Naga leader R. Suisa put it. This was his proposal that he had conveyed in person to Mrs Gandhi and Sukhai in Delhi and Phizo in London.

The atmosphere that prevailed then was full of distrust and resentment. The communication between the leaders therefore rapidly deteriorated. Whatever Phizo may have truly thought, it was obviously not possible for him to accept it and pursue it. Perhaps it was too sudden under the circumstances.

After Indira's positive response to his proposal, Suisa had gone to see Phizo because he, Suisa, had said to Indira that Phizo was his leader and the decision would lie with Phizo and his colleagues. So Suisa was clearly hurt by the cold response he reportedly received from Phizo. Among his last words to those close to him were, 'If anybody can bring higher than that of my last proposal he is performing miracles, we must bow down and worship him.' Understandably he was bitter. \*Indira Gandhi suddenly ended the talks without giving any clear reasons for doing so.

But it was clear she knew Nagas could not adopt any approach that would violate the 'full sovereignty' stance of the NNC. In any case the resolution passed by the Tatar Hoho in Wokha to call off the talks, naturally putting the blame on Indira Gandhi, precluded any other options Sukhai might have wished. The ceasefire and all that had opened up ended with catastrophic consequences on the Naga struggle. Today we have another cease-fire loaded with opportunities.

Are we in the same situation where progress on building 'a retaining wall' is possible but we may end in another landslide this time to a level where we will be so broken that renewal in the foreseeable future may become impossible? As we look back, a pattern is clear. It is the rigidity of a pattern that has constricted us from soon after the launching of the struggle. Phizo, Sakhrie and his moderate colleagues, Suisa, Sukhai and his delegation, none of them were free to explore any options outside the all-binding pattern we had imposed on ourselves.

### *A Naga Speaks*

The signatories of the Shillong Accord were thrashed on the altar of sacrifice to this almighty pattern. Their hopeless impossibility to explain themselves, made worse by their failure to be simply open had something to do with the same rigidity of thought that had created the pattern. The dogmatic sloganeering power of this pattern of thought powerfully propelled Isak Swu, Thuingaleng Muivah and S S Khaplang to positions of control of the Naga struggle. What do they say about the future now?

You have sufficiently indicated what you are considering to propose for negotiation with Delhi. All of us, who have given our views in response to your invitation during the last 48 hours, have expressed support for the ongoing talks and ceasefire between you and Delhi. Most of us have emphasised that all the factions of the Naga struggle should first reach an unquestionable consensus if the outcome is to be workable.

The public has understood your reasons for rejecting the idea of talks with the Khaplang and NNC groups. Yet we from the public are stating clearly to you to go the extra mile only because the consequences of your decision here on this issue will be borne by all Nagas not just the national workers.

We have 'reached a dead-end of blame and counter-blame'. Yet man's extremity is always God's opportunity. So when Mr Muivah said yesterday, 'I want to appeal to your conscience and not to your emotion', the opening for God's opportunity surely started. And by the appeal to conscience this consultation too was placed at the right level.

Our struggle is destroying itself and us the people because we are so clear where and how others have hurt us but do not see, or we explain away, where we have hurt others. 'Oh that some power would give us the gift to see ourselves as others see us,' as the Scottish national poet put it so wisely.

One issue needing our urgent attention is how our society and our struggle have been made dysfunctional and destructive because of our dishonesty and casualness about our mistakes and wrongs and our readiness to put the worst interpretation to the mistakes and failings of others. Our crisis requires us to immediately deal with this moral and spiritual irresponsibility. Nagas are drowning in a sea of ever-increasing problems created by all of us with the attitude which says, 'I will adopt any method to succeed and get what I want for my instant gratification, somebody else will take care of the consequences of my unethical methods.'

Prolonged practice and toleration of this callous irresponsibility in countless offices and other fields of life have today given birth to the ultimate monster of corruption - the *Rex Tyrannosaurus* of Extortion. As we cannot deny we have all helped to genetically engineer the birth of this terrible creature now creating havoc in the Naga *Jurassic Park*, we have no strength or courage to stand up to it. In my view our leaders should now bring about a settlement that sufficiently safeguards the honour and political right of the Nagas that the NNC and NSCN have preserved up to today.

A settlement that recognises the nationality of the Nagas (mentioned in the MPhil thesis of Ahu Sakhrie, JNU, Delhi) without disturbing the territorial integrity of India should not be beyond the united genius and skill of our leaders and the Indian negotiators. But to get even this far, Nagas will have to reach out to the Indian people in a big way to help them to understand why Nagas cannot settle for less on grounds of the historical and political facts of their struggle. Without the understanding and help of the Indian public we will always be at the mercy of bureaucrats in Delhi. The solutions hatched by them over the decades have brought us to where we are today. The solutions have harmed India economically and morally as much as they have harmed Nagas.

Nagas have pushed as far as they need to politically. Their identity is established. Before it is too late Nagas must now get down to consolidating themselves. This means healing the wounds they have inflicted on one another, sorting out their mistakes, restoring their relationships to develop and strengthen the sense of being a people. Our leaders must tell our people our struggle now is to repair all that has gone wrong so that the task which is the real meaning of life on Earth may be taken up - to grow and become responsible and dependable for ourselves and the world, which is what independence really means.

The toughest test of our maturity and wisdom is going to be in tackling our mistakes in such a way that we become more united and stronger as a result. From the experiences of others who have done this it has been shown that total transparency and truthfulness is the key that opens unexpected doors to a new world.

‘You desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part you will make me to know wisdom.’ (Psalm 51-1). David thus set the standard needed for reaching the truth.

Blaise Pascal observed, ‘Truth is so obscure nowadays and lies so

***A Naga Speaks***

well established, that unless we love the truth we shall never recognise it.'

I shall venture to illustrate a way of tackling our mistakes that leads to healing and understanding, if sincerely done. For this I'm going to talk about the deteriorated relationship between Angamis and Semas. There are likely to be errors in what I will say because my knowledge of what has happened is incomplete. Please feel free to correct me. I do not need to go into details here. That should be done only when Angamis and Semas start to talk together. We have been deeply affected by certain things Semas have done. We have resented what has happened and blamed them.

But an increasing number of Angamis have realised that when we Angamis were in positions of leadership of the Naga struggle we had caused hurt and distrust in our Sema brethren through acts of commission and omission. We see now that we provoked them to do some of the things for which we blamed them. So we have our share in some of their mistakes, which we need to admit and accept.

I believe that all the mistakes in our struggle, which we are using to score points against one another, are all interconnected. And if we can honestly accept the ways in which we have provoked others to make mistakes God will be able to come in and give us His miracles of change and reconciliation.

'On earth God wrestles with the devil and the battleground is man.' This was how Dostoyevsky, the Russian writer, saw the battle in the souls of individuals that decides the fates of nations. This is God's battle for our souls, the very beginning of our formation as a people and nation. We are not putting easy things to our leaders to consider. Let us at this time slow down and listen to one another and to God for His guidance. Our human wisdom has failed. 'The most important trip you may take in life is meeting people halfway.'

NOTE: I came to learn years later that most of the senior leaders who had borne the brunt of the launching of the Naga struggle deeply felt Suisa 'who had just joined them' went on his own and made the Suisa Proposal to Indira Gandhi to solve the Indo-Naga Issue without proper prior consultation with them. Suisa perhaps was not aware of the resentment stirred up by his 'hasty action.'

## Thoughts for the Ceasefire

*Nagaland Post* 8 October 1998

*Two species of blindness easily combine; of those who see not what is,  
and of those who see what is not.- Quintus Tertullianus*

The positions taken by the different Naga political groups regarding the ceasefire reflect the split in the Naga movement. The public see this as inevitable for the moment but are grateful for the ceasefire to the extent it is real. They want it to acquire the needed mandate for its fullest effectiveness. For this to happen the initiatives that have reportedly been launched by the Naga Hoho and the various NGOs for total stoppage of killings must be backed by the public. The ceasefire is ticking away like a time-bomb. We must use it to begin to face and change some of our serious weaknesses.

The political and economic priorities on the Naga agenda have never been in doubt. We are at least clear we want to be prosperous! But the agenda has left out the mental, moral and spiritual fundamentals of life. The result is we have produced a society, overground and underground, that is fast destroying itself.

The lessons African nations are learning from the costly mistakes of their freedom struggle apply to us with equal urgency. Dr Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, the charismatic pioneer of modern Africa's political liberation proclaimed to cheering crowds, 'Seek ye first the political kingdom and all else shall be added unto you.' It was highly popular but it was an incomplete and misleading philosophy of life and revolution. Seeking the political kingdom or freedom was right. It was historically inevitable that the white imperialists had to leave Africa, but leaving out the ethical, spiritual and moral priorities from the agenda of the freedom struggle was a fatal error.

The new African republics soon became unmanageable as a few became too fat and too privileged too soon while too many became too thin because of the heartless greed and corruption of most of the leaders and the educated elite. In less than 20 years, national dreams became nightmares as bitterness and despair turned extensive stretches of Africa into wastelands of death and destruction. Uncounted thousands of starving and dying refugees started fleeing their own homelands to escape civil and inter-tribal wars.

*A Naga Speaks*



Highly unfair and shortsighted trading strategies of the rich nations controlling the raw material markets made it extremely tough for the new republics to succeed. They were generally rich in natural resources but poor in foreign exchange reserves, experience and infrastructure assets. But the unpreparedness of the leaders of the newly free nations and their people to respond adequately to the new relentless challenges of running a modern state made the crisis too chaotic. They had come to believe that somehow milk and honey would automatically flow once the white rulers left Africa. The tragic stories of Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Zaire, Somalia are too well-known to need explanation. Cambodia and other nations can be added to this list.

The way we have made the state of Nagaland and virtually all Central schemes unworkable because of 'sticky fingers' and rendered our political struggle so destructive to itself and the people for whom it was launched, shows what we will do to any settlement that may come unless we start to vigorously tackle the non-political part of our agenda. The following come under that part: Responsible citizenship, Discipline, Care for one another, Standards of perfection and Excellence in all we do, and Creative self-limitation for economic growth for 'There is enough in the world (jobs, allocations from Delhi, etc...) for everyone's needs but not for everyone's greed, and if everyone cared enough and shared enough, everyone will have enough.'

Our most urgent need now is therefore to concentrate our best wisdom together on how we heal the monstrous wounds and vengeful bitterness that have crippled the entire Naga family. If our hearts are liberated from inter-tribal resentments and hates, and the burden of guilt lifted from our souls, progress towards a settlement will become possible.

Attempted below are some practical suggestions for the ceasefire to bear fruit. If every Naga were to accept them as his or her personal responsibility, our darkness and confusion will begin to give way to God's light and clarity sooner than we think possible now. Readers will have suggestions of their own to add:

- Complete freedom of expression and debate to enable Nagas to think and breathe freely again. Any infringement of this heaven-sent right is counterproductive and dangerous.
- Complete cessation of blood-letting for factional or tribal advantage, for short-sighted divide and destroy strategies of Indian Intelligence agencies, or for revenge or extortion.

***A Naga Speaks***



- Complete stoppage or drastic reduction of corruption and stealing of any size and variety, to begin to make lying, cheating, extortion, selfishness and all unethical compromises unfashionable and unacceptable by a people who claim to have come to the light of Christ from the darkness of the past to build His kingdom on earth as it is in Heaven. The Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists in Nagaland will also readily agree that their religions are against corruption and cheating. An ancient Hindu saying puts it clearly: 'He who takes more from society than gives to it, is a thief.'

Let us be clear, shameless stealing by abuse of power and position at the top is to society what HIV/AIDS is to the human body. The sense of right and wrong which acts as fragile moral barriers is easily destroyed. Society's immune system is breached. Extortion and other crude methods of quick success at the expense of others become uncontrollable as the young people conclude that only fools restrain themselves for the good of society.

- Decision by Nagas to reach out to one another to begin an over-due process of inter-Naga conversations to evolve inspired ways of solving the problems we have all helped to create and heap upon ourselves. All that is required for this to produce results is for all of us to sincerely listen to what the other person, tribe or faction has to say and why. The American native Indians put it so well, 'Walk a mile in another man's moccasins. Walk a mile in another man's shoes, before you leave him condemned forever.'

The correct assessment of every conflict is achieved by examining two different perceptions. They are:

- a. How we see it,
- b. How God sees it.

So when we put ourselves in the shoes of others, we are nearer to God's or History's view which is the acceptable common ground for solving problems. The Naga struggle has been paralysed by bitter accusations of one another and hardened distrusts and suspicions. But all of them can dramatically change if we will only decide to listen to how others must have viewed us and the wrongs for which we have blamed them with such certainty. We will see that we are too sensitive to how others hurt us but not sensitive enough to how we hurt others. We will begin to see that a good deal of their wrong actions is their bitter reaction to our wrong

motives and ways. We do not see them for what they really are. If our venomous feelings are thus reduced to their proper size, searching together for what is really right will become more attractive and compelling than the meaningless fight over 'Who is right'. If our leaders will want what is right more than what they want for themselves, we do not need to worry about our struggle and our future.

The battleground of our struggle has now changed. This is one of the most important realities we need to understand.

1. Time and events have caused a deep shift which has radically altered the Naga struggle. We are not going to be allowed to ignore its demands on us to change completely our ways of doing things. The shift is this: The battleground of our struggle is now in the hearts and minds of every Naga, not out there in the jungle where a few 'national workers' have fought and laid down their lives, or in Delhi and foreign capitals as we have thought for the past 50 years. The concentration has changed from the external to the internal; from shooting at people and shouting slogans to achieve our goal to finding out why we have become so destructive in our overground or underground politics, and putting the wrong right so that we may be able to struggle correctly for our goal.
2. An analogy will clarify here. Suppose some of us set out from Kohima for Shamatore for a great celebration. The journey started with great excitement. But progress slowed down. We cannot proceed beyond Tuensang. Something has gone wrong with the bus, and a fight has also broken out among the passengers as well as the crew. At this stage the only sensible thing to do is to repair the vehicle, and restore unity and friendship among the crew and travellers, instead of blaming one another and screaming at each other about the goal. The goal is always there. The point is to deal with what has made the journey impossible!
3. Our root problem is the shallowness of our philosophy and meaning of life as a people which has produced our present stagnation. Our concept of sovereignty freedom and economic development is so materialistic, selfish and cheap that if we were to achieve our goal, there will not be enough to satisfy our greed.
4. Therefore, every Naga heart and mind has to now become the battleground where the battle for the adequate purpose and meaning of life will have to be fought out. For far too long we ordinary citizens have just let our 'national workers' do the sacrificial toiling and sweating, and dirty tricks for the struggle and we have become a thoughtless,

***A Naga Speaks***

irresponsible, waiting, demanding people who expect to be kept happy with plenty of easy money from Delhi pending a 'final settlement' when more money will come from other nations. The geo-political realities of our environment are extremely tough. Nagas must realise that if we aspire for a particular identity or position in the modern world we have to pay a very high price of all-round growth to match the realities.

5. Nagas must now go to the people of India, not to Delhi. We should be grateful for the understanding and sympathy of friends in the world. But the Indo-Naga problem cannot be solved without the understanding and cooperation of the Indian people. The presence of the Government of India in the land of the Nagas is like the trespassing of an elephant into a garden ignoring the fence. Just talking to the helpless mahout on the elephant is not enough. The tough task is to win the co-operation of the elephant! Going to the people of India will radically change the struggle. It will compel Nagas to think, change their prejudices and fears and grow in every way to match the requirements of the conversation with the people of a great Nation. The interaction will help both sides. The Naga struggle will be healed and restored to the proper course that can lead to an acceptable settlement
6. Nagas can go to the people of India with confidence and authority because the clarifications they made of their position before India became independent are beyond dispute. The people of India are the most important audience we have to reach. Indeed it can be said it is in the hearts and minds of the Nagas and of the Indian people where the solution acceptable to both sides will be worked out. Delhi can come in only after that. The size of the task facing us is as big and as demanding as that if we are looking for a solution that will work.
7. We should now be clear that the true meaning of our goal is really in the purity of the methods and means we adopt to achieve it. We will struggle more effectively and with deepest satisfaction if we will accept this inescapable truth as the heart of the philosophy of our struggle. At this stage of our journey Nagas should pause and examine every conceivable question about ourselves, our weaknesses and our strengths, and choose the course God will bless.

## Assessment of the present political scenario: Where Do We Go from Here?

NBCC Consultations on Situational Analysis, Kohima. 14 June 2000

*Landrum Bolling*, a respected thinker and tireless worker for a just settlement and peace between the Israelis and Palestinians in the Holy Land writes, 'The real issue, significant for everyone, is whether the sterile negative of today's life in the Middle East, by which all men are imperiled, can be converted to a pattern of human cooperation not yet known or seen among men.' He argues that this is not 'sentimental nonsense... if men can believe that there are not hopeless situations, but only hopeless men.' (*Search for Peace in the Middle East*).

This analysis compels us to think. It says converting 'the sterile negative of today's life' in the whole strife-torn Middle East is 'the real issue'. According to him, the wasteland of mind, spirit and imagination needs to be revived first, if workable political solutions are to be found. He goes deep enough to where Arabs and Israelis need to win the same battle together, and in which the world too is made equally responsible.

Our own crisis, though comparatively a much smaller one than the one in the Middle East, is revealing the same reality to us. Unless we deal wholeheartedly with our damaged relationships caused by the barrenness and poverty of our thinking and spirit, our political slogans are cries of futility and worse.

It is clear we too have to make sure we are not hopeless men and women, if we are to strive for something that will work.

Like a journey our struggle has brought us up to where we are and what we are today. We are rightly proud that we did set out on the journey because we believed in it. But there is deep anxiety and doubt in us because the journey has become extremely rough and complicated. We have reached unfamiliar territory. We wonder what lies ahead. We are deeply conscious that the struggle that was launched by our pioneers at enormous sacrifices is now unable to move forward because of our inadequacies of head, heart and experience.

Where have we come and what are we today? We all know the details of the struggle so we do not need to go into them here. I propose that we begin with the following comprehensive assessment:

1. The Naga struggle for freedom has started to destroy itself, and it has

*A Naga Speaks*

also started to destroy the people for whom it was launched. Why?

2. The State of Nagaland has also started to do exactly the same thing. Why? What is the meaning of this destructiveness that has come out of all of us?

Ideologically both the underground struggle and the overground State have become bankrupt and barren. Organisationally and structurally both have become stagnant and inflexible and therefore unworkable and oppressive. They cannot grow or respond correctly to changing realities. Are those running our underground and overground political efforts the only Nagas to blame for these shortcomings? Have we produced such a situation because we Nagas are worse human beings than others? Or are we caught in what is called a 'paradigm shift' in which our thinking is not matching the high requirements of the new situation?

Many communities are facing the same crisis that has been aptly described by Yugoslav thinker Milovan Djilas, 'We live today in tomorrow's world with yesterday's ideas.' The growth in thinking, spirit, responsibility and discipline demanded from all of us is clearly expressed with these few words. If we are casual and selfish today, our children will inherit a society that will be destructive beyond control.

To say that the political struggle for freedom and the State have both become destructive does not mean that the struggle and the State, different forms of our people's effort to go forward, are wrong as such. Or to say that they have become bankrupt, stagnant and unworkable is not a reflection or condemnation of only those who lead and run our underground and overground ventures. This assessment reflects a common truth about all of us as we are today. But we cannot leave it there.

This truth is that something is missing or is seriously inadequate in the human element in the Naga story. That is, all of us. Of course specific individuals have made, and are making, mistakes; some more selfish than others, which have produced the present dangerous situation. But given the same opportunity or position, most of us will make the same mistakes because our understanding of what is required to solve our own problems to survive in the fast changing world is way below the required level. In other words, our philosophy of life is not adequate for the challenges of the new situation. We are just too ignorant to act correctly. That is where our battle is now.

Therefore let there be no misunderstanding of the assessment

*A Naga Speaks*

made here. It is not an accusation of individuals although all are required to change. It is an objective examination of the inadequacies and fallacies in our thinking that have produced our crisis. It holds all of us responsible ultimately although those in positions of power can do the most to bring about changes.

Did the Naga pioneers do the right thing in starting the Naga struggle at all, going as far as the declaration of independence on 14 August 1947? This should be fully discussed so that Nagas find a consensus of the course that they will take from now on. It is quite possible that the beginning was very right, but as usual in all human enterprises, the Naga struggle too went wrong along the way due to human frailties. It is the common story of all Nagas. Let us examine it without fear or any selfish agendas in order that we may decide correctly together for what is right for all.

Nagas made their position clear to the British Simon Commission way back in 1929. It was, to be left alone. The declaration of independence confirming what had been said to the Commission was made before India became independent. So Nagas have always maintained that they are not 'secessionists' or 'anti-national', because they are not trying to secede from, or anti a nation they had agreed to be a part of. So they have fought to uphold their position with the moral authority of an aggrieved neighbour whose legitimate rights have been violated by their stronger neighbour by mistake. The latter understandably sees no alternative to defending the mistake today by denying the facts. Nagas are thus unhampered by any sense that they are guilty of treason against India by choosing to be true to themselves, firmly standing by the facts of the history of their struggle.

The Naga position is that this issue can be settled on the basis of the legal and historical facts of the Naga case without disturbing the territorial integrity of India. Nagas maintain that the facts will reveal that their homeland had ceased to be a part of the new India that became independent on 15 August 1947. Nagas are clear that if theirs is a case of secession their fight is without moral sanction and political and historical validity. But if it is not one of secession it is their duty to convince the people of India about the rightness of their struggle.

This is the main task facing the Nagas today. They maintain that the facts are ignored by the Government of India, and not yet understood by the Indian people. They believe the people of India will understand their position and a settlement that will be just and honourable to both sides is

possible.

Our people have paid a heavy price for daring to attempt to be true to their convictions. Let us be humbly proud of both the attempt and the price paid for it, accepting the latter as natural.

But we soon ran into serious trouble because we had not thought about the tough practical implications of being a people in the world. Our economic thinking was a vague assumption that plenty of foreign aid from somewhere would be forthcoming to enable us to survive. We assumed that our natural resources would meet the costs of development, not bothered by the formidable practical details involved in procuring the resources and selling them to get money in return.

The creation of the State by Delhi to destroy the Naga struggle resulted in the sudden inflow of money. This played a major part in making Nagas to think that money was an easily available commodity for Nagas. All of us have been equally irresponsible and uninformed about the price to be paid to become a people who would be fit to survive in the modern world. I think we are irresponsible and careless not because we want deliberately to be so. But because our awareness of what is required of everyone to take our society forward in a changing, competitive world is still too inadequate.

In the Naga struggle for freedom, our people have been told from the beginning that all that is required of them is to be loyal to the cause and the national fighters. The fighters will bring sovereignty that would solve all our problems. Today the elimination of other factions is openly encouraged to demonstrate loyalty!

Our people have been given too little to do, overground and underground, that would enrich their own lives and make their nation grow. Isn't this creating hell on earth before going to the real one?

Thus lulled into irresponsibility and casualness from both sides of Naga politics, Nagas have become a waiting, expecting, demanding, complaining people who do not think they have to solve their own problems. So we have naturally become an unleadable and ungovernable people waiting to be served. And we have come to think that if leaders exploit the greed and weaknesses of their people for their own cheap success and instant gratification, it is normal politics. The result is our politics is devoid of the kind of bold and imaginative statesmanship needed for our very complicated crisis.

Isak, Muivah, Khaplang and Adinno, all have their high impeccable

*A Naga Speaks*



political slogans and manifestos for Naga sovereignty. The majority of Nagas do share a deep belief that the basic aspirations of nationhood, which produced the Naga struggle, are crucially important for the Nagas. They of course long for their land to be a republic, and they believe they have a case that is legally and politically unchallengeable, as clarified earlier. They understand the reasons why India has ruled over them but they are clear that a political settlement that will be acceptable to them also is yet to be achieved.

But Nagas now agree that the struggle for freedom as the IM, K and Adinno groups are waging it has become too destructive for the Nagas. The nature of our crisis is such it will be equally destructive if any other leaders lead it. Their slogans are for the highest Naga goals. But the 'freedom struggle' activities of the different national fighters have made the public to think that the leaders of the groups have lost control of their followers. Or they and their followers think the Naga public should not question them in any way but simply pay their taxes and give anything else as demanded.

The public has become cynical and bitter because the wrong use of a good deal of the funds collected by force has become well known. It is now said that the national workers are no longer after freedom, but after money and property and instant enjoyment of the lifestyle of the elite and the rich of our society today. This is tragic and dangerous because our people do deeply cherish the aspirations for which the Naga struggle was launched.

The question is how much longer can the Naga struggle survive if three of its four factions collect taxes by force from an already worn-out and frustrated people? What about the people's survival? Is this not manifestation of our unexamined bankruptcy - mental, moral and spiritual, therefore our politics and what we grandly call our economy destructive, our religion heaven-obsessed but out of touch with the realities God wrestles with on earth?

I am conscious that what I am saying is risky if misinterpreted. But I believe, as in a surgical operation, we need to go deep enough to the roots of the disease for healing. And let us be absolutely clear if we go deep and far enough, we will find we are all responsible for the disease that threatens to overwhelm us.

What we have said about the Naga struggle can be said about the State government also. The illegal commissions and cuts that have to be paid to Ministers, and civil servants from top to bottom, to get things done,

***A Naga Speaks***



so like the underground methods, are accepted as 'the way things are done in Nagaland'. The passion with which elections are fought and jobs are sought is not, by and large, for selfless service to develop our people, but for the quick gains that come with elective posts and employment in the bureaucracy. Added to these are the arbitrary transfers with posts through nepotism or blackmail.

There are some individual civil servants, some well-known, others quietly doing their duties unseen, who do fight to be true Christians in all their dealings. They faithfully adhere to Solzhenitsyn's example and teaching, 'The lie may come into the world and even dominate it, but not through me.' They shine like candles in our darkness, proving it is possible to be truthful; and inspiring others to think and give leadership like them.

The dismal picture given above is not about the present administration only. For although the present administration's shortcomings and scandals are well known, the legacy of unsolved problems it inherited from previous years cannot be denied. But we have to now go beyond repetition of condemnations to bold decisions to change our wrong ways that have helped to create the present despair of our people. A hunger for adventure quickened by rebirth of vision and imagination will produce unexpected wonders of enthusiasm to transform our crisis.

A special word should be said to our brothers and sisters in the Naga struggle for freedom. When we discuss their failures, we acknowledge to those who are sincere that they are where they are because of our common feeling for our aspirations. We are too often hypocritical and deceitful. We condemn their wrong methods of fighting for Naga goals, but we hide or justify the wrong methods we adopt without hesitation for our own success and instant enrichment. Many of us want them to sacrifice everything to keep the struggle alive because the story that Nagas are still fighting for their political convictions deeply stirs our self-esteem and gives substance and shape to our identity as a people. Their fight makes others talk about Nagas and we enjoy the admiration without paying the price for it.

Our prolonged crisis has resulted in both overground and underground leaders and operators of diverse kinds becoming rich virtually overnight out of the money from Delhi for law and order and development. It is only God and those who have abused their positions and grabbed what should not be theirs who know where the bulk of the money

has gone. Whether overground or underground, can we honestly measure ourselves by this well-known Indian saying, 'He who takes more out of society than gives to it is a thief!'

I would like to call what we are trying to do in these NBCC-sponsored consultations as 'spiritual breathing', because we are putting into words what we feel about the survival of our society. Because of fear, or sheer laziness and irresponsibility or dislike of facing reality we have not thought adequately and spoken out clearly. I believe speaking out truthfully about our crisis with the intention of doing something to answer it is spiritual breathing. A total process involving our soul, mind, heart, conscience and imagination.

At first the pain and awkwardness will be difficult because the exercise is most likely to be unfamiliar to all of us. We will feel 'poor in spirit'. But if we do it with purpose and determination it will lead us to 'bedrock insights that transcend hatred and mistrust', because at some depth of our crisis we are all equally helpless, all equally at a loss as to how to do what needs to be done.

### **Where Do We Go From Here?**

This will be an annoying question for those who feel Nagas need not go beyond where we are today; and a meaningless one for those who have not bothered to consider it at all. But it is the most important question for those who take the long-term view that Nagas must not lightly treat or undervalue a struggle that a clear majority of our people have waged at immense sacrifice. Nagas must now objectively examine the experiences of the past decades and learn from the inevitable mistakes made. This will enable our people to choose the right course together with surer understanding and compassion gained from 'the burdens and the lessons' of the struggle.

We are unable to go forward to anything without the healing of the wounds we have inflicted on one another, and the rebirth of the common sense of peoplehood that launched the Nagas on their journey. Our aspirations are genuine and they are important for our steady growth into the future. We have naturally shouted our high political aspirations, but we have underestimated our serious limitations as a people only just at the beginning of our journey.

We have not understood that the fragile internal relationships

of our very young Naga family cannot stand brutal shocks of inter-tribal wounding beyond a certain point. Reckless liquidations and manipulations have made Nagas too distrustful of one another because hidden factional, party or tribal agendas are suspected. Our hearts have grown icy-cold and even vengeful. This is not the way a people can develop in a merciless world. There is a high moral and spiritual price we have to pay if we are to reach our goals.

Everyone has a part to play to steer our society away from its suicidal course. Here is a very practical and effective way to start. Identify and write down the things I have done or failed to do for which I am unhappy or regret. What will emerge from this 'experiment with truth' are the things God is waiting for me to look at. They are the things that keep Him and others out of my life.

*The dearest idol I have known,  
Whate'er that idol be:  
Help me to tear it from Thy throne,  
And worship only Thee.*

What is the thing I justify, defend and refuse to surrender to the Cross? But if in true humility I simply obey, as God guides me, my soul will come alive again. (Isaiah 55:3) And I will start to change and thus help in changing our present situation. Most may reject this as foolish simple-mindedness. It is simple and even foolish if by cleverly putting the blame on others and accepting no responsibility, our problems are solved.

But starting the change in oneself brings in something new because our honesty opens the way for God to enter our crisis. Without Him we cannot change our crisis. But without our obedience He cannot do anything either. Human wisdom may belittle it, but as far as God is concerned, I can make no better contribution for the building of His society than my truthful obedience. That is why it is said,

*When man listens. God speaks;  
When man obeys. God acts;  
And when men change, nations change.*

Most of us hold the view that our 'small' acts of obedience will not make any difference because we are not VIPs in politics, the bureaucracy or public life. It is true just being obedient or 'good' without any conscious commitment to be used by God to build a just society or His Kingdom on

earth may produce nothing constructive. But if we will humbly say to God, 'Here am I, change me and use me,' He immediately starts to use us in ways we cannot imagine because He is the builder without whom we build in vain, but with whom nothing is impossible.

G K Chesterton said, 'Christianity has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found to be difficult and left untried.' Does this explain why we say what we do or don't do is not important? We are interested in going to a Kingdom in Heaven built by Him for us to enjoy. He is more interested in our giving our best in cooperating with him to build His Kingdom right here on earth, overground or underground?

It is not the mere population increase of Christians that is meant here, but the quality of obedience and imitation of Christ in Christians.

Now the political question of where do we go from here. I believe the most urgent thing to be done at this juncture has been initiated by the Naga People's Movement for Human Rights. 67 Nagas under the aegis of NPMHR went to Delhi at the end of last January to start a 'Journey of Conscience, a people-to-people conversation with the people of India.' Those who came on the journey and Nagas in Delhi conducted a prayer at Gandhiji's Rajghat Memorial on January 30th, the day he was killed, to make the symbolic start of the conversation with the people of India. The prayer was for all who have been killed or have suffered, Nagas and Indians, because of the conflict in Nagaland. They referred to the 'gift of a lasting relationship with the people of India' that the Mahatma had given to the Nagas by the sensitive understanding he had shown when Naga leaders had seen him in Delhi just before he was killed.

The Nagas on the yatra expressed recognition that Nagas had erred in failing all these years to reach out to the people of India, the most important audience without whose understanding the Naga case cannot be satisfactorily settled. They stated their confidence that recognition of the political rights of the Nagas by the Indian people would open the way for the finding of a settlement that would be acceptable to both sides.

This bold and imaginative initiative by today's Nagas has made the people of India, those they met, equally responsible for the Indo-Naga issue and extended the battleground beyond the narrow confines of Nagaland to the whole of India. Another most significant shift has taken place. The journey of conscience compels the heart and conscience of every Naga to also become a part of the battleground.

In the long run, the moral, ethical and spiritual validity of the Naga case will be won or lost in what Nagas will choose to worship in their hearts. Guns, bombs and money cannot take us further. The decisive battle now is to demonstrate that we can solve our problems and grow together by the adequacy of our thinking and living. In other words start to become today what we dream of becoming tomorrow. In accepting this challenge our bankruptcy of purpose will be ended.

We face the practical question of what do we negotiate with India for a settlement. The NSCN (IM) deserves the fullest credit for the ceasefire they achieved with the Government of India. Their insistence that they alone should talk with Delhi is understandable. But it is unrealistic because it ignores the fierce inter-tribal divisions that have come to control Naga politics and society today. Thus left out of the process, the other factions can afford to be adamant that nothing less than sovereignty can be the stand of the Nagas.

The IM leadership confronts a Government that simply cannot touch the issue of sovereignty. No government in Delhi will ever be powerful enough to do this. So what is it that Isak and Muivah can negotiate with Delhi? It is not known. Our urgent need is for our conflicting factions to come together and evolve a realistic consensus proposal all can support for negotiation with Delhi.

Speaking strictly as an individual, I believe Nagas will have to agree to negotiate for an interim settlement that postpones discussion of the issues of Naga sovereignty and India's territorial integrity to a mutually agreed future time. If this interim settlement gives sufficient recognition to the political rights of the Nagas, their nationality and the validity of their historic struggle, Nagas may start to perceive that keeping the territorial integrity of India undisturbed will turn out to be the best guarantee of their future as a people. This could lead to a final settlement. For Delhi to foist another unworkable Accord or Agreement on Nagas will be to destroy them by exploiting their weaknesses. But the solution may cost India too dearly in the long run.

The only option that Delhi can respond to will be the one that the Indian people can call upon their Government to consider. A proposal for an interim settlement is such an option in so far as there is really no other plan that both sides can accept to even discuss. Are we not facing a new opportunity to correctly settle our central problem on the best possible terms in the vastly changed times we have reached in the new century?

### *A Naga Speaks*

The ball is therefore clearly in the Naga court. It is difficult for any of the rival factions to propose the next steps. The IM leadership is in the unenviable position of having to propose terms for negotiating for a settlement. Its position is extra sensitive. If it proposes for any settlement other than for sovereignty, the earlier charge by Khaplang will be vindicated and the Federal group will be rehabilitated after being over humiliated for Shillong Accord.

The Naga public is asking the IM leadership to simply propose what they consider to be the best terms for the Nagas now and to call upon the others to take a common stand by pardoning their past excesses. Their transparency will win the public and it will challenge the other factions to respond with magnanimity if they are wise. It boils down to our leaders to show understanding to one another and respond to the rare opportunity with boldness and statesmanship.

Our worst mistakes and failures, and our most difficult relationships and regrets will become our common strength and wealth if the finding and fulfillment of God's plan for all becomes more important to us than defending our errors.

### **The Naga Logjam or Paralysis: What is killing the Ceasefire?**

2000

*T*he talks between Nagas and Delhi have come to an ominous standstill. The tantalising ceasefire has turned treacherously misleading. It is now swallowing up the talks and the hope it had stirred alive when it was first declared in 1997.

Many know the terrible curse in Coleridge's poem, *The Ancient Mariner*. The ancient sailor ungratefully killed the great seabird, an albatross, which had followed the ship and brought blessings to its crew. Soon a curse descended and changed everything. The breeze ceased to blow in the silent sea. Nothing stirred, all signs of life had vanished, the ship stood still like a ghost. The awful curse ended only when the sailor, now penitent, was sorry for his wanton cruelty. Love of living things returned and 'A spring of love gushed' in his heart. He could pray again.

We need to discern the curse we have brought upon ourselves. God grant us the wisdom and grace needed to go far enough to one another.

*A Naga Speaks*

To understand one group or faction alone is not responsible. We have all contributed our shares if we are honest.

From the appeals made by virtually all sections of the Naga public to the IM leadership not to walk out of the ceasefire, it is clear we all want something positive to come out of the talks. It is also clear that whatever our political views, all Nagas agree peace, stability and development will be possible only by a settlement that fully involves the fighters of the Naga struggle. The ceasefire is nearing the end of its fourth year now. But it has been fruitless because the talks have not yet gone beyond formal statements that do not touch the key issues.

Like an overlooked and broken-down vehicle, the much-touted talks are again unable to proceed further. The same thing eventually happened with the earlier ceasefire of 1964. We all know how that ceasefire also promised much but came to a disastrous end.

Something has to be done so that there will be progress. When we examine what it is that has to be done, we quickly find ourselves facing the whole question of the Naga struggle that has become like the painted, doomed ship that is no longer moving because the painted ocean is without wind or breeze to move and without rain to keep the sailors alive.

So the real problem in our case is made up of two related problems. The first is the curse that has brought our ship to a deadly standstill. First let us deal with the curse, then the ship.

I believe the curse is the vengeful resentment and hate that has steadily accumulated in the Naga story. This destructive force has come to control our politics and poisoned all our inter-tribal relationships and produced the situation we have today. We now need to admit what we know deep down to be the real problem and attempt to do together what needs to be done. No one or no group can do it alone.

Genesis 4 tells us how far God went to battle for the soul and character of Cain, the son of Adam and Eve. God came and asked, 'Cain, why are you unhappy?' God told Cain to trust in his justice and fairness and challenged Cain to simply admit he could have given a better offering to God and to be glad his brother did a better job, which God preferred. Cain was warned that if he justified and defended his unsatisfactory performance, it would lead to worse sins. He was told to overcome sin, waiting like an animal to devour him. The challenge was for complete truthfulness and transparency indicating how much God expects from any



person made in His image.

We know Cain was mad with jealousy and anger towards his brother Abel. And he justified his attitude. God asked the question because He wanted Cain to put into words what he really felt and desired to do, so that he might give himself the chance of rejecting the wrong he was tempted to do. We all know that our pride and selfishness, Satan's best weapons for controlling us, are instantly exposed and weakened if we simply say why we want to do something that is wrong.

If we are truthful and willing enough, our pride and selfishness are crucified, not just wounded, and we experience liberation and salvation. It would be correct to say that with His question to Cain, God inaugurated His eternal battle for the human race to be truthful. Was it not also the beginning of psychotherapy? Ever since that question about unhappiness or loss of peace of mind, human beings have always known whenever they have gone wrong despite their denials.

I find God's question to Cain most challenging and hope giving because if I let Him, I know God speaks to me also most clearly where I am unhappy or regretful, angry and resentful. If I obey, then what divides me most from God becomes my strongest link with Him and God is enabled to enter my society through me.

Cain rejected the path of truthfulness and committed the first murder in the human story. He chose to exercise his human right to be jealous and destructive and rejected his higher human right to be free by being transparent and accept correction to do the best he was capable of, as God expected of him. The path he chose was to be unappreciative, self-centered, intolerant and vicious. It became the accepted human way of dealing with one another when our pride is crossed. Lamech, Cain's descendant a few generations later on, killed a man and a young man simply because they hurt or annoyed him. He justified slavery to his pride and selfishness, the strongest human temptation ever since.

The magnificent Naga political struggle has fragmented into four factions. All of them declare the same goals and slogans. Three of them are heavily armed. The guns purchased out of the high taxes the public pay have been used for reckless inter-factional eliminations showing little concern for consequences.

The fourth, the NNC (Merhepfü), the smallest and cleanest, has chosen a low-profile existence. Its members do not collect taxes, God



bless them, as they do not believe guns and bombs will take the Nagas anywhere. Though presently marginalised its members are some of the most respected senior veterans of the Naga struggle. Their credentials for sacrifices made for their people are second to none. Theirs is the 'cry in the wilderness', which they believe must prevail one day. The fifth Naga group, an offshoot of the Naga struggle, runs the State of Nagaland. A similar group is a strong participant in the overground politics of Manipur.

Whichever groups we belong to, we all pray to the same God for the victory of the Nagas, which of course means our particular group!

If the God we talk so much about is more than a harmless, sentimental Santa Claus, He surely must be asking what He asked Cain! And if He is the God who sent His Son to the world to build His kingdom 'on earth as it is in heaven', will He have nothing to say about the way we conduct our politics?

How many times I ask myself what God must have asked Phizo, General Kaito. Kughato Sūkhai, Ramyo Zimik. Keviyalie Metha and Zashei Huire? Could He, in whom they all believed, have asked each one of them anything less than 'What is disturbing you which I can see on your face?' And is he not putting the same question to our leaders who are still with us? Isak Swu, Th Muivah, Khodao Yanthan, S S Khaplang, Adinno and her colleagues, Biseto, Thinoselie, and S C Jamir. The list can go on to include Hokishe, Jasokie, Chiten Jamir, Rev Mhiasi, Scato Swu, Raising, General Atem, Kitovi, and countless others who have done things in the name of their people. Indeed all of us, because He loves and regards every one of us as equally responsible for the right thing to be done. There is no question or room for condemning any one here. But none of us can say God has not told us to do or not to do something to help His way, not ours, to win.

In linking the above question to our leaders, am I condemning any one of them? I am clear I am not. When you put yourself in their positions and consider what they must wrestle with, you understand why and how our politics has become so dangerous and difficult and you sympathise with them instead of judge them. You know you would have made the same mistakes or worse.

We are so 'wonderfully and fearfully made' that our conscience and soul are disturbed when they sense something is not right or should be done differently. Our peace and confidence is restored when we respond truthfully. This extraordinary sensitivity is God's most precious gift to us because He guides us through it to build His kingdom on earth. I believe the

malignant curse suggested earlier, poisoning our politics and society, has come upon us because we have not taken God's whispers to us seriously or we have deliberately silenced them. Our common sin is in our failure to sensitively and compassionately help or inspire one another to listen to the whispers and obey them. This is really the only way to build the just society that works!

Instead of paying attention to God's very personal and privileged questions to us about our regrets and anger and despair, and answering them truthfully, we have shouted that others should admit their regrets and failures. This has resulted in inner despair and hatred of others and ourselves because others and we know we are not open. Are we surprised our politics has become corrupt, petty, cynical and murderous?

The present ceasefire is caught in a tight logjam created largely by the things that have wounded and divided us that we are not prepared to discuss. And our refusal or inability to go far and deep enough to the point where we acknowledge our mistakes and regrets, has prevented creative search for solutions that can work. The mistakes, if analyzed, can become our common strength for the journey ahead. But if they are buried because reputations of individuals are more important than the truth, they become like Claymore landmines that keep people apart. The curse has grown out of the buried truths. That is why it is so powerful. Is it not the inevitable result of our rejoicing more in the iniquity of others instead of in the healing truth for all of us?

We have to go back to identify where and how things went wrong in order to address today's stalemate. Nagas fought the Indian Army with all that they could muster to simply uphold the choice they had made for independence. Their declaration of independence was made one day ahead of India because Delhi's attempt to manipulate them over the Hydari - Naga Agreement had taught them to be abundantly wise and correct. Their people, especially the villagers, bore the horrible brunt of the brutal excesses the Indian Army soon unleashed to terrorise the Nagas into giving up the struggle they had launched to maintain their stand that they were not part of India before the British came.

The moral authority with which Nagas fought came from the fact that they had no sense of guilt for their stand. They could not be accused of being secessionists because they had made clear from 1929 onward that once the British who invaded their land decided to leave, Nagas claimed the right to decide their own future. The legal and historical validity of the

Naga political position is the crux of the Indo-Naga dispute. It is an issue of honour on which most Nagas will agree. They regard themselves as India's legitimate neighbours who had chosen to be true to their history as understood by them based on the facts most important to them.

A few educated Nagas, although they shared the same emotional pulls with their people, genuinely doubted the wisdom of going as far as independence because they understood the gigantic practical implications involved. There were others who opposed the fight for independence because the unprecedented prospects of instant success and personal enrichment naturally made much more sense to them than some romantic notions of Naga nationhood in the distant future. Perhaps for some, sheer personal reactions against A Z Phizo's passionate zeal and total commitment, which left no Naga village unstirred, may have decided their stand.

But without doubt, a clear, indeed overwhelming, majority of the Nagas opted for the path of struggle for achieving sovereign nationhood. To be fair to those who opposed them, the fighters for Naga freedom too craved for success and wealth as much as those who opted for Statehood. The difference was that they wanted to be powerful and rich in an independent Naga republic. The motivation was the same.

The initial unity of those who rose and fought for the high Naga goal was awe-inspiring. The dormant, rudimentary sense of being a people linked together only by some instinctive, incoherent feelings of being an interrelated community became articulate and directed towards a common goal. The organised struggle to achieve recognition as a nation rose splendidly like a well-launched rocket into the sky. The sight dazzled and stirred Nagas to a new consciousness of their evolving identity that they had not experienced before. It was their finest hour, whatever misfortunes were to follow soon.

It would be true to say we have all asked all possible questions about the Naga struggle. I am fully conscious that the limited powers of my mind can give only inadequate conclusions. I believe our elders did the right thing when they took the stand that was most natural to them on the basis of their history. To have suppressed our deepest beliefs and convictions about ourselves would have produced long-term damage to our character and development as a people. It was most important we started as we did, by being true to ourselves whatever the cost might turn out to be.

### *A Naga Speaks*

But life in a changing world calls for much more than doing the natural thing, important as that is to start with.

The Naga struggle, as with all such struggles, soon ran into tough philosophical, moral and spiritual questions, not to speak of the ever-present economic realities. The Naga rocket was launched well. It had to be launched under the circumstances of the day. But we had not given sufficient thought to how it was to be kept in orbit. We soon found we lacked the needed experience and resources to keep our rocket orbiting at the right height.

The toughest question was, and is, the doctrine of ends and means. This doctrine states the unchangeable eternal principle that the wrongs in the methods we adopt to achieve our goal destroy the goal and us sooner or later, even if the goal is good and noble. This doctrine of truthfulness is the ultimate test of all human enterprises, politics being the most significant of all because that is where God and Satan both call upon us to help them build their respective kingdoms, of heaven or hell on earth.

What we have experienced so far is that if we worship our goals and follow our own ways to achieve them, ignoring or rejecting God's guidance, wisdom and plan, our politics becomes futile and unbearably destructive. The indisputable truth that has emerged from our half century of struggle is surely that following our human wisdom alone results in our inevitable rejection and destruction of one another, and our aspirations quickly turn to ashes and nightmares. Both our underground and overground attempts to take our people forward have confirmed this truth of politics and history.

From all that we have tried and failed we have no alternative left but to attempt the highest and most civilised and reliable option of politics. It is to search with God and one another what is really right for us, and all who are affected by what we desire to achieve.

The strongest objection to this proposition can be expected from our political leaders underground and overground. It may be condemned as excessive naivety and simple-minded theorising ignoring the harsh realities of politics. But the reply to these possible charges is that for a people like us who are still at the very beginning of our journey, and therefore still too centered on our tribal agendas, to continue our old ways is to commit joint suicide.

Given our intense distrust of one another and the shocks we have inflicted on one another already in the course of our joint struggle thus far,

any goal or idea that is less than what is right for all will lead us to disaster.

But is not the logjam that has brought the talks to a standstill largely our own creation? The fruit of our accumulated wrongs, of commissions and omissions, our unexamined inadequacies and shortcomings and the damaged relationships within the young Naga family.

It is therefore a waste of time and energy, and not strictly truthful, to blame Delhi for this fatal logjam. That Delhi exploits our tragic dividedness to weaken and destroy the Naga struggle is another matter. But that should not surprise us. After all, salaried bureaucrats who run governments, with rare exceptions, do not think beyond quick results. We have to realise that the political leadership is yet to give serious attention to the reasons why we have fought for so long.

The dirty killing of the three Zeliangrong youth in Haflong by the Security Forces the day after the NSF Conference ended shows cold-blooded implementation of a cynical strategy in which human beings rate very low. It is not worthy of the India we would like to talk to for a just settlement. But it is the India that officially deals with us as a problem to be solved to protect India's interests. It will continue if we do not tackle our share in the logjam.

Our crisis now demands that we objectively look at what we know deep down to be the central issue and attempt to spell out what needs to be done.

But some may say why bring up the ugly things beneath the surface when Nagas now know money will keep coming from Delhi and that's all that should matter to a people? And the Naga political movement shows signs of being a spent force with its ageing respected leaders deeply divided, and an embarrassing number of the new leaders have shown they are not different from some of the overground leaders they call traitors?

They have sold their souls and their moral authority by their shameless stealing of the money collected in the name of the Naga struggle. They have shown no hesitation to misuse their guns acquired for the struggle at immense cost to the public and take advantage of the crisis.

All this is true. However, a people's struggle like ours is not something like an old bus or ship that can be abandoned by the passengers who can just get on another bus or ship and continue the journey undisturbed as if nothing serious had happened. Something that has engaged our deepest convictions and emotions and cost us so dearly has to

be truthfully and responsibly understood and made our common strength for the journey ahead. Let us be clear we will not be able to survive the consequences of the mistakes made so far if they are not recognised and put right now.

Some will say the struggle shouldn't have been started at all, or that it took on too much to achieve. The vast majority of Nagas do feel our elders did the right thing. I belong to this group. But all will agree that the undergrounders and those who opposed them have made serious mistakes of judgment, of deliberate malice and selfishness, and of inadequate thinking. Of course we the people have thought mainly in terms of what we can get from our leaders and self-righteously criticised them when things have gone wrong without accepting any responsibility ourselves to make sure the wrongs were avoided.

It should be said when we talk of the Naga struggle we have now reached the point where the overground political process in the different Naga-inhabited States has also to be regarded as part of the same struggle in so far as it involves Nagas.

Many realities we think not important are causing the logjam. We cannot ignore them for we are told God and the Devil are in the details.

### Leave No Group Out

*T*he Naga struggle tells the story of the Nagas trying to become a nation inspired by a common vision. All Nagas can be grateful and justly proud for what the struggle has achieved for them.

Yet the Naga struggle too is no stranger to the painful differences and mistakes that always occur in all struggles for aspirations. Our urgent need is to restore the health of our struggle and our people. The way to do this is healing our differences through bold transparency about our own mistakes and wrongs, instead of complaining about others.

The Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee acknowledged in Kohima last October the uniqueness of the Naga story and that mistakes had been made in responding to the Naga struggle. His statesmanship has created a breakthrough in Indo-Naga relations and the present talks. His bold leadership is worthy of India's age and stature.

### *A Naga Speaks*

At this time we pay our highest tributes to all the visionary Naga pioneers. They dared to be true to themselves and our history and launched the Naga struggle without counting the cost. We pay the same tributes to those who have carried it forward to its present stage with equal courage, dedication and matchless ability. Genuine differences have divided the national workers. But Nagas honour all who have fought sacrificially without exploiting the Naga cause to benefit themselves. As for those who are doing so by collecting money by force and fraud, they must know they are the worst oppressors of their people.

Some had the privilege to start the struggle Nagas are deeply proud of. Others coming after them have sustained and widened it and taken it to new heights. Have not both groups played their parts as planned by God? By appreciating and honouring one another with generous understanding and compassion will any side lose anything worthwhile? If with God's grace they will do so, Nagas will build a new future together. Should they choose to do less, their wounded and unhealed legacy will prove to be a curse, not a blessing, for the Nagas of tomorrow.

The need and longing of our people for peace, justice and stability is a sacred mandate with immense power for good. All Nagas are praying that their leaders will help one another to cooperate and use the mandate to evolve a just, honourable and acceptable settlement of the Indo-Naga problem. Let their people and God bless them for their wisdom and courage. Leave no group out at this stage.

### **Sanity from Tungjoy**

*Nagaland Post* . 20 September 2002

*I*t was my good fortune to stay overnight at Tungjoy again. The Barak flowing quietly below the village to distant climes and to the sea stirs the imagination. The sweeping view of the valley and horizons from this great Poumai village does something to you.

I have come for the reconciliation and peace process awareness programme conducted by UNCM at Tadubi at the end of August.

My host took me to call on Sani Darhü: the senior Naga leader now aged 74. As a veteran of the Naga struggle and also a survivor of a near fatal illness, which almost claimed his life, his reminiscences are many and rich

***A Naga Speaks***



and his conclusions calm and straightforward.

He was one of those who signed the Shillong Accord. What Mr. Darhü said and what according to him should happen now struck me as being highly significant and constructive. I wrote down what he said. If my English version of what he said in Angami is incorrect on any point I am prepared to be corrected by him. I have tried my best to stick to his words and thoughts.

He said the following: 'Shillong Accord could never be the final solution because it was not our choice or plan. But signing it was the only way to respond to the situation as it was then. I am clear about this. All other areas had surrendered to the extremely severe repression the Indian army had unleashed on our people.

'Nagaland state government ruled by our own people issued an order that was designed to strangle our struggle. The house of every national worker in every village was marked out by a red flag by day and a lantern by night. If the member fighting or working for the Naga struggle was not brought and surrendered to the government, the punishment meted out to the family was left to the discretion of the security forces.

'India used brute force to terrorize our people to break their spirit. The Indian people should be ashamed of what their government did. The state and those Nagas who had surrendered helped to fully implement the order. Our people were too tired. We could not let them continue to bear the excessive burden any longer. We signed the Accord not seeing any other way. We did it for the good of our people at the height of the crisis.

'When the Government of India realized that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Clause of the Accord gave an unintended small opening for the Nagas, the government did everything to destroy that opening. We were pushed to the wall.

'Three times, in 1977 and 1978, Keviyallay, Ramyo, myself and others went to Pangsha to talk to our fellow national leaders, Isak, Muivah, Khaplang and those with them. But no meetings took place. Our struggle had been seriously weakened by the surrenders that had already taken place in most areas, the formation of the Revolutionary Government caused by deep resentments and inter-tribal rivalry and the clash of personalities among leaders.

'Our motives for trying to meet were perhaps understandably suspected because ill will and distrust among those still continuing the struggle had destroyed communication. Indian intelligence and some



people in state government, I have no doubt, did everything to finish the Naga struggle by deepening our divisions. They succeeded because defeating one another became our main thinking. Before the Accord, the Indian army operations made it too difficult for us to meet. After the Accord the suspicions prevented us from meeting.

‘At the Transit camp in Kohima serious discussions took place to reject the Accord. But some refused, so it was not done. I felt deeply unhappy and uneasy watching personal vendettas becoming more important than the larger cause of the Nagas. In my view each side suspected the worst of the other side and did not sincerely try to remove the suspicions. There were strong reasons for suspicions on both sides because both sides began to pursue hidden plans not openly declared. So the right course at that time was not found. Then the People’s Militia was formed by our side. It was one of the greatest mistakes in the Naga struggle. I was not consulted. I totally disagreed with the idea. So I returned to my village in 1985 knowing it had become pointless for me to stay on.

‘Serious wrongs have been done by both sides. The NSCN (IM) has committed excesses to defeat their rivals. But we are also responsible for what has gone wrong.

‘What they have achieved must be recognized now whatever our feelings. The new ceasefire and the ongoing talks with India are real achievements. Facts must be acknowledged. Let them now be generous, farsighted and honest with the Nagas and bring a settlement that can be supported by all Nagas.

‘Let them not waste this great opportunity by being small-minded and ignoring the reality of what others deeply feel. Let them show wisdom and farsightedness. They must know that Nagas know why they have condemned and killed others so far. But Nagas will forgive if their approach is right. Let them be straightforward.’

I asked if what he had said could be made known publicly. He said, ‘Yes, I want our people to know my sincere appeal. This is my prayer and highest expectation from our leaders now. I am now past taking sides. I am now living with gratitude for God’s goodness to me and my family. I pray our leaders will not fail us.’

I believe Darhü has shown the best way for Nagas to go forward together at this time. One of our seniormost veterans has called for everyone to change for the highest good of all Nagas. His openness about

how things went wrong and how they can be made right, and his appeal for statesmanship and sanity from Tungjoy, we need it so urgently at this time.

### **To Heal and Restore the Naga Story**

Talk given at the NNC General Session in Jotsoma on Plebiscite Day.

16 May 2003

*I* thank President I. Panger Walling, and General Secretary Vizosielhoü Nagi, for inviting me. Some of the most respected leaders of the Naga struggle are present at this gathering - women and men who have given the best years of your lives, risking everything dear to you, including life, for your deepest beliefs for the Nagas. You and your many comrades who have died, or are absent today because of differences, have given us the Naga struggle to take our people forward. We naturally think of Zasibito, Kruzhalie, Rivilie and Vilekho, mentioning only a few from this heroic village. We also think of Phizo, Imkongmeren, Thongti, Kughato Sukhai, Zashei Huire, Lungleuheng, Wheha, Khodao, and so many others I am unable to mention here. All are remembered with deepest appreciation and affection.

I am conscious of both your trust in inviting me to say something today and my inadequacy to match the occasion. I welcome the opportunity to express my views as one who too has tried to care for our people according to values I have decided to live by.

Plebiscite Day is a very appropriate occasion to examine and reflect on the Nagas and their struggle. A friend told me recently, 'We do not need to discuss and debate about the past. We all know the facts of the struggle from the beginning to this day. Our problem is how to deal with yesterday and tomorrow. Our struggle is right. But we are afraid to talk honestly together to work out how we are to succeed in a world that has changed so much from what it was when our struggle began. When in doubt about the next step it is not a sign of weakness or defeat to ask the views and thoughts of others to clear the doubts and work out the best way to go forward'. I agree with him.

If our pioneers had counted the cost and failed to act decisively as they did so admirably, our crisis today will be much more complicated. The problems created by trying to be what others say you should be are much

***A Naga Speaks***

more difficult to solve than those created by trying to be what you know you are not.

By stating boldly our political position, as they believed to be right on the basis of our history, the identity of our nationality was established on clear, legal and historical foundations. Therefore, let us be grateful the legacy we have inherited is a sound foundation on which to build our future. What do we want to build on the foundation?

The Naga story too has become a very different story from what it was many years ago when it was virtually invisible. Today, because of the political struggle, which exploded into an all-round upheaval during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Naga story has become complicated, turbulent, threatening and highly visible. And yet the story today is the continuation of the same story that was obscure and silent for many centuries. The impacts of the new realities of India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Burma and our North East region are exposing the serious inadequacies of our philosophy of life.

Nagas have reached a point again when we must not repeat past mistakes. One costly lesson from the past is that, when we face a crisis we must reason together to find out the right next steps forward.

The struggle was at every stage a step into unknown territory. There was no experience from the past to guide our pioneers. Fearless, honest dialogue risking trusting across tribal barriers was not tried. Very often, there was no time to do so. So, as happens in most political struggles trying to make headway under immense pressures, frequently with severely limited resources, instead of honest examination of genuine questions arising from changing realities, the familiar slogans and the goals were repeated and the battle continued. The pressures of the struggle were so intense sufficient thought and time could not be given to the unresolved issues. The error was perhaps underestimated also.

The inevitable result was resentment and distrust, leading to the bitter divisions and blames of today. Of course it is much easier for comfortable analysts like me today to say obvious things from a safe distance. But the mistakes must not be repeated.

The mistakes happened at every important stage of the struggle after the Plebiscite when the Government of India decided to smash the massive movement of the Nagas, using the stick of full military force and the carrot of a Nagaland State that was too hastily created. But whatever

the differences over its creation, the State has become a provisional device needed equally by the Nagas and Delhi pending a satisfactory settlement.

India is not able to erase the Naga movement because the Nagas established the legal, political legitimacy and validity of their case before the British Empire ended or before India became an independent nation. Therefore, the Naga struggle is not a rebellious act of secession punishable under severe specific laws against treason of secession. We know and India knows the legality of our case.

In view of the mistakes of the past made under extraordinary circumstances as stated earlier, the NSCN (IM) consultations, welcoming the fullest, frankest discussions of all views, without any hindrance as I personally experienced, therefore deserve to be appreciated as steps in the right direction. They were organized under equally hazardous circumstances but with greater management competence and much more resources mobilized. Naga Hoho and Church leaders responded by repeatedly calling for the coming together of national workers of all groups to hammer out a common consensus for negotiating an honourable, acceptable settlement to be the next step of the consultations.

Will NSCN (IM) give to this highly potential modality the attention it deserves? If they want, I believe NSCN (IM) will find the way for all Nagas to win with them. Respecting the assessment of most Nagas today, and acting according to it, will make the mandate of the peace process unquestionable.

Could it be that God told the NSCN (IM) leaders to start the consultations? Many Nagas believe He did and are expecting NSCN (IM) to be revolutionary enough to implement the thought, as God wants them to. NSCN (IM)'s cautiousness with such a risky guidance from God is understandable. But it would be a tragic error should they fail to cooperate with God by letting their own strategic and other considerations limit and nullify His guidance for the good of all Nagas.

NSCN (IM) therefore should grasp the initiative at this time. Suppose they were to say to all the other groups, 'We must not and cannot proceed further in the talks with India without all the Naga national workers evolving a common position on the terms for a negotiated settlement based on new realities. We must not have another defective accord or agreement that will divide and weaken us further. Nagas will not underestimate the price we too have paid for what we have achieved for the Naga struggle.

‘We also, like others, need the grace of understanding and forgiveness of those we have hurt, if we are to put right the wrongs we too have committed in the pursuit of the struggle. Come, let us sit down and reason it out together, with readiness to understand and forgive, for the sake of our people. No issue is too big for God and our united goodwill and wisdom to solve’.

I am not saying a settlement should be held up for healing and reconciliation to be achieved first as a precondition. I am saying a settlement without some healing already taking place, which is possible, will be tragic repetition of past mistakes. This must not be misinterpreted to represent a secret agenda to revive NNC/FGN and prevent NSCN (IM) achieving a settlement. I understand the suspicion because my roots are NNC. But the suspicion is a waste of time because I am clear that without healing of hurts all plans are doomed to fail.

I suggest that if we can see the Naga story from history’s and God’s broad perspectives we will see that our mistakes, wrongs and failures, underground and overground, need not divide and weaken us further. They can become our common strength if we decide to show understanding, appreciation and compassion for one another. We will see that, frail like us, others also have made mistakes. If what is right for all Nagas will become more important to us than what suits and benefits us only, putting right our mistakes and wrongs will make sense. Our mistakes and sins are all inter-linked, as Christ showed in the story of the woman taken in adultery.

The Naga family is paralysed by vengeful blames and distrust at a time when our leaders of the different groups should be seriously evolving together a satisfactory consensus on the most fundamental issues for our future instead of using all our energies and resources to pull one another down.

As for resources, how can Nagas support four groups and survive? And how can our businessmen and women begin to develop our pathetic economy when they have to spend most of their time and energy negotiating with the ‘tax-collectors’ and their endless imitators? Our history will tell us, after it is too late, about the shameless destruction of our timber forests by the disgraceful collusion of powerful underground and overground looters.

The truth is we are trying to grow on a largely ‘criminalized economy’ that is also uncontrollably criminalizing. The discovery that an increasing number of our national workers have become as greedy and

***A Naga Speaks***

ruthless as their counterparts in the State Government is a depressing, sobering reality for our people.

The people are apprehensive of an impending disaster that will be all the more tragic because it is preventable if we will sacrifice our narrower concerns so that what is right and best for all Nagas may win. The people therefore want our leaders, to simply sit down to listen to and understand one another with complete openness of heart and mind. The people's prayer is 'Lead us not into your temptations, but deliver us from evil.'

Honest conversations going on among Nagas today reveal a correct, fair, compassionate understanding of the Naga struggle. Despite the sufferings and massive dislocations of lives caused by the struggle, Nagas seem to have concluded with pride and satisfaction, that the struggle was and is an important part of our growth as a people, therefore a priceless achievement. What is equally clear also is that the people have a fair, objective assessment of each leader, underground and overground.

What they have concluded cannot be changed by argument used for tribe, factional and personal advantage and propaganda. And covering up only increases the distrust. Plain transparency is the best policy. It will not surprise or shock the people. They will understand the courage as they have weighed for long and concluded where each leader is right or wrong, truthful or not. The people's appreciation for simple transparency about failures and mistakes will enable reconciliation, healing and unexpected changes to take place.

Because of my own limitations I will surely say things wrongly or incompletely. But I want to discuss how I believe God sees our most difficult divisions. Reconciliation has to be pursued at that level, not at the level that suits our selfishness, fears and prejudices. I believe what I feel in my conscience and soul alone should guide me in the battle for reconciliation.

The surging Naga river ran into serious trouble when mutual distrust and frustration between Angamis and Sumis caused cracks in the hitherto united NNC struggle. The Pochuries, Zeliangrongs, Rengmas and other tribes have rightly expressed resentment that the rivalry between two so-called advanced tribes took precedence over the common Naga struggle for which they had enlisted. They were outraged that they became pawns in the clash of agendas of others. The animosity that developed from unaddressed reactions and hurts on both sides undeniably played a decisive part in the chain of events that followed: The collapse of

### *A Naga Speaks*

the Rounds of Talks following the 1964 cease-fire, the formation and dissolution of the Revolutionary Government and the consequences, the capture of General Mowu and his band of fighters, and Shillong Accord.

The Shillong Accord revealed how unhealed hurts had become festering wounds that poisoned relationships far and wide. The Accord thus led to the splits that fragmented the Naga struggle.

Other tribes are the best judges of their own share in the weakening of the Naga story. God will show them. I venture to speak as an Angami. I am not saying that Angamis will agree with what follows. Perhaps some will. Many who feel they have had no share in the mistakes and errors discussed will be highly annoyed, and rightly so, thinking I have tarred them with the same brush. That is not my intention. Perhaps some of my facts are not correct. I fully expect and am ready to be told by anyone where I am wrong. My assessment is based on what I have heard frequently. I am trying to breathe spiritually, so to speak, to find out if God is disturbing my soul to say something to me to act on.

I thank God for the values and beliefs and ways that have brought the Angamis thus far and enabled us to contribute our humble share to the Naga story. I am justly proud of what our brave pioneers have given. What bothers my conscience is our reluctance to acknowledge our share in what has gone wrong. I am of course not pretending that others are blameless.

I propose that if we think we are less wrong than others, as others too may think about themselves, then let us appropriate our portion with God's help and put things right without excuses so that God may be able to enter our crisis? It may inspire others to tackle their portions! By being truthful and honourable about our failures, the good we may have done will not be erased. God and others will take care of that.

I believe we Angamis need to claim full responsibility for the health of the Naga family by truthfully identifying the places where we could and should have done things differently. Let us start with the points over which we are not happy. As a tribe that has played a pioneering and central role in launching the Naga struggle it is not honourable to only claim the credit and be so silent about our failures and so loud about those of others. Perhaps we think our mistakes are not serious. Others certainly don't think so. God should be the judge.

Supposing with gratitude to God for the role He granted us to play, with the full support readily given by other Nagas, in the launching of the



Naga struggle, we now show readiness to extend our goodwill and support today to those who have taken the struggle forward with admirable commitment, courage and competence? Is that not the best way to claim rightful ownership of the struggle?

Did Phizo give his life to create something to be run by Angamis in perpetuity? Is doing our utmost to prevent others from leading and developing the Naga struggle what we are meant to be doing now? That is the unmistakable message others are getting.

But could that really be God's plan and task for us after all that we have helped to build? Is it right and honourable before God and our people to insist that because we played a key role in planting the Naga tree, only we have the right and privilege to look after the tree? Nagas are now concerned the tree may die because instead of watering and protecting the tree, the gardeners are preventing one another from looking after it.

I am not suggesting we retreat in self-pity and resentment to lick our wounds, real as they are, and not to be treated lightly. I am suggesting that if for us, ensuring the health and growth of the Naga tree becomes more important than our status in the garden, our wounds will be healed and our role and status will be secure. And all Nagas will grow, each giving his or her best.

A Tuensang youth leader gave vent to his anger after some Angamis had insensitively snubbed one of the seniormost Naga leaders from his area. If we can accept with grace what others see in us, which hurt them, we will find liberation and spiritual growth.

Once I had the chance to tell Th Muivah what I thought of Tangkhuls. He listened in silence and nodded. I asked him to tell me what he had to say about Angamis. 'Thank you for what you said about Tangkhuls. Can you take what I have to say?', I said, 'I must, as it would help us.' He was generous and straight: 'The political clarity, courage and convictions of Angami pioneers like Phizo and Sakhrie gave Nagas their unique struggle. We are able to carry it forward today because the legal, political position NNC established long ago cannot be disputed. The Angami contribution cannot be matched. It is the foundation of our struggle.'

'But I find Angamis do not accept the leadership of others. They seem unable to appreciate the sacrifices and contributions of others. They think only Angami leadership is to be trusted and Angamis are right in everything. Aish, you may not understand but it has hurt many of us too

much.'

On another occasion he expressed regret that they who reacted against the wrongs of others had themselves committed serious wrongs and mistakes. He said, 'If the Naga public will tell us fairly where we are wrong and where we are right as well as where our opponents are right and wrong, it will help us to talk with one another.'

What I heard gave me hope because I saw that honest conversation could take us to the all-important painful realities in us. But the road to healing is costly because all parties to a hurt are required to help one another to achieve it. The cost must not deter us.

The Dalai Lama said once, those who tell us the difficult things about us hurt us. But we should welcome what they tell us and regard them as our best teachers. What a wonderful way to disarm one's enemies and turn them into much needed helpers!

Do we regard those who tell us what they see in us anti-Angami? Is that not rejecting an opportunity for nation building? Many Angamis are likely to take the Dalai Lama's advice to enable honest conversations to start, realizing we need to see what others see in us in order to change and grow.

The more the Shillong Accord is sought to be ignored as unimportant or condemned the worse it gets because it was the product of unacknowledged wrongs and suspected motives of Angamis, Sumis and Tangkhuls. If all sides can decide to help one another by acknowledging the facts truthfully, they will bring a healing closure to an issue that has damaged precious Naga relationships for so long. Is it really too much to expect such a gift to come out of their common Christianity and love for Nagas?

Yes the Accord was signed under humiliating duress. It did bring urgently needed relief to countless people in the villages of those who were still fighting the Indian security forces. Many Naga fighters in jails were released. The ending of cruel repression by India was widely welcomed. But it became clear Nagas, would not, and could not accept it. The signatories and their supporters chose not to be straightforward because they saw only the sins of others but failed to see their own. They were naturally bitter. Soldiers of the Revolutionary Government, seeing their predicament as a chance for revenge, gave in to the temptation, and guided Indian soldiers to the remaining hideouts of Naga Army and NNC/FGN. This

deepened the bitterness.

The revenge for past mistakes and grievances was understandable. But as happens with all revenges, instead of answering the wrong, the success of the revenge complicated the wrongs further, breeding more problems. It is so easy to condemn revenge, but unless we acknowledge our undeniable share in it worse wrongs always follow. Does not our lack of passion and conviction to sit down with those we blame, to sort things out truthfully reveal our unwillingness to see where we too provoked others to hurt us? Let us not be too sure we did not.

Trapped in their bitterness, the 'Accordists' seemed to have taken a position where hurting those who had hurt them became more important than the healing and restoration of the struggle they had played such a heroic role to start. If I were in their position I would have been tempted to do as they did. But their counter-revenge has exacted too heavy a price, and they will be causing irreparable damage to themselves and the Nagas unless they now decide to take the high road of statesman/womanship and help break the chain of hate, revenge and sorrow.

The full-scale condemnation of the Accord by NSCN (IM) was not matched by an equal acknowledgement of what the Revolutionary Government soldiers did. The NSCN (IM) was silent on this issue for tactical compulsions. I do think the resentment and distrust the dishonesty produced are more than they have cared to understand.

Because of the unhealed resentments on all sides, the Accord was like a tormented child. It brought the worst out of Nagas. It produced a macabre dance of curse and death and despair, danced to the tune of hate and revenge. It has become a powerful example of how hell is created when we give stone, snake and poisoned drink instead of bread, fish and clean living water to one another. When as an Angami, I look back at what has happened I am unhappy at how we have let a fully understandable, rectifiable error damage the Naga family so greatly for so long because of our bitterness and wounded pride with which I fully identify.

I feel sure Uncle Phizo in heaven is praying that without further delay, those who love him on earth will help open the door to healing and reconciliation by simply acknowledging on his behalf that, whatever the reason, his failure to make a public rejection of the Accord, in the manner he had condemned the cooperation suggestion from Sakhrie, was a regrettable mistake. Can we believe the complicated considerations that run our politics on earth continue in heaven! To believe they do is to believe

*A Naga Speaks*

in a miserable heaven!

Had Uncle Phizo lived longer, and if he had not gone too far away from his people, he might have acknowledged his failures that had caused resentment and distrust. To be fair to him, he ended up in a situation where everything was more likely to go wrong than go right. For very good reasons, he was extremely circumspect in every step he took. But once he was clear, I believe he would have done what was best for the Nagas. Am I projecting such a positive belief for personal reasons? I am prepared to work for reconciliation with this belief because I can understand what his isolation from his people must have done to him.

The uncertainty that had grown prevented Phizo from acting imaginatively as he used to do earlier. This perhaps explains his tragic failure to respond to Isak, Khaplang and Muivah. Perhaps other personal considerations prevailed? After all human beings can err so easily. Many Nagas are therefore pained by the folly of those damaging his secure stature by insisting Phizo made no mistakes. Is it not possible we are forcing something on him he no longer wants or needs?

To his eternal credit, he did not say to the national workers they could collect money even by wrong methods. He stayed firm although he was reduced to severest financial limitations because his people could not collect money in the extremely hard-pressed situation. He obviously concluded that the deepest ancestral and Christian ethical values that had been compromised a great deal already should not be damaged further.

Phizo is no more. If those who have claimed his legacy will do as he in heaven must surely be wishing they will, they would not be damaging or diminishing his historic stature in any way. They will in fact make it stand out all the more. More than that, they will be helping the NSCN (IM) to implement the costly restitutions for reconciliation that they have indicated they will do.

Helping one another to do the best for our people in no way suggests defeat for anyone. It will usher in the kind of politics that will save us at this time. In the situation of deadlock we now have, any other kind of politics will be too costly for the Nagas.

I am painfully conscious I am hurting Adinno and her colleagues by some of the things I have said. It gives me no pleasure but my valuation and respect of their commitment and sacrifice, and the unique role they are meant to play to save us all at this time, does not allow me to say anything

less than what I have said. I pray that ultimately they will understand my intention.

Let me be wrong. It is more important we somehow start to reach out to one another before it is too late. The opportunity before us is for all Nagas who have come to know and accept one another as one family, one people, to learn to value and care for one another. To reject it is to condemn ourselves to stay inside the soul-destroying comfort zone of our tribal narcissism. What opportunity and what danger!

Old Jonah running away from God, in the middle of the raging storm in the sea, said: 'I know it is because of me that this great storm has come upon you.' Rev Yankey Patton, veteran Churchman and passionate patriot once read out this at an NBCC peace committee meeting and said, 'Friends, this is what we have to pray and work for.' How right he is. Imitation of Jonah will simplify our reconciliation battle so much.

I have used the platform of NNC (Panger) to express my deepest convictions for renewal of the Nagas because Nagas believe you are best suited, because your records are the cleanest, to serve as the common bridge for the divided Nagas to use to come to one another again.

My intention is to encourage 'crusading for God in ourselves' first so that hope in dialogue may be born. Will this NNC demonstrate transparency by acknowledging the regrets they feel about some of the points on which they have failed to act? Our human extremity is God's opportunity.



## Reconciliation – I

*The wrong things we have done to one another have produced our  
destructive politics*

Why I Work For Reconciliation	113
Reconciliation Through Healing	117
Reconciliation And The Settlement: What I Believe	124
Reconciliation To Create A Caring Society	129
Peace Building: Its Impact On The Common Man	130

## Why I Work For Reconciliation

2003

*We shall not cease from exploration. And the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started, and know the place for the first time. – T S Eliot*

We are required to first pay the price for transparency, healing, trust, forgiving and being forgiven, making reconciliation possible. Then the fruits we need and want so much are added unto us – unity, peace, settlement, stability, and socio-economic growth. Let us remember the Cross comes before salvation. I am not saying we cannot have settlement or economic development before healing and reconciliation. But the lessons from the creation of the State, the Revolutionary Government and Shillong Accord are too important to be ignored.

I am not presuming others are or should be interested in why I work for reconciliation. But I have concluded I should clarify my position because, by invitation and personal conviction, I am associated with the current efforts by the newly created Naga Hoho led by M. Vero, the Churches and other public bodies to achieve reconciliation.

Nagas started out together in a magnificent manner to struggle for a common aspiration as it had developed from their emerging history. As was to be expected and as happens in all human struggles, we ran into differences. We started to walk separate paths. Today, compelled by changes we cannot avoid, and beckoned by indisputable opportunities, we are considering our different paths converging again. That is why reconciliation has become our common concern.

We find we have no choice but to evolve together a wider common identity that would enable us to cope with the challenges of changes coming to us. It means stepping out of our narrow comfort-zone prejudices and fears that ignite tribalism. We hate the mental, spiritual costs of change and growth that are involved.

That is why the search for reconciliation is such a hazardous venture. It means walking back on the paths we have taken due to our divisions ‘to arrive where we started from’ in the first place. The walk back to our past, which we cannot avoid if we are to have reconciliation, is an inward journey to ourselves and to our common experiences. We see afresh where the landslides of our blunders and mistakes occurred resulting in distrusts, vengeful resentments and divisions.

*A Naga Speaks*





Under the intense pressures of our struggle, we failed to clear up the mistakes that, like rocks and earth brought down by a landslide, had blocked our path. It is easy to condemn the failure, but it is more helpful to show understanding and compassion because the struggle has been most trying for all our people. We need to show greatness of mind and heart to one another, the key to open doors to reconciliation.

The unanimous recognition of our need for reconciliation comes from the painful experiences we have gone through together during the past decades of struggle. It will be correct to say we are surprised and even shocked by what we have done to one another in unfamiliar situations that either threatened us or tempted us. Our consciences are wrestling with disturbing questions.

Therefore reconciliation raises bitter justification, blaming or suspicions because our political divisions are the fruits of the wounds and hurts we have inflicted on one another. We defend our actions or ignore the wounds we have caused which provoke others to retaliate and hurt us. We are determined to avoid our share of the blame because our purpose and meaning of life have not gone beyond what we selfishly want.

Our fear of the cost of transparency, due to our attachment to our prejudices and plans, makes us insist that reconciliation should be on our terms. This demand is irrational and self-defeating because reconciliation is a moral and spiritual fruit which is like an indivisible egg from God. We are not permitted to break it to suit ourselves. If we break it, it ceases to be the egg designed by God for its specific purposes. Like all such eggs, reconciliation is indivisible.

It is not surprising then that reconciliation on the basis of all of us changing where we need to is not popular. Those who call for it are suspected, at worst, of hidden motives, and at best, of political stupidity and simple-mindedness.

The joint reconciliation initiative launched by the Churches and Naga Hoho, so promising at first, has not produced what was expected from it. As the Convenor of Naga Hoho Co-ordination Committee that was closely associated with the launching ceremony, I am acutely conscious of the sense of disappointment felt by the public. A review is called for, not to apportion blame, but to understand the price we have to pay.

Within a day of the launching ceremony on 20 December 2001, like many others I too received an invitation to the first Bangkok



consultation called by NSCN (IM). The IM group had publicly supported the reconciliation process, after trying very hard indeed to stop it. Having concluded that open discussions and dialogue across the table is the first step towards understanding, and appreciating the bold initiative, I went. I saw it as the public helping to build bridges among the factions.

The second Bangkok consultation followed some months later on. I went again. The invitation signed by Gen Retd V S Atem, Convenor, Steering Committee said, 'The political negotiation has entered into a very crucial stage... The time has come for us to seize the initiative to understand one another, to remove distrust, suspicion, and to share feelings so that we can come closer to one another. We value your contribution, your concern and your participation in this peace process. NSCN wants to be founded on truth and reality and we want to hear your opinion and views of the Naga public and NGOs so that we do not make mistakes... so that we will be doing the best for the Nagas and Nagalim.'

At the consultations, Chairman Isak Swu and General Secretary Th Muivah spoke extensively to bring up to date the talk process with India, and giving their assessment of the struggle as seen by them. To their credit, they listened with fullest openness and graciousness to all that was expressed by the participants, some of whom spoke with complete frankness.

As an ordinary Naga citizen, I believe the consultations will be judged as some of the most important initiatives by the IM to include the people in their thinking and strategy. They naturally spoke to win the public to their view and position. That is the legitimate way of persuasion. It is hoped they took the frank opinions expressed to them in the spirit in which they were given.

The Naga Hoho sent a delegate to the first Bangkok consultation as specified. To the second went four, including the President and Vice-President. As Convenor of Naga Co-ordination Committee, and a member of NBCC Peace Committee, I have taken part also in the discussions with Mr Kitovi and his colleagues in Mokokchung, and other meetings with leaders of NSCN (IM) in Dimapur, and of NNC (Panger) at various times. Some years back I had the privilege of meeting Chairman S S Khaplang at his Oking HQ with an NBCC delegation led by Rev Dr Pongsing.

Naga Hoho and the Church have consistently welcomed the consultations as the right steps in the right direction and to be encouraged. The two bodies have therefore sought hard to meet all the groups, believing

### *A Naga Speaks*

the time has come when the fragmented groups of the Naga struggle now tragically competing as deadly rivals should sit down to evolve a consensus on the terms for negotiating a settlement with Delhi. For this all-important dialogue of Naga national workers to take place, Naga Hoho and the Church have called for complete cessation of inter-factions killings to make a start.

The two bodies proposed and organised a simple modality to enable the honest conversation among Naga freedom fighters to get started, fully trusting that God will melt frozen barriers and open long-shut hearts and minds. Nagas waited with guarded hopefulness when the meeting proposed to be held in Kohima village from 9-11 August 2002 was announced. The killing of Lawrence, of NSCN (K) in Kohima village by NSCN (IM) in the preceding fortnight put paid to the proposed meeting.

The assassination taken in context, revealed a thinking that NSCN (IM) seems to regard as its special strength but which the rest of the Nagas see as its most serious weakness. Whatever the tactical compulsions may be that the NSCN (IM) sees, it was a costly jolt to the positive impression the Bangkok consultations had created.

Despite the setback, the modality was kept alive. The three-day conversation by Naga fighters talking, eating and being together at close range did not take place. But a joint prayer meeting took place at Naga Club building in Kohima. The NSCN (IM), NSCN (K) and NNC (P) were represented, the last one by General Panger himself with ten others of their leadership. Rev Zhabu Terhüja, Chairman of the Nagaland Christian Forum conducted the prayer meeting. I have fully supported the stand of the Church and Naga Hoho as being the most honourable basis for all factions to come together.

NNC/FGN (Adinno) has charged that I have joined NSCN (IM). Certain sections in the NSCN (IM) reportedly suspect that a few of us in the Church and Naga Hoho are calling for reconciliation, but our hidden agenda is 'to revive NNC and FGN' and sabotage the peace and talk process between NSCN (IM) and Government of India.

These conflicting suspicions prompt me to declare what I, a worker for reconciliation really believe in so that doubts causing needless distrust and even consequences may be removed. I owe it to myself, the public and the factions, to explain the convictions that motivate my work for reconciliation.

For obvious reasons of history and family connections, I am inclined

towards NNC. I have the deepest respect and gratitude for what NNC has given to the Nagas, but in all honesty, to revive NNC/FGN is not motivating me in whatever I am trying to do, however small and insignificant it may be.

With all my inadequacies what I am really interested in is to revive the role and place of God in our politics and every area of our society paralysed and confused at the moment in the throes of changes coming from all quarters. For this to happen I long with all my heart for God to win in Adinno, Isak, Khodao, Muivah, Khaplang, Kitovi, S C Jamir, Hokishe Sema, Neiphiu, Therie, Shürhozelie Huska and so on. If God's guidance, desire and plan will not be allowed to win in these leaders what chance does the Naga family have at all to find healing and cooperation for sheer survival in a world where concessions are not given?

I am venturing to exercise my responsibility of expressing my vision for our leaders that they be statesmen and stateswomen of God whose thinking, aim and living will inspire hope in our people, especially our youth, so that corruption and extortion will not become the philosophy and life style Nagas will be known for as it is beginning to be.

I believe our politics and our Christianity should be so pro-God, pro-active, and pro-life that we conduct all our affairs in the belief of the recoverability and potential of everyone for whom Christ died. On this basis we can trust one another not because of our virtues but because there is room for change in all of us.

We must not be foolish and underestimate the reality that we are just at the beginning of our journey. We are not allowed to pull the high requirements of the journey down to where they suit us only.

### **Reconciliation through Healing**

Nagaland Baptist Church Council Seminar, Dimapur. 25 March 2003

*Reconciliation and healing are a part of a number of other similar things we long for, namely, hope, unity, peace, security, safety, stability, happiness, social and economic development, forgiveness, transparency, and so on. Among these strong desires of the human heart, peace, unity, security and development frequently become political slogans. But because these desires are interlinked, and we cannot pick and choose those we*

*A Naga Speaks*

want to suit ourselves and ignore the rest, slogans like, 'Give Peace a Chance!' or 'We Want Unity!' shouted at processions and demonstrations only tend to increase conflict and tension.

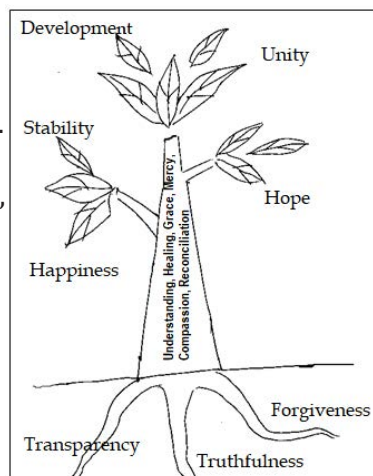
A careful analysis reveals that these desires are linked to one another in a sequential order. Some of them are the fruits, so they occur at the end of the sequential relationship. So we need to sort out the manner and order in which they are related. I find the picture of a fruit tree helps to understand this subject. Let us look at the following model.

### The Tree Model

Let us look at the tree here. Our experiences tell us that the roots of the tree are transparency and forgiveness drawing up life-giving powers from below. Then comes the stem of the tree where we see understanding, mercy, compassion, healing, reconciliation and grace. Then the branches, producing the flowers, leaves and fruits of hope, unity, peace, happiness, stability and development. These fruits, taken together, are sometime called dynamic, healthy democracy, freedom, human rights etc...

We Nagas have also gone through bitter experiences searching and struggling for the fruits of life mentioned which all human beings need. If we are to have them, we need to understand that we have to first pay a solid price for them. The size of the price will not deter or frighten us if we understand clearly. It is said, 'Nothing in life is to be feared. It is only to be understood.' If we understand how by an exquisite, beautiful process the roots produce the flowers, leaves and fruits, we will see how we too can and should achieve the things we need. Insufficient thinking, ignorance and confusion needlessly cause so much of our problems. Ignorance and confusion produce fear, panic, despair and hate which often erupt in violence.

Now, how do we work out our reconciliation through healing? I shall share some of the ideas that keep coming to me. The first point is that the search and application should start with me as a worker with Nagaland Baptist Church Council and Naga Hoho for reconciliation. 'You desire truth



*A Naga Speaks*

in the inward parts, and in the hidden part you will make me to know wisdom.’ (Psalm 51:6) This insight is immensely important and helpful for me. The wisdom that comes in my hidden parts as a result of drastic honesty in my inward parts, is the clear, sure guidance I need to find in every situation.

By nature I am deeply self-seeking, ambitious and hungry for success, fame and human praise. God must find me to be like a slippery fish as he tries to handle, control and guide me! I had the great privilege of being befriended, cared and fought for by an Englishman who was a noted author and journalist. He became a powerful moral and spiritual voice in Britain and the world. He sensed my need for help for liberation from self-centeredness, and he never gave up caring and fighting for me no matter how I responded.

After he died during a speaking tour in Peru, his wife wrote me a letter to tell me her husband’s conviction and vision for me, and to convey her own thoughts. She said, ‘I guess your area also needs leaders who want nothing for themselves.’ I have found to want nothing for myself in any way is the central battle for my soul and character every day. It means staying truthful and clean about the things I easily want for myself which divide me from God and other human beings. If what I want for myself cuts me off from God – whatever that may be – I become divisive, and I cause distrust and reaction in others, making it difficult for others to work with me.

The English novelist, Aldous Huxley said: ‘Those who crusade not for God in themselves but against the Devil in others, never succeed in making the world better, but leave it as it was, or sometimes perceptibly worse than it was, before the crusade began. By thinking primarily of evil, we tend however excellent our intention, to create occasions for evil to manifest itself. To be more against the Devil than for God is exceedingly dangerous.’ (*The Devils of Loudon*). Crusading for God in myself first is the first requirement for reconciliation.

This sharp observation helps me so much. I find I can lose my way by pointing out the errors, mistakes and hidden evil motives in others. I may get an audience to listen to my condemnation of others. Because there is usually some truth in my criticism, I start to think I am doing something great for the victory of truth! But if I am not truthful or transparent about my own failures and weaknesses, and the selfish motives driving me, I am doing nothing good or constructive or healing, because others see the things I am hiding or justifying. This causes bitterness and vicious

resentment in them. My dishonesty provokes them to do their worst.

Then I start a crusade against them condemning the wrongs they have done to me. But I refuse to acknowledge where I have provoked them to retaliate. I am shouting out about their evil deeds, which are often true. But God is more interested in where I provoked them, and what I will do about them. He wants me to face and accept my share in the errors and wrongs of those I condemn and thus help them also to change! Giving our best, not our worst, to one another - fish and bread, not snakes and stones. Is this not His formula for building His kingdom on earth?

We recall the pledge the Presidents of the 38 Naga tribes read out jointly in Kohima on 20 December 2001. They were helping to launch the Naga Reconciliation Process. The pledge said, 'We, my tribe, will go beyond seeing only where others have hurt us, to seeing where we too may have provoked others to hurt us, so that forgiving and being forgiven may become possible.'

I believe this pledge gives the answer to the dangerous error Huxley has pointed out - to admit where we are wrong, and therefore we too have our share in the wrongs of others. Remember Jesus telling the angry crowd, 'Let him who is without sin, cast the first stone.' This level of passionate love for truthfulness is indicated in 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 13: 4-7: 'Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrong. Love does not delight in the evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.' These verses indicate the purity of heart and commitment to truthfulness needed for the work of reconciliation.

Surgeons and their assistants are required to wash their hands thoroughly with soap and disinfectant before starting an operation. Otherwise they may cause death to the patient they are supposed to be curing.

Similarly, we who work for reconciliation and healing within the Naga family must not underestimate our need for purity of heart and motive. If something we want selfishly is more important than what God wants, then we block God's power working in the hearts of people we are trying to heal and reconcile.

Last January I was invited to go with the President of Naga Hoho and his colleagues to meet Isak and Muivah in New Delhi. I went. Having



given much thought to what Reconciliation means, I always have much to say on the subject! But when the meeting with the two leaders started I found myself most hesitant to say what I had to say. I was recalling what had gone through me before I left Shillong. When I saw Isak and Muivah making an impressive impact on TV and the printed media on their arrival in Delhi, I had said to myself, 'How I wish Uncle Phizo is doing this, not these two.' I shared with my wife the jealousy I felt which I found embarrassing. I said sorry to God and prayed to be cleansed by him.

At the meeting in Delhi I felt agitated inside, not knowing whether or not to share what I had felt in Shillong. Feeling very poor in spirit and fearful lest I would make a fool of myself, I decided to share what I had shared with my wife. I said I saw no other way except to be just as I was by nature without God, and try to walk in the light as he is in the light, so that unhampered by my selfish demands, God's truth and plan may be found together.

I do not know if what I shared helped or not, but Isak did say he appreciated my honest confession about myself. On my part I participated in the discussions with complete openness, free from fear and judgment.

I am sharing this recent experience to try to illustrate what Huxley's observation means to me. I can make speeches on all the wrongs and mistakes committed by the leaders of the various groups, underground and overground, or the other tribes. But I am just a lot of angry hot air that is of no use for achieving reconciliation. If I want to play my part, God wants me to first deal with the wrongs and shortcomings in myself.

The point I want to make is that if we are to have reconciliation, peace, unity, stability and development, we have to accept to pay a price. The price is costly transparency, which opens up our lives to others and to God. What follow naturally are trust, hope and forgiving and being forgiven, understanding, compassion, healing. Transparency means being simply honest without any explanation or justification.

We are so used to talking about our political problem that with reconciliation also we tend to think that it is needed only among the factions, and those in politics. But reconciliation and healing has to occur wherever human relationships have been damaged and distrust and hatred have started to grow. This may be within our families, between friends and associates outside or between tribes. Reconciliation will release the spirit and the soul of the Nagas, and it has to start with transparency and healing.

## CONCLUSION: How Evil Starts and Grows In Us?

I venture to share some thoughts from my own battles. I am baffled and fascinated by the choices I have to make daily between truth and untruth or good and evil. But having to choose keeps me near the Cross, and free.

The tree model shows how transparency or truthfulness is the key that opens the door to forgiveness, healing, reconciliation and all the other fruits we need for life, to be worthwhile. An important lesson from history seems to be that unless transparency comes first, the other things cannot follow or occur. In fact, without transparency and healing, violence and bribery in diverse forms become alternative means for maintaining peace, unity and development.

In *1 John 1:7* we read, 'If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.' This verse explains how our truthfulness and simple obedience enable God to come in and transform, heal and restore the human relationships, which make possible peace, unity, stability and development. We tend to be too impatient with such explanations and regard them as useless idealism. But the truth cannot be disputed. Sooner or later situations compel us to go deep enough to the roots. But it is often too late.

The blood of the crucified Christ cleansing me becomes a reality when I walk in the light, which means not justifying, or defending or proving anything. To walk in the light is to 'Call a spade a spade', or to 'Speak the truth and shame the devil.' Christ said, 'Let your "Yes" be "Yes", and your "No", "No". For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.' (*Matthew 5:37*). It is so simple and always dependable.

I need to understand how evil is formed in my life and fight it, if I am to play my part in the urgent task of changing our society for the better. Evil is the central problem in the battle for healing and reconciliation. Why and How?

I find, in my life, evil starts from my protection of my selfishness and pride. At first it is often only a mild, seemingly simple act of deceit, skillfully performed to guard or protect what I want for myself. It is neither Yes or No. It is intentionally unclear. Then I tell more lies to guard the first lie. I become unhappy, angry, and even aggressive to make sure the truth stays hidden.

The key for me is to be simply honest with my wife, the person closest to me, who after all agreed to marry me in faith. Of course, we started our life partnership hiding nothing from each other about our past lives. The point is to continue that openness. It is a much-needed challenge to my character.

Some years back I returned from a long journey with something I found difficult to tell my wife. Finally, when I was honest with her, breaking my pride and fear, thus shaming the devil, she said, 'Well, it just shows you too are a rascal! But an honest one. Thank you, I understand. You have shown courage too. Keep it up!'

I realised that if I had decided not to be honest with her my soul would have been suffocated, the worst thing we can do to ourselves, and I would have allowed evil to start to grow in it. This spiritual law of tackling evil is the most important point to be understood in human resource development and in nation building. Crucifying pride, selfishness and fear is the only way to tackle evil.

M. Scott Peck writes, 'Carl Jung ascribed human evil to the refusal to meet the Shadow - those aspects of ourselves that we do not want to own or recognise and that we continually attempt to sweep under the rug of consciousness.' (*The Different Drum*). Peck adds that evil is 'militant ignorance', meaning aggressive, willful refusal to face and know certain truths in ourselves because we are afraid of not knowing how to handle what may follow, or we know it and we decide not to pay the price.

Peck points out '*Evil is Live* spelt backwards.' What a fascinating accident of language! Evil is evil because it subverts, distorts the divinely ordained way of living out our lives on earth, constantly changed and guided by God. 'One step enough for me.'

Here is an observation deserving our careful reflection and understanding: 'There are dozens of ways to deal with evil and several ways to conquer it. All of them are facets of the truth that the only ultimate way to conquer evil is to let it be smothered within a willing, living human being. When it is absorbed there like blood in a sponge or a spear into one's heart, it loses its power and goes no further.' (Gale D Webber: *The Night and Nothing*). God had to deal with evil that way by Christ dying on the Cross.

## Reducing Our Problems To Manageable Sizes:

I shall end with a practical suggestion. We are so honest about other people's mistakes and wrongs but so hesitant to talk about where we too are wrong. This kind of destructive honesty has to be rectified if we are to achieve reconciliation. Supposing our different tribes were to form their own voluntary internal groups whereby each tribe, inspired by God, objectively identified and accepted where their tribe has weakened or harmed the Naga family by the failures or deliberate wrongs of its members?

The ground rule to be followed should be to concentrate only on where one's tribe has failed, leaving to others and God where they have failed or done wrong. Should some tribe decide to come out with their conclusions that would powerfully inspire our society? That tribe will not become smaller or weaker because of the courageous act. On the contrary it will become freer, more creative, and stronger in the best sense.

Even if nothing is published at the end of the exercise, the honest identification of failures, weaknesses and mistakes within the different tribes will result in drastic reduction of the dishonest recriminations and blames that have corroded and weakened our society so dangerously. Our problems will be reduced to manageable sizes. We will become more understanding and cooperative with one another because of correct knowledge of where we too are wrong, just like others or more than others. Reconciliation through healing will start. And the other things we need and want so urgently for the sakes of our children will be added unto us. For reasons known to all, only the so-called 'advanced tribes' may be involved in this experiment with truth. The 'backward tribes' will be very happy for the 'advanced tribes' to show the way in this particular field!

## Reconciliation and Settlement: What I Believe

*I*t is not my presumption that others are or should at all be interested in what I believe. Nor am I keen to talk about them as it is so difficult to say anything adequately on the issues in the Naga crisis and most likely be misconstrued or misinterpreted. But I sense that it has become necessary to say what I believe about reconciliation and the settlement we are talking about.

*A Naga Speaks*

By invitation and conviction, I have been associated with the efforts of Naga Hoho, the Churches, and other bodies of Naga civil society to help Nagas find an acceptable and workable settlement of their political question with India.

There is no dispute about the urgent need for a settlement. But given the history of the Naga struggle, if any settlement is to work, healing and reconciliation among Nagas must somehow be achieved. There is no dispute on this also because unhealed wounds and hurts always produce solutions that in turn produce societies that do not work, that cannot be developed, and therefore suicidal. This lesson cries out from numerous situations in the past and today, which we cannot treat lightly.

So, with others, I have taken part in discussions over the past few years with the various leaders of our people. Suspicions and misinterpretations of the intentions behind these interactions have been spread. So as one committed to transparency, healing and reconciliation, I have decided to clarify the intentions and beliefs that have motivated my own efforts however small they may be.

My concern is that the precious reconciliation road must be kept clean and open for all Nagas to walk on. I care deeply that no cynical doubts, arising from baseless suspicions, pollute and kill the Naga reconciliation stream that is meant to become our river of hope and healing.

I am aware that those who have given us the Naga struggle or story which we are proud of, will feel that those who have not fought and sacrificed exactly as they have, have no right to express their views about our crisis. The NSCN (IM) recently warned that those who adopt ‘delaying tactics or trying to sabotage the expeditious conduct of the current peace process will be seriously viewed as anti-national and anti-people.’

Taken in context, is it wrong to conclude that these words are directed at some of us who spoke out our honest convictions at the Bangkok consultations, as requested to do so?

The NSCN (IM) should be told to understand their beautifully worded letters inviting Nagas to the consultations. Their most recent invitation had stated, ‘The time has come for us to seize the initiative to understand one another to remove distrust, suspicion, and to share feelings so that we can come closer to one another. We value your contribution, your concern and your participation in this peace process. NSCN wants to

be founded on truth and reality and we want to hear your opinions and views so that we will be doing the best for the Nagas and Nagalim.'

Not to respond to such a call would have been perverse and anti-Naga.

Concerned, responsible Nagas will agree that the wrong things we have done to one another have produced our destructive politics. After all politics is the outward expression of what is going on inside a society.

The reconciliation road we are developing today has to start from what went wrong yesterday. But the importance of this road lies in the opening it gives to all Nagas to tomorrow so that the precious opportunities ahead are not wasted because of the untackled mistakes of the past.

Discussing the lessons for Europe from the previous century, Seumas Milne observed, 'There is no major 20th century political tradition without blood on its hands. But the battle over history is never really about the past - it's about the future.' This is the real meaning and purpose of reconciliation.

Nagas are conscious that they have again reached a decisive point in their history, a crisis with opportunities and dangers in equal measures. All crises are like that. So if we are wise we identify the opportunities and build on them. Failure to do so allows the dangers to destroy us. It is essential we speak out to evolve understanding and trust through public debate. This will dissolve the dangers, and the opportunities will be allowed to win to benefit us. It is easiest at this time to retreat into our tribal holes as crabs do when trouble comes. But the needed public debate will then not take place. The space for interaction and dialogue created so painstakingly by the Naga Hoho, the Churches and other groups, and now being vacated by our retreat to our respective holes can most easily become our killing field instead of being our democratic debating arena, traditionally so important to us.

I have been accused by NNC/FGN (Adinno) of having joined the IM group. The few meetings I have participated in with Isak and Muivah and the signing of the Joint Bangkok Declarations have been cited as proof of the allegation. Some village leaders from my range have even asked if it was true that I have accepted to be a future ambassador of the NSCN (IM) government following 'their settlement'! In embarrassment, my reply is that if someone like me should be thought fit by any group to be a Naga ambassador we Nagas are heading for trouble, did not seem to change the

suspicion.

Certain leaders of the NSCN (K) charged that the Naga Hoho brought Chief Minister Zoramthanga to come to Bangkok to convince the Nagas at the Consultations to give up sovereignty. Their suspicion is understandable. If any other group had brought Zoramthanga to talk to a Naga political consultation the colourful accusations of betrayal, sell-out, etc... that the IM group would have made can easily be imagined!

Some NSCN (IM) associates apparently conveyed their suspicion to Isak and Muivah that I met Padmanabaiah and the Union Home Minister in Delhi to interfere in the talks process, and that S C Jamir was financing me. The simple truth is that I have never met Padmanabaiah or L K Advani. I would have nothing to say to these official VVIPs although I do have plenty to say and do say to the Indian people and the Naga people - the two most important audiences for solving the Indo-Naga question.

Padmanabaiah was at a meeting where I spoke at India International Centre in New Delhi. He left before the meeting ended. That was the closest I got to the famous interlocutor. As for money from Jamir, I don't think he will be tight-fisted if I ever approached him for help for my work. But that has never happened yet. The point of all these suspicions is that they indicate the bankruptcy of our thinking.

The latest allegation from NSCN (IM) sources is that the real hidden agenda of some of us who have spoken for reconciliation is to 'revive the NNC/FGN'. This suspicion and speculation can lead to needless but serious consequences at this critical juncture.

I personally believe the NNC (Panger), the cleanest, most low profile of all the groups of the Naga struggle can be a vital bridge for all the former comrades now in tragic conflict against one another to come to one another. They have not resorted to the use of arms obviously realising that unless the internal differences are resolved, military conflict alone with India cannot take us far. They very sensibly do not think procuring arms to fight fellow Nagas will help our people at all. Nagas are grateful that they are not collecting taxes in the name of the Naga struggle and misusing them as is happening so shamelessly and callously in the other groups. Their position on the Shillong Accord is truthful and correct. Their moral authority comes also from their unquestionable record of life-long dedication to the Naga cause and heroic sacrifices made by them for their beliefs and love for their people.



But I should humbly state that I am not doing whatever I am trying to do to revive NNC or FGN. I am certainly trying to revive the place and role of God in Naga society and politics, underground and overground. I am humbly but passionately interested in God winning in all our leaders, thinking that that will be for their own and our people's highest good. Isak, Muivah, Khodao, Khaplang, Kitovi, Adinno and S C Jamir. To aim for anything less at this stage would be a foolish waste of time, energy and resources, and betrayal of our leaders and God when both need us most to be truthful.

I do believe all our leaders are important because all of them represent the achievements of their tribes whatever others may think of them.

Personally, what concerns me most is that the things that are most important to us are in danger of being damaged or lost. Our greatest asset, secured at immense cost, is the aspiration of all Nagas to be a people and a nation. On this hangs all that is of value and meaning in the heart-rending Naga story. Because I believe our loss will prove to be too costly for the coming generations,

I have chosen not to hold anything back that I see and feel, risking perhaps causing pain and anger, in the belief that if the right kind of heart-to-heart interaction can start even at this late hour, all may not be destroyed or lost.

Our first need is an objective analysis of the distance we have covered. In this exercise, in view of what is at stake, we must rise above our personal emotional attachments and prejudices. This will enable us to draw a balance sheet that can serve as a dependable basis from which to build together for the future.

All great ventures have their ups and downs. All of them start to reveal the inherent weaknesses because they are after all human ventures. No venture can be greater for a people than their decision and struggle to be a nation. For a people to decide from scratch to achieve this goal and to struggle for it is to strike out into the unknown. The pioneers who take it upon themselves to lead their people forward naturally make all sorts of errors and miscalculations because they travel a path that is full of untested risks and possibilities.

For us Nagas, after more than half a century of unyielding exploring and struggling, we are desperately needing to take stock and consolidate

ourselves by learning from the mistakes and errors. This can be done with compassion, understanding and transparency, as there is really no room for condemnation of one another because no one is really infallible and blameless. The challenge is severely testing the maturity of our thinking and character.



### Reconciliation to Create a Caring Society

Our most urgent need is clearly to create a caring society where everyone will have their share because there is enough for everyone's needs although not for everyone's greed. There is a short circuit or incompleteness in our thinking because our society overground and underground has produced too many leech-like citizens.

'Christianity has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult and left untried.' This was G K Chesterton's observation.

Are we not facing the same problem with reconciliation? We know reconciliation has to be God's way, not our way. That it is not something we can manipulate or manufacture to suit our family, tribe, our faction, party or ourselves. We realise it is the fruit of our coming to the Cross of Christ where we are transformed by costly transparency and truthfulness, for the sakes of our families, people, our God and ourselves. Our willing acceptance to be what God requires us to be and to do what needs to be done for all, not just ourselves, immediately creates hope and trust in others also. We know it is a good thing and we like it. But, being human, we are not sure we want to risk walking the whole road to reconciliation because it takes us all to the Cross. We like the fruit but not the pain of the Cross of change and growth before it.

Another thought that comes to mind is that we are right now like the shouting crowd that brought the woman taken in adultery to Jesus. When something goes wrong, or someone has done a wrong thing, our safety lies in making sure the issue is sensationalised and uproar is created so that the deeper questions are not examined too closely.

Our strongest temptation in a crisis is not to go deep or far enough lest we discover we too are required to do something. So we all condemn or criticise the obvious failures of others from our well-protected positions like snipers taking shots at exposed targets. The noise and tension keep

*A Naga Speaks*

everyone from going beneath the surface. Nothing changes. The criticised but unsolved problem is added to the huge pile of unsolved problems crushing our society to death. All wait for the next scandal to attack.

Christ listened and looked, and saw through the strategy of the crowd. He did not issue one of those rejoinders that blasts, flays and castigates but helps no one. Instead he gave everyone in the crowd, including the woman, the chance of a life time to go deep and far enough to first find liberation and then to take their wounded, corrupt, heartless society forward by each becoming transparent, healed and healing individuals. He held all of them up to the highest they probably never thought they were capable of – to boldly accept responsibility for doing what needed to be done, instead of pointing out where others are wrong and doing everything to hide where we too are wrong.

Christ was not for adultery, prostitution or other such ‘social evils’. He was aiming to raise healers and builders out of them instead of them taking sides that would make the situation more hopeless.

We are grateful for the dedicated few in different areas of our society who burn cleanly like candles in our darkness.

### **Peace Building: Its Impact on the Common Man and People’s Participation.**

*I*t is a long time now that Nagas have not known peace. So the need to build peace is not disputed by anyone. But when the task of building peace is taken up or contemplated, we find that the subject is perceived differently by the different parties involved in the Naga crisis. The clash of perceptions produces clash of approaches. The result is confusion and fruitless shouting for peace. No wonder peace is a much-proclaimed slogan that has gone stale. And people have become cynical about peace.

To build peace in Nagaland what is needed obviously is to start with a correct, objective understanding of what has caused the deep and widespread conflict that has dislocated and profoundly changed the lives of our people. It would be correct and fair to say that the conflict is the outcome of the struggle of the Nagas for their aspirations, and the Government of India’s reaction to it.

*A Naga Speaks*

The conflict has spread to all the areas where Nagas live. Such a broad understanding based on the facts of what the people have actually experienced will reveal paths to be followed to build peace.

The whole world is overwhelmed by the challenge to correctly respond to rapid changes that the human race constantly generates as it marches ahead. Changes produce problems that require solutions through creative changes in human minds, attitudes and behavior.

Albert Einstein said, 'We cannot solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.' This requirement is extremely difficult to meet because human attitudes and thinking do not change easily to adjust to the social-economic-political changes occurring in society. The result is accumulation of unsolved problems that overwhelm and paralyse society. Books like Alvin Toffler's *Future Shock*, have portrayed the enormity of the changes which even the most developed societies are ill-prepared to handle adequately.

If peace building is to be effective the crisis in Nagaland and the North East should be understood to be coming from this wider crisis of change in the world. The dismissive and prejudiced attitude that tends to be adopted by officialdom especially is that but for instigation by foreign missionaries and others, the costly conflicts that have destabilised the whole region would not have occurred and the simple-minded tribal people would have stayed contented and unadventurous.

The meaning of this attitude is that the tribal peoples are mentally and spiritually incapable of feeling, thinking and imagination; that they are devoid of the creative urges of progress. But there are indications that policy makers in Delhi have taken stock of the years of conflict in Nagaland and drawn conclusions. This should be recognised.

Some peoples and nations are better prepared than others to handle the changes. Some are staggeringly successful. The majority are repeated failures. But they have no choice but to keep trying to keep going with the rest of mankind, causing more pain to themselves and others in the process. Whether we are rich or poor, strong or weak, 'No man is an island entire unto himself.' We share a common humanity and destiny that requires each to give and do our best. We are in the same boat on a voyage of discovery and all-round growth as human beings. We cannot opt out of the common venture of mankind on grounds of being unready, inexperience or sheer disinclination.

The voyage is perilous and unavoidable because it is the unstoppable force of progress. Herbert Spencer says, 'Progress is not an accident, but a necessity. It is a part of nature.' The nature of the challenge all mankind faces is clearly stated in the observation made by Milovan Djilas, the Marxist thinker and once Vice-President of Yugoslavia, 'We are living today in tomorrow's world with yesterday's ideas.'

The Nagas and all the different communities of the North East are in the throes of conflicts that are unavoidable, complicated and threatening. It should be understood with compassion that the conflicts have resulted from our people's response to the multi-dimensional changes impacting us from a rapidly changing world. Our response could not be any other way except to struggle and to fight. To characterise our struggle as being against India or any other nations misses the point that it is our natural response to defend our identity as we have understood.

Our struggle reflects our understanding of ourselves as our history and geography have shaped us. It showed our thinking of how best to survive under one identity in our given situation. Our response thus became a political struggle to defend and develop our fledgling identity. In trying to ensure its survival and viability the struggle became violent.

Let us never forget that we are trying to build peace in a situation where our people are compelled to fight for the security of our identity threatened by rapidly changing paradigms not because some foreign forces have stuffed ideas into their simple minds.

Our crisis is made all the more complicated because our thinking, ways and attitudes are not matching the new situations we have to cope with. Most of our people are having to sort out this hidden crisis in everything we do every day. There are so many vulnerable insecure people like us in the world who have to fight. Yet we end up merely as cold statistics of problems of social, economic misery and political chaos.

Our agonising dilemma is that we are forced to learn so many lessons in a very short time what other societies have taken centuries to learn. Is it surprising we are responding so inadequately, both the underground and overground. The creation of the State marked the decisive entry of India into the history of the Nagas. This objective account of what has happened over the past six decades has to be understood so that peacebuilding may be rooted in reality.

Those Naga leaders who stepped forward to cooperate with Delhi

to create the State of Nagaland genuinely believed they did the right thing for the Nagas. They believed the declared objectives of the Naga struggle were too far away to be achievable as a newly independent India could not handle the issue, they also saw Nagas were not ready. The creation of the State was inevitable and it also became irresistible when Delhi made it clear it was its policy towards the conflict that had erupted in Nagaland.

In the given situation of the day as it prevailed at the time, the creators of the State perhaps did not try enough to carry the NNC because they saw that the NNC leaders would not agree with their plan and they were most probably correct. They also saw that Government of India too was not in a position to consider any ideas that did not fully agree with its position. But from today's hindsight, the conclusion seems clear that the error was to project the State as the final settlement of the question against the declared opposition of the leaders of NNC who made it clear it was not what many Nagas had fought and died for.

For those creating the State, and those opposing it, they were all treading totally unknown territory. Most of the former also believed in the rightness of the Naga goals. But they could not ignore the impossibility of getting India to accept the Naga position. So the temptations that the State represented were doubly strong to resist just in order to do the right thing with those who opposed the creation of the State. For the latter the pull of the history and thinking they had created was equally overpowering. The idea of including the underground fighters was understandably not tried enough. Although winning them was formidably difficult, leaving them out was nonetheless a tragic error.

Kevichüsa, the first Naga to acquire the IAS title, took a stand Nagas should learn from. After participating fully in the discussions of the Naga People's Convention on how to respond to Nehru's hasty offer to create the State, he refused to board the chartered Dakota flight from Jorhat to go to Delhi to start direct negotiation with the Prime Minister. He had maintained the freedom fighters fighting in the jungles were the ones to sit at the negotiating table. They at the Convention, mostly civil servants of Naga Hills District, were to facilitate the talks as ushers even to enable those who had sacrificed greatly for their people's cause.

Whenever I came home from my travels for my work I called on him and Mrs Kevichüsa, Azo Mani, in their Dimapur home, because his truthfulness was so reassuring and fed my spirit always. Again and again he said 'It would have been a grave moral error for us to usurp the place of

the actual fighters at the negotiating table.’ He showed greedless politics, real Christianity, I discovered. It was a unique stand he, Vizol and Megorüto Liegise took. It remains unique in the story of the Naga struggle.

The harsh irony is that the creators of the State and four Prime Ministers of India have now come around to the position that the political question is yet to be solved and have agreed to solve it through a negotiation process. There are sufficient signs that the leaders of the Naga struggle too have started to show equal realism as evident from the ongoing peace process.

The Government of India for a long time clearly regarded the conflict in Nagaland merely as a law and order problem for bureaucrats to tackle to preserve the territorial integrity of India. The people were not important. A definite shift seems to have taken place. Today strong signs are evident of an understanding attitude informing policy formulations, appreciating the historic compulsions that have driven the people that have produced the crisis.

Victor Hugo observed, ‘There is nothing more powerful than an idea whose time has come.’ The attempts being made to restore and strengthen peace today are clear signs that all involved in the protracted Naga crisis have reached common conclusions and learned common lessons. Peace building is therefore an idea whose time has come and the longing for it is the strongest factor to ensure its success ultimately.





## Personal Journey

*I decided to be faithful to the 'guidance from within'*

The Most Important Decisions In My Life	136
Praying, Listening And Discovering God's Plan	140
Something To Share	145
On The Rim Of The Golden Triangle	146

## The Most Important Decisions in my life

**N**eurosis is always the substitute for legitimate suffering'. This startling observation is in *The Road Less Travelled*, by M. Scott Peck, the American psychiatrist and author. He also says, 'Mental health is an ongoing process of dedication to reality at all costs.'

If as a contributor to the WASU Souvenir I am permitted to express a wish, it is that all Western Angami students who care for our future will measure their thinking and living against these observations. I can say the truth contained in them has changed my life. That is why I am taking the liberty of proposing that it be examined by all who, like me, need fundamental changes in their lives. Let us not brush it aside as something only professors need to understand. I shall offer what I, as a layman, think these scientific statements mean, risking being wrong.

The Psalmist says we are 'wonderfully and fearfully made'. So God requires from us not just physical growth. Man has to grow mentally, spiritually and morally also, as we are more than chemicals, muscle and bone. All-round growth means frequent death to selfishness, laziness, lust and pride. St. Paul called it 'living sacrifice, holy- the kind He can accept.'

This high price of growth is the 'legitimate suffering' that man pays for his freedom, dignity and mental health. So when I say 'no' to the pain and suffering essential for legitimate growth, I fail to become what my Creator made me to be. The conflict thus born becomes an inescapable neurotic obsession in my mind and spirit, but which I resolutely deny.

The dictionary says neurosis is 'a mental disorder characterised by anxiety, compulsions, obsessions, phobias, depressions, etc....' And 'obsession' means to be preoccupied with an idea that 'haunt or trouble' the mind. In other words, I have started to lose my balance, sanity, objectivity and truthfulness. I am of course not 'mad' yet! But I am no longer dedicated 'to reality at all costs', which is so well described by David as 'truth in the inward parts' and wisdom 'in the hidden parts'.

It is true only a few of us end up in lunatic asylums. But so many of us are caught in depression, anxieties, prejudices and guilt complexes because we have shut our minds and hearts to what we know to be right and essential, and resist or do not try enough to become instruments God can use to build His Kingdom on earth. Surely salvation means all-out co-operation between me and God for His project on earth, a society where

*A Naga Speaks*

everyone will have enough because everyone cares enough and shares enough. There is enough for our needs but not for our greed.

With unresolved conflicts disturbing us we do our jobs poorly or selfishly. We are dissatisfied. The consequences of our bad performances in our tasks have so seriously overburdened and weakened our society. The highest standard for mental health and spiritual freedom is, I think, expressed in David's imperishable prayer of penitence and rededication in Psalms 51:6-17. 'Make me willing to obey you... it is a broken spirit you want. A broken and a contrite heart, O God, you will not ignore.' Is it not 'the peace that passeth all understanding' that Paul talked of? The widespread loss of this heaven-sent mental health has resulted in the majority of beds in hospitals in the 'developed nations' being occupied by psychosomatic patients. The excessive cost of national health schemes of governments is said to be out of control in most rich nations.

So we can understand why a speaker at a national convention of psychologists in the USA started his talk by saying, 'The good news is that only 80% of Americans are neurotic. The bad news is that the remaining 20% are psychotic!'

Let us now consider what came out of Gethsemane for humanity. Welcoming Jesus into Jerusalem, the crowd had shouted, 'Hosanna, to the son of David, blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord.' Not very long after all that, he found himself alone in Gethsemane. He was sorely tempted to say 'no' to his calling. 'He broke into sweat and blood' as he prayed 'if it were possible let this pass from me.' He wanted to choose the second best and avoid the legitimate suffering that confronted him. Jesus said, 'My soul is crushed by sorrow to the point of death.'

It was 'the dark night of the soul' that the Catholic mystic St. John of the cross wrote about. To find yourself in such despair and loneliness does not mean that you are committing sin. In fact if you are really serious about God and his purpose for your life, you will go through the dark night of dying to self. God was happy Jacob wrestled with Him right through the night. God gave him a new name, Israel, 'because you have been strong with God, you shall prevail with men.' (Gen. 32)

Your neurosis, your confused struggling with extremely difficult choices, produces sin and evil if you end up choosing the second best that suits you but it is not what is right. After your wrong choice you start to justify your selfishness and EGO (Edging God Out). The heart that says 'no' to God inevitably becomes the devil's laboratory for evil purposes.

***A Naga Speaks***

To come back to Gethsemane drama, I believe when Christ faced his neurosis and came out victorious by choosing to do God's will he inaugurated Christianity with the following words of revolutionary obedience, 'Not my will, but yours be done.' Even after that our Lord cried on the cross, 'My God, My God, why have you deserted me?' It cost him everything to say 'yes' to what he was called to do and be, rejecting anything less. The crisis was total, and the response was total. Consider what T S Eliot said, 'The last temptation is the greatest treason, to do the right deed for the wrong reason.'

The authenticity of his humanity was shown in his desperate wrestling with his neurosis. The authenticity of his divine nature was in his choice to do his Father's will. If his humanity was not real, Christianity would be simply a beautiful story like those of the Olympian gods of Greek mythology who were too good to be true, and therefore without the power to demand 'My life, my soul, my all.' That God does fight for our victory is beautifully indicated in St. Luke's words about Christ's victory, 'And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.'

Now let us bring this discussion down to the situations of life you and I face daily. An Indian saint and mystic poet, Sant Tukaram who lived several centuries ago in Dehu village near today's Pune, said, 'Every moment of our lives we face the need to accept that which is right and reject what is wrong.'

This choice is immediate as well as long term. If I do something for instant satisfaction, it is a matter of immediate choice. It may result in foolish waste of time, energy, resources, opportunities, addiction and damage to my spirit and the hell-like life I give to my family. If the question is the purpose and aim of my life, it is long-term choice requiring sufficient thinking, openness and willingness from me. The immediate and long-term are of course closely connected.

In 1955, in Madras Christian College, I found myself facing the long-term question. What am I to live for? I clearly did not have the courage others had to go underground, nor the conviction that it was the best and right course to take. It would be fair to say the physical cowardice came partly from the feeling that the Naga search and struggle for peoplehood and nationhood would require more than just laying down one's life in an ambush or exchange of gunfire. Having said this I think of all Nagas who have died fighting for the Naga cause with deepest admiration and a sense of responsibility that we cannot allow what they have given us to go waste.

### *A Naga Speaks*

There is therefore no room for selfishness on my part. So in Chennai I too wrestled with the question that all Naga students have wrestled with all these years – How can I live relevantly for my people?

I met the people of Moral Re-Armament, now Initiatives of Change, at this time. The challenge of MRA was to fully live out what my Christian faith and beliefs implied. To solve society's and my personal problems, God's way, not my way. To live and fight for nations to be governed by men and women governed by God. To my endless frustration and anger I found my ways and thoughts were the exact opposite of God's ways and thoughts.

If anyone would decide to give himself or herself to God to build His kingdom on earth, the just society, it is best to correctly understand the truth expressed in Isaiah 55:8-13. I think it is simply that because of the pride in my sinful nature I am always self-centered, and against God's pure, clean ways. I resist His total claim over me. But my soul's hunger for Him is also as real as my sinful nature; and if I simply turn to Him and listen, my soul comes alive (Is 55:3). He knows my spiritual hunger for the bread of life.

Our relationship with God is sound if He corrects and directs, and we happily accept both. Our pride is there only to be broken for our deeper change. We worship a false God of our own creation when we make Him a harmless, permissive, do-gooder Santa Claus who is only bent on pleasing us! But if we give Him first place in our life and obey Him, the fruits of our obedience are abundant.

Ultimately I concluded the greatest service I could render to myself and to my people was to give my life to God for Him to break, change, fill and guide. With trepidation and doubts, yet with deepest conviction, I decided with all my weaknesses to live to do what needs to be done, not what I like or can do successfully. In all humility I believe this to be most important decision in my life.

The second important decision was to set aside sufficient time each morning to 'listen' to God, to assess in silence what is going on in me and around me, and what He wants done, and to write down the thoughts that come in this listening time in order to find clarity and obey faithfully. His guidance is precise and adequate for specific situations, always wonderfully unexpected!

However inadequate my obedience has been, I have no doubt at all that such listening and praying makes Christianity instantly practical

and relevant. One of course needs to learn from mistakes instead of being defensive. God unfailingly helps us to see our mistakes and inadequacies if we let Him. Others do the same with malicious glee or compassion depending on their character and aim in life.

What your spouse, children and closest friends say to you with the greatest difficulty is often the nearest to what God sees of you! Humility and simple honesty about your mistakes is the key to freedom and growth. It is helpful to know that to admit my wrongs and mistakes may not be the end of the world! In fact my transparency will give hope to others that a new world is possible! Others will say, 'If he can change, anyone can!' The following lines say it all, -

*Jesus I my cross have taken,  
All to leave and follow Thee;  
Destitute, despised, forsaken,  
Thou from hence my all shall be;  
Perish every fond ambition,  
All I have sought, or loved, or known;  
Yet how rich is my condition,  
God and heaven are still my own.*

### Praying, Listening and Discovering God's Plan

12 December 2017

*When man listens, God speaks. When man obeys, God acts. When men change, nations change. – Frank Buchman*

**I** propose to share from my limited experiences whatever I have found about praying to God, listening to Him and learning to play my part in His plan for the world guided by Him.

As I look back, I see that like others I was also guided to God and to prayer by deep needs in my soul for meaning and purpose of life, for security and answers to existential fears, for freedom and salvation. Soon after I joined Madras Christian College in 1955 I came to know about 'listening to God' from two professors from Britain teaching there. As they put it, they were 'committed to the remaking of the world through change

***A Naga Speaks***

in people, starting with ourselves. I had come to the right place at the right time finding the idea I needed at that stage of my journey. The professors' academic standing and the evident quality of their Christian thinking and living made me interested in what they had to say. According to them, listening enables God to 'speak back to us' after he has heard our prayers. He is given His chance to guide us. To them what God has to say to us is as important as, if not more important than, what we say to Him. The logic and sanity in it convinced me.

Just as we know the person we are talking to on the phone is there and hearing us, we know the God we pray to is also there and hears us! A phone call is, or should be, a two-way conversation, not a monologue. The purpose is not served if one side does the whole talking or does not listen properly and switches off before the other side could say anything back! The implications of listening to God were intriguing and disturbing as well because I feared where it might possibly lead me? Would He inspire and guide me to be and to do something too challenging? But I could not ignore the door that had been opened before me to a path beckoning me.

### **Experiment in listening:**

The professors arranged a small occasion on the campus for some of their guests from abroad to meet some of us. I remember the chairman saying the meeting was on remaking the world through changes taking place in people, putting wrongs right in our lives to start the change by learning to 'listen to God's guidance and obeying it.' He shared from his own experience what listening and obeying to help bring changes in the world meant. Then saying all would learn more in a time of silent listening he called for a quiet time together. Each was given paper and pencil and we were encouraged to write down whatever might come during the few minutes of silence!

Of course I did not hear any voice and I felt awkward. The thoughts floating across my mind's eye seemed vague and meaningless. But one thought stood out. I clearly remember writing, 'You are a very selfish man.' Then I wrote about jealousy, being loveless, resentments, bitterness and hatred because of selfishness in a number of ways.

Breaking the silence the chairman said anyone could use the time. Each one shared what had come to them. When my turn came, I said nothing important enough had come, and then read out what I had



written. The chairman warmly thanked me for my courage and honesty. I was deeply touched because I dreaded to be honest and courageous but I longed so much to be just that. I sensed I had done something very important by being transparent, calling a spade a spade.

That initial experience of a tiny moral, spiritual breakthrough taught me that for most of us ordinary folk our first steps of obedience will seem to us and others to be too small and insignificant to be worthy of attention and pursuit. But they are priceless because they are acts of obedience no matter how small. They become the turning points in a person's life if he or she stays true and continues on to the next steps. C.S Lewis describes this battle so clearly and movingly: 'What saves a man is to take a step then another step.' The ancient Chinese taught, 'A journey of a thousand miles starts with the first step.'

In the next days I started to discover the meaning of what I had written and read out at the meeting. I decided to get up earlier in the morning to listen regularly. I was already reading my Bible and praying quite regularly. Now listening was added. And it was when I listened that the 'selfishness' that had come to me in my first time of listening some days earlier came back to me. What was I to do about it? I had to admit, 'Number 1 first and to hell with the rest!' was the resolutely held doctrine of my life.

I justified selfishness in everything I did. It was my security. I believed a very ordinary person like me could not afford to be selfless. This belief and the argument I had built around it was a very tough defensive barrier that effectively kept God out of my life. I had not realised that if this position is taken by everyone, society's decadence increases uncontrollably with everyone contributing to it, blaming one another and using different excuses. The smaller contributors to the decadence bitterly condemn the bigger contributors who simply become bolder in their ways as no one is accepting responsibility for the consequences of selfishness. Those who compromise in 'small ways whenever necessary for survival' end up being the unhappy losers.

One morning in my quiet time I asked in what ways I was being selfish. The first thought I wrote down was that the way I had solved a problem in my room was selfish and dishonest. One midnight after all had gone to bed I replaced the powerful light bulb in the common bathroom with the weaker bulb from my room. I decided to return the bulbs to their original places and then go and tell the warden what I had done and say sorry. As the warden was the most popular professor of English literature

in our college I feared what he would think, but worse, my brilliant class friends would come to know about it.

I decided to be faithful to the 'guidance from within', so I went to see the warden one evening. After listening carefully to what I narrated and my apology, he lent forward and shook my hand and said, 'Thank you for being honest. Keep it up!' He understood my crisis of trying to fight for something. And instead of the derision I dreaded I felt strong encouragement from him. I walked back to my room inspired and quite stunned. I had done something because it was right not because of what I would get from it!

Inspired by the first experiment I went on to write to my father and got honest with him about things I had done I was ashamed of and the times I had cheated him in the expense accounts I had sent him and asked for forgiveness. Although a political innocent, he was in Nagaon Central Jail in Assam as a 'political prisoner'. His letter in reply touched the most sensitive spot in me because he thanked me for my honesty and said what I had written had made him to think of the ways in which he had hurt our mother. He promised he would change and do things differently.

I was deeply stirred and amazed God had used my small step of obedience to inspire my father to do the thing that meant the most to me. Although I was away most of the time I came to know he kept his word and father was a different man. The change I sensed in my father was sustained very much by what I would call mother's Christ-centered Christianity.

The apology I made at a meeting in Madras city for the bitterness and hate in me towards India for what was happening in Nagaland, and the letter to a Nepali family back home in Kohima asking for forgiveness for having wished harm to come to them and their property when I was a school boy as they were 'outsiders', revealed the size of the problem and the answer I was accepting. I sensed I was being shown a path to walk that I could not treat casually. These small steps of obedience did not change what was going on in Nagaland or the world. But change had certainly started in me and my family. I decided I had found the way I was to live for myself and for my people.

After being away for years in different parts of India and the world I returned to the situation in Nagaland and the NE region. In no time I was in the middle of the overwhelming drugs and alcohol crisis in my family. Soon after, Naga Mothers Association asked me to be part of their valiant attempt to confront the crisis bringing our society down on its knees. The

challenge in its totality involves bringing about recovery in individuals for their rehabilitation through adequate psycho-spiritual counseling. As to be expected, the work for spiritual recovery in addicts linked me to Nagaland Baptist Church Council's wider related battle for healing and reconciliation in our society. These closer encounters with the deeper needs of our society caught in the upheavals of rapid changes showed the nature and size of the crisis. Trying to address the crisis revealed how much I too was indeed a co-addict, a part of the selfishness and greed paralysing our society I condemned.

While I was away in programmes and actions of 'remaking the world', others had become the owners of all the land in the Dimapur plains! My heart was often dry with resentment and covetousness whenever I came home. In dismay and distress I prayed, listened and examined my crisis. One morning this rather unorthodox thought came: Your obsession is to own a small piece of land! Why not claim ownership of the entire Naga homeland and take on to care for all the people in it? God was pulling my leg to say it was time I knew that if you want anything for yourself other than the building of the just society for all, the kingdom of God on earth as it must be in heaven, you may get what you want, but that's all there is to your life, nothing more! I saw light in the gloom.

I saw I was unhappy and insecure because I was looking for satisfaction in 'success' my way and had not dared to find out what I had or didn't have, and what I was meant to do with what I had rather than being envious of what others have. I asked, 'What is the most important thing to you for which you will give everything and what should you do for what is most important for you?' 'God wants you to give your very best for what is most important to you. That will be your joyous contribution to His world or kingdom on earth.'

I was ready. I said goodbye to the rather long list of what I didn't have! I might add that included capacity to do mathematics, physics, chemistry, law, and complicated things like that! But what I discovered to be most important, and which I had, were deep hunger for justice, peace, truthfulness, restoration and protection of our planet, and so on. Well, most people, apart from Donald Trump and his cabinet it seems want these things! So why complain, I was in good company!

I decided to want and fight only for the things I believe to be most important to prevail. After that the things I regretted I didn't have ceased to distract and drag me down. I found I started to really rejoice in the talents

and success of others. Serenity came from being happy that I am not more than what I am, but I am not less than what I am and the point is to use it to its maximum capacity to do what needs to be done, my contribution to God's plan for the world starting with those nearest to me.

'Who knows where madness lies? Perhaps to be too practical is madness? To surrender dreams, this may be madness? To seek treasure where there is only trash? Too much sanity may be madness! But maddest of all is to see life only as it is and not as it could be.' - (Don Quixote in *Man of La Mancha* by Miguel de Cervantes.)



### Something to Share

Oasis (A quarterly publication of Naga Christian Fellowship, Guwahati.),  
October-December Issue, 2005

*'Real peace building is living enquiry that requires truthfulness  
each step of the way.'*

We are so easily honest and loud about the wrongs and mistakes of others, but embarrassingly silent about our own wrongs and mistakes. The result - we become so right, but miserably unhappy and ineffective! It hurts others and they cannot trust us fully.

Crusading against what is wrong in others feeds our passion for revenge and success. But our silence about our own wrongs provokes them to justify themselves with greater anger. What are we doing to them and to ourselves? Christ said we are to give fish and bread, not snake and stone; our best, not our worst, to one another – his formula for building the kingdom of God on earth, meaning a just compassionate, creative society.

I have found that if I want to crusade for God in myself, priceless help comes from my family. They see and feel so clearly the things I do not see in myself which keep God out of my life and which cause resentment and distrust and others. I cherish the first time my son quietly told me not to boast during a conversation I was having with some friends. He was only eight. I was annoyed and almost told him to shut up. I was glad I did not, because something very precious was happening between us. Later that night I thanked him for telling me what he felt and asked him to tell me whatever he felt without any fear in the future also although I never liked

*A Naga Speaks*

being corrected. He told me, 'Don't worry. I will do that!' I realised that if due to pride I had told him to shut up I could have lost my son forever to fear, faithlessness, despair and loneliness – very often the door to drugs or alcohol.

After about six years of our marriage my wife one day told me in tears she was worn out by my bad temper, dishonesty and pride. She said, 'You have become good in many ways. But you don't know how your sharp temper and quick lies wound me. Whenever I try to point out your wrongs you hit back with your temper and clever reasons, which are not honest. The temper and dishonesty of a good man is so difficult to live with.'

I'll never forget the sobering experience and the agreement we reached that we were not to live in fear of telling whatever we sense or see in each other so that we may become what God means each one of us to be.

Frank Buchman, initiator of Moral Re-Armament, now called Initiatives of Change, said, 'Peace is not just an idea. It means people becoming different.'



### On the Rim of The Golden Triangle

*One in 90 people in Nagaland it is estimated is a drug addict. Niketu Iralu, a counsellor at the Mount Gilead Rehabilitation Centre, Sechü-Zubza, Nagaland, in 1989 and some months of 1990, and works closely with Naga Mothers Association (NMA) describes how local people are fighting back.*

Drugs are a terrible reality in many families in the State of Nagaland, including my own. According to official figures, we have 10,000 to 15,000 addicts – 5000 of them hardcore, in a population of under 900,000. Related to this is AIDS; a recent report reckoned that a major portion of India's HIV positive cases live near the Burmese border, in Nagaland and our neighbour Manipur.

My hometown, Kohima, lies on one of the main drug routes from Burma and the Golden Triangle to India's cities and the world. Nagaland's health department estimates that our drug addicts spend Rs 350 million a year. Our annual health budget is only Rs 230 million, so we do not have the resources to respond.

In 1988 Naga women gave up waiting for the government or men

*A Naga Speaks*

to do what was needed and set up Naga Mothers Association. This has rallied mothers in towns and villages all over the State to fight the menace of drugs and alcohol addiction and trafficking corroding society. These women are up against formidable odds; the purposelessness of young and old and the ruthless greed and cunning of the drug peddlers. They risk reprisal by helping the police to arrest the traffickers. They have shown us that we will only survive if we learn to care.

In 1989 drug addiction and alcoholism in my family in Nagaland brought me home from Western India where I had been living for 20 years. The NMA were just opening Mount Gilead Home, the first rehabilitation centre in North East India and they were looking for counselors. They asked me to work with them.

I hesitated, because I had no experience of dealing with addicts. I talked to Father Joe Pereira, the founder of India's most trusted rehabilitation centre, the KRIPA Foundation in Mumbai. He told me that the recovery programme for drug addicts follows the same principles as Alcoholics Anonymous, which came out of the Oxford Group (later MRA). As I had been working with MRA in India, he felt sure I could help.

One Sunday in church a group of boys and girls sang a hymn so beautifully that the whole congregation was moved. When I saw their impact I thought, 'that is the spirit of God which can heal people's hearts and souls. You are meant to enable that spirit to go into the addicts.'

So I went to Mount Gilead Home. The NMA General Secretary Neidonuo Angami had moved in to cook and do anything else needed to inspire the inmates. The four addicts there only wanted to sleep and eat. The first hurriedly trained counselors played games with them, sang songs and read Bible verses to them. We did not know what else to do.

One young man, C, did not want to talk and his bad moods affected everyone else. One day I told him to come and see me after dinner. 'Why are you in such despair, so hopeless?' I asked. 'I have come here because of my mother's pleading,' he replied. 'I have been to many of the detoxification courses in India and every time I reach home I have drugs in my pocket again because people in the hospitals give them to me.' His brother had said that he did not want C in his house anymore.

C told me that he was an epileptic, and that he had twice tried to kill himself, but had been saved by his family. Next time he said, he would succeed. 'So there is no point in my disturbing you or anybody else'.

I did not know what to say, but I had the sense that I must be bold in faith. So I told him there were many new ways of treating epilepsy. 'You will be OK', I said. 'Leave it to me'. I told him we were brothers for life, and that I was going to stand by him, because he was made in the image of God, and Christ died for him.

A little light came into his face 'nobody has faith in me anymore; I have no faith in myself,' he said. When he left at midnight, he said he'd think about what I'd said although he suspected it was just a pep talk from a counsellor trying to help.

There was a stream near the home from which water came to the centre. Next morning before our first session C came into my room with a big crab in his hand. He said he was on his way to the morning wash-up place when he saw the crab between two stones and he caught it. I told him it was the biggest I had seen in the area and that we would make him captain of our crab catching expeditions. I asked him to take it to the cook and I would announce before lunch that the special crab preparation for which we in our area go catching crabs was his contribution! He went away with a smile I had never seen before. Perhaps God had given him that crab to honour a decision to start afresh which he had made overnight; he needed to know that he could achieve something.

It was slow, but from that day he became less touchy. When he was in trouble he came and talked to the counselors. One step in the recovery programme involves putting things right. He laboriously wrote letters to all the members of his family, whose possessions he had sold to finance his habit.

After a year at Mount Gilead, C spent a year at KRIPA in Bombay. Today he counsels addicts outside the home – an ex-addict can communicate very well with fellow addicts. 'Now my Mother can sleep peacefully' he says.

We learned something vital from him for helping the other addicts; having faith in them and the vision that they will help others, sticking with them and never giving up. Today four are counsellors, others have returned to their jobs and one has gone to college to continue his studies. Many others have run away from the programme.

We only have facilities for 16 addicts, though the NMA is trying to build a centre for 30. We only accept those who have a medical certificate to prove they have been detoxified for the last 10 days. For the first few

days after detox they are calm and we try to provide the spiritual input, which will make them want to recover.

Our recovery programme is based on the 12 Steps of AA. Each day the addicts say a prayer: 'God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference.' When they learn to tackle the things they can change, they are on their way to recovery.





## World Matters

*My freedom has nothing to do with the oppressor*

Gandhi – Revolutionary With Do-Able Ideas	151
Crazywater And Alcoholism	155
Thoughts For Asia's 'Little Men In Rags'	158
10,000 Years In A Life Time: Learning To Respond	160
Perth - Raminigining - Panchgani	164
Saddam Hussein	172
Alcohol And Drugs – Are They WMD?	175

## Gandhi – the revolutionary with do-able ideas for everyone.

When Professor B B Kumar asked me again recently to write something on Mahatma Gandhi for *Astha Bharti*, my first response naturally was, 'What can a Naga in the remote corner where we are and some one who is not a scholar say anything that will have any value on a subject so widely known already?' Professor Kumar quietly insisted, and it is not easy to turn down a request from him as I know how selflessly he served the Nagas when he taught in colleges all over Nagaland. So what follows are some random reflections and comments.

When during the freedom struggle, Mahatma Gandhi was asked one day by a western journalist, 'What is your message?' Gandhi replied, 'My life is my message.' Perhaps it was the hunger in his own soul and spirit that made him to ask the question? Or may be he was looking for a headline for his report back to his paper. It sounded so simple but Gandhi did not need to say anything more. We know his reply to an American reporter's question, 'What do you think of Western civilisation?' was equally brief, 'It would be a very good idea.' Gandhi definitely got both men to look at their own lives.

In the first half of 1947, a delegation from the Naga National Council called on Gandhiji at his Bhangi Colony Ashram in New Delhi. Welcoming the Nagas he asked 'What can I do for you?' They said they had come to see him concerning the question of Naga freedom. Gandhi replied, 'You must be free. I became free long ago.' They asked, 'How can you say that? The British are still in Delhi and all over India!' Gandhi said, 'My freedom has nothing to do with whether the British are here or not.'

He went on to explain the fullest dimension of freedom he believed in and fought to achieve for himself and his people. For him political freedom on its own was a dangerously incomplete goal. When the Nagas said they were not going to give in to the threat the Governor of Assam had made, in response to the stand they had taken on the basis of their history, that he would deploy maximum force to suppress them, Gandhi told them, 'I will come and be the first man to be shot before any Naga is shot.'

The Naga delegation headed by A Z Phizo was made up mainly of elders from villages. They came back and told their people they believed Nagas would find the right solution with Gandhi. Not long after their return to Kohima, Gandhi was killed on his way to the evening prayer meeting

by three bullets from Nathuram Godse's handgun. He was killed because he was sticking to his vision of Hindu-Muslim harmony through radical, profound changes in individuals and on a massive scale.

He knew that kind of a change on both sides was not taking place right away to make him a political success but he was committed to what was right and would be best in the long run not just for Hindus and Muslims, but for the whole deeply divided human race. His life was his message, and it was unwavering commitment to live out what the Gita teaches, 'Do your duty and leave the result in His hands.'

Thirty years later I took Rajmohan Gandhi to meet A Z Phizo, my maternal uncle, who was in Bromley, Kent, at the time. The President of the NNC, his daughter and son laid on the best possible to receive Mahatma Gandhi's grandson. I always remember the dignified perfection of all the details of the tea that afternoon with some pride and satisfaction. I was struck by three other things. The first was how completely relaxed Phizo was and spoke from his heart and secondly, how sensitively Rajmohan listened to him giving complete attention. No doubt the quality of the listening enabled Phizo to be so relaxed. The third thing was the first point Phizo made after they sat down, 'Rajmohan, I have met quite a few people in my life. But I have never met anyone as truly happy as your grandfather was.' He was referring to the time he and his colleagues had met Mahatma Gandhi in Delhi. I remember being somewhat intrigued that happiness obviously meant so much to Phizo.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the all-out implementation of three ideologies to answer the rising needs and problems of mankind. The needs and problems were extraordinary challenges to human existence. The three ideologies were 'philosophies of life applied in action'. They were responses to the challenges that have produced the modern world.

Karl Marx's idea was that if circumstances became what they should be, all human beings would become one class and the new type of men and women would automatically treat one another justly. According to him the first step to create the right circumstances was to destroy the existing unjust structures and the exploitative classes defending their vested interests in the oppressive structures. Adolf Hitler's idea was that the Germanic race was the master race and it alone was fit to rule mankind.

Mankind watched Karl Marx's idea expressed in *Das Kapital*, and Adolf Hitler's idea expressed in *Mein Kampf* being implemented by human beings demonising, despising, blaming, hanging, executing, gassing and

removing by force other human beings on unprecedented scales and relocating them elsewhere, to achieve the world order the two ideas based on class and race proclaimed.

The world also watched Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, the 'naked fakir', steadfastly mobilising the vast seemingly helpless millions of his people, 'men of dust', who became fearless satyagrahis and implemented his ideas as explained and demonstrated in his book, *My Experiments with Truth*.

The first two ideas sought to justify man's ways to man. The third idea justified God's ways to man so that his progress and growth in all dimensions may not be at the mercy of human tyranny of any kind. The first two ideas have turned out to be misleading temptations. The third idea was a calling to the deepest values in the conscience of human beings. Gandhi by his life based on his experiments showed that these values grow steadily if listened to with sufficient attention and obeyed.

It was this calling that the 24-year-old Gandhi recognised and decided to obey when he rose from the cold lonely railway station platform of Pietermaritzburg in Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa, where he had been violently thrown down by the white ticket collector who told him he had no right to be traveling in a compartment for whites only. Gandhi had come to South Africa at the invitation of a Parsi family to start his legal career. He was dressed as an Englishman and as a citizen of the British Empire he saw no reason why he could not travel in any railway compartment in South Africa like any other citizen of the Empire.

The humiliation meted out to him by the huge, brutish white man was total. It is said 'Humiliation is the nuclear bomb in human relations at the personal as well as at the international level.' The profound spiritual awareness he had received from childhood from his parents and community based on the teachings of the Gita and the other books of Hindu scripture won that night in the battle raging in the heart and conscience of the young Gujarati from Porbandar. Gandhi took his hurt and humiliation to the God of Truth he was beginning to turn to, instead of to himself with his human ego, pride and prejudices. The rest is history, as we say.

Young Lenin returned home from school one day and found the newspaper on the table with the headline news that his elder brother whom he adored and his fellow activists who had tried to assassinate the Czar of Russia had been hanged by the Secret Police. Lenin read it, threw it on the ground, spat on it, and declared, 'I will make them pay.' More or less

the same story is repeated in Stalin's and Mao's stories.

The day after Saddam Hussein was caught by the American GIs, the picture of the pathetic rat hole in an obscure part of Baghdad in which he was trying to hide was in the papers and on TV all the world. One of the articles wrote about his childhood. His stepfather was an extremely bitter and cruel man. Saddam was told he could wear his shoes only during class hours. He was to walk to school and back home with his shoes strung around his neck so that the soles may last long. The humiliation he suffered daily because of his stepfather's sadistic cruelty towards him wounded him deeply. Saddam often told close colleagues later in life what the humiliation had done to him. The colleagues he suspected were shot point-blank one day at a closed door meeting at the beginning of his take-over of the Baa'th Socialist Party of Iraq. Saddam too clearly took his humiliation and hurt to himself and he set out to make his nation and the world pay for what he had suffered.

Soon after joining Madras University in 1955 to start my BA, I was given a copy of *My Experiments with Truth* by a friend from England, working with Moral Re-Armament, now called Initiatives of Change. I started to read and I couldn't put it down. I wept when I saw that Gandhi's utter rejection of selfishness, fear and deceitfulness by obeying the 'still small voice within' was the exact opposite of the life I was living and justifying. I must have wept because I sensed hope for myself and the hunger to be defiant against what is wrong was beginning to be born within me.

Why has Gandhi become the super star of the modern world, emerging as the one whose ideas won the 20<sup>th</sup> century contest and became the philosophy and path for change for the great heroes of the 21<sup>st</sup> century? The list of his spiritual children are impressive – Martin Luther King Jr, the Russian and East European dissidents, Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu, the Dalai Lama, Aung San Suu Kyi, and the latest Chinese Nobel laureate for peace and human rights, Liu Xiaobo. Is not the explanation for his popularity in the do-ability of his ideas? 'Be the change you want to see in the world.' This is possibly his most popular teaching or message today. Who has not instinctively felt the calling tugging at his/her mind and soul to start to be the change though the wrongs are so formidable?

The Nagas who called on him at his Bhangi Colony Ashram, I believe, definitely felt this tugging. As for me, not long after the shedding of my tears in response to the challenge of his stories to me, I decided to

*A Naga Speaks*

start making my own experiments with truth in very small things and to keep doing it so that I may be the change I long for in Nagaland and beyond, inspiring others to do likewise.

‘The still small voice is the only tyrant to whom I bend my knees.’ ‘There is enough in the world for everyone’s needs. But not for everyone’s greed.’ If these are to be ignored by the world today because of the price tags on them to be truthful and to care and share enough, just and peaceful growth for all will become impossible. They are found to be doable, if you and I will do them step by step, one day at a time, because the dangers and opportunities facing the world demand us to do so.

### Crazywater and Alcoholism

A book review by Niketu Iralu

*Skwidayabo, deganigohadaynyohs, imialuk, nedotou and gahtonejabee*, are some of the native American names for alcohol, meaning ‘firewater’, ‘the mind-changer’, ‘bad water’, ‘white man’s water’ and ‘crazywater’! To the Ojibway Tribe, a drunkard is *geeshkwaybee*, Crazy-in-the-head!

A Canadian friend has sent *Crazywater* by Brian Maracle. The book was a national bestseller in Canada in 1993. The 48-year old author, journalist and broadcaster is a native of the Mohawk Nation of the Six Nations Grand River Territory in Ontario. It is now derogatory to call his people *Red Indians*. They are now *First Nation people*.

*Crazywater* is a collection of heart-breaking interviews with 75 native alcoholics. It gives a close-up picture of the massive damage that alcohol and other substances have inflicted on the original inhabitants of Canada over the past centuries. The stark portrait of tragedy that emerges from the words of Onkwehonwe men and women of Great Turtle Island (North America) is shocking, profoundly moving and powerfully uplifting.

The reason for this triple impact on the heart and mind probably comes from the fact that a highly acclaimed recovering alcoholic native thinker helps his people to tell their story of rugged bravery and defiance, tragic weaknesses and failures, but now managing to come into their own again. The story vividly shows that the First Nation People (Onkwehonwe, Iroquois word for ‘the real people’) have begun to emerge from the tunnel

*A Naga Speaks*

they had entered when the Europeans took over their vast, rich and beautiful continent.

Acknowledging the co-operation he received, Maracle writes, 'My idea for the book is rooted in the fact that native wit and wisdom is largely unknown and unappreciated – so I have used the oral history format to let the people tell their own stories and bring their talents to light...I can't think of a better way to get the reader to share our shame, pain, anger, joy and celebration.'

In the introduction he writes, 'This, then, is about our people's involvement with alcohol. I interviewed native people only because this book is meant to be our story. The non-native experts have all had their say. Now it's our turn.'

'Drink no firewater of the white man. It makes you mice for the white men who are cats. Many a meal they have eaten of you.' Skenando, Oneida Chief said these words of wisdom to his people at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Before the Europeans came, native people had their pride and culture intact – 'they had no need for the obliterating powers of alcohol to cope with the repressive and depressive elements of contemporary society.' Native people's first contact with alcohol was probably a thousand years ago when the first Vikings stepped ashore the Atlantic coast of Canada. 'The Onkwehonwe have been on a downhill slide ever since,' says Maracle.

Smallpox, measles, malaria, yellow fever and influenza killed 50 to 90% of the natives because they were totally unexposed to these diseases. Although alcohol was not as instantly deadly as the new germs that came from Europe, its fatal effects on them have remained as strong as ever. The modern era native alcoholism started in the 18th century mainly through European fur-traders and whiskey sellers. Recalling this, native people 'burn with resentment or wince with sadness over family and tribal histories scarred by greed and alcohol.' Some accounts of those days talk of entire native communities being drunk whenever they traded their fur with whiskey, or crying when the supply of 'firewater' failed to arrive.

The individual narrations of personal experiences in the book start with Isaiah, a 76-year old Cree from Northern Quebec. The last story is that of Johana, a 27-year old Chipeweyan woman from a fur trap line in Northern Alberta. Described as 'tall, thin and strikingly attractive' she is 'fifth generation to the cycle and disease of alcoholism'. Due to physical and

sexual abuse in childhood, she became a wild and turbulent alcoholic when she became a teenager.

Her story, like those of the others in the book, is an account of being traumatised by abuses, being shocked and unnurtured from childhood and becoming totally unmanageable and dysfunctional in later years. She however recovers her sobriety.

She says, 'My people are on a journey of healin' so that we will rightfully take our place in this society and I see how I play a part as a recovered alcoholic. Yes. I am doin' this for myself. But I am not doin' it alone. I am frontierin' a crusade of a people that are now awakenin'. I am not only healin' from the wounds of war, I am healin' from the greatest wounds that I spiritually have had to endure. And that's the wounds that are inflicted by this disease of alcoholism. Because they destroyed me and my family and my people to the depth of hell.'

Maracle declares, 'Old Man Canada stripped us of our land, languages, culture, dignity, traditional economies, governments and social structures...robbed us, raped us and left us with no pride in the past and no hope for the future.... Coldly and deliberately poisoned us with his policies and legislation just as surely as if he had held us to the ground with his knees on our chest and used a funnel to pour the booze down our throat. Are we as native people, then, completely and solely to blame for our alcoholism? No. But it's time we stop blaming others and started accepting responsibility for changing the situation we're in. The problem of native alcoholism won't be solved until we face up to the problem as individuals and as a people... We have a huge drinking problem. That's one of the reasons I decided to do this book. I think *Crazywater* will contribute to this national admission.'

Making a powerful call 'to start the national healing because healing must begin,' Maracle asks all Canadians to understand the native alcoholic's 'pain and the circumstances that put him there'.

*Crazywater* celebrates sobriety and a revival of native culture and traditional spirituality. Maracle states, 'I want people to know that there is a cultural and spiritual revival under way in native communities and it is being inspired and led by sober people. Despite the devastation we have endured, the Onkwehonwe are going to heal and grow stronger.'



### Thoughts for Asia's 'little men in rags'

*In a stark, short scene in a new stage production called *Song of Asia*, a guerrilla says the following soliloquy:*

*Is hate wrong?*

*Will it destroy us as well as those we want destroyed?*

*But without it, how are we going to make sure we don't get exploited?*

*And what about those who've died? Those in prisons?*

*They are forgotten. We have become like some abandoned mines where only foul gases remain.*

*We say we love our people. But will our greater love for our own success and glory condemn us*

*to give our worst to those who mean the most to us?*

*Is it cowardly to forgive?*

*If I can have the courage to kill a man, can't I also have the courage to love him enough*

*to make him a different man?*

Is this man a Mizo or a Naga of India's North East? Or is he a Kachin or a Karen of Burma? A Che Guevarist of Sri Lanka? He could be anyone of them, or any one of the countless 'little men in rags' in Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia or Vietnam. He could even be a Khampa of Tibet, the forgotten fighter on the roof of the world.

The dilemmas tearing the heart of the guerrilla apart are as immediate as the sodden jungle around him in which he has become a hunted animal, day in and day out.

Or perhaps it is one of those clear evenings in spring or autumn just as the sun is setting. There is not a cloud in the sky to hide the stars. The jungle noises of birds and myriad insects and animals have just started to well out from the trees and bushes and the holes in the ground. In such a setting of dreamlike harmony, anyone can start to think. From somewhere, someone seems to say:

*Be not afraid, this land is full of noises, sounds,*

*and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not*

*.....and dreaming.*

*The clouds, methought, would open and show riches*

**A Naga Speaks**

*Ready to drop upon me: that, when I waked,  
I cried to sleep again.  
.....This will prove a brave kingdom to me,  
Where I shall have my music for nothing .  
.....That shall be by and by.*

It is one of the most difficult things not to feel intensely possessive of one's land wherein such enchanting rural beauty exists. Then there are the thousand and one experiences and memories of one's people associated with the land. Above all, blood has been shed in the fight to defend the ancestral land from being taken and exploited by others too strong to resist. Friends and relations have been killed or large numbers of them are already in jails or maimed for life. The traditional code of honour and revenge is not to be so easily cast aside. All these and more contribute to the making of the tough 'little men in rags' who have made large tracts of the Asian continent, particularly the South-East, known for insurgency wars since the Second World War.

And yet, the aspirations, all the sacrifices and the cruelties perpetrated in the name of the cause so often altogether don't add up to much in the end because the larger problems and issues in the background are ignored. And the political and economic compulsions of a rapidly changing world harshly intrude into all the dreams.

Because of a combination of factors such as more money being spent for development, better weapons used by more soldiers to squash insurgents, some shift in the strategic interests of the larger powers and sheer fatigue on the part of men who have spent years in the countryside, it would seem that guerrilla activities have started to slacken in a number of Asian countries. And the weary men are said to be continuously retuning home in larger numbers.

The frequent ceasefire violations in Indo-China notwithstanding, increasingly the emphasis is now on planning for the reconstruction of the war-ravaged lands. The statesmen and the experts, who want real stability to come to this vitally strategic region of South-East Asia, will merely prepare the ground for worse upheavals in the coming years if they are planning for economic and social rehabilitation alone.

Dr Frank Buchman, initiator of Initiatives of Change, once said of war-stricken Europe: 'Upon a foundation of changed lives, permanent reconstruction is assured. Apart from changed lives, no civilisation can

***A Naga Speaks***

endure.' If brilliant schemes for material reconstruction are not to escalate into uncontrolled chaos and corruption, the wounds in the hearts of millions have somehow got to experience healing and forgiveness.

The tragic weakness with guerrilla uprising is that, for all their fury, they are always inadequate reactions to the wrongs and dangers they are supposed to remedy. The cost in terms of lives destroyed is always exorbitant without the wrongs being touched or cured. And the moral and spiritual chaos unleashed because of the short-cut means adopted of violence eventually destroys what has seemingly been achieved politically or otherwise. The Middle East and Indo- China crises amply illustrate this.

For the sake of themselves and the world, those who are prepared to suffer heroically and die for their regional rights or interests need urgently to learn to change the people of the class, the race or the country they hate and fear. At least some of the 'little men in rags' and their children will take up this highly demanding revolutionary trail.



### 10,000 years in a Life time: Learning to respond

*P*apua New Guinea (PNG), home of the incomparable *Bird of Paradise*, is a most interesting, extraordinary beautiful and rich nation rising in the South Pacific. The 6 million Melanesian people speaking over one thousand dialects, living on 600 islands are creating a modern nation out of their difficult diversities. They are transforming their worst problems into their common national wealth and strength. They have made serious mistakes as all nations do, but they are learning from them and making progress.

Albert Maori Kiki was born in a remote village on one of the islands of PNG where his people still lived in the Stone Age. Somehow his parents managed to put him in a primary school run by Christian Missionaries. Eventually he became a student of the University of PNG that had been established by Australia, the nation entrusted by the UN to govern and prepare PNG to become an independent nation. When PNG became independent in the 70s, the young man was one of the few who had graduated from the University. He was made the first Foreign Minister of his country and sent to the UN headquarters in New York to represent PNG.

Not long after that he was decorated by the Queen of England,

*A Naga Speaks*

the Head of the Commonwealth and called Sir Albert Maori Kiki. His experiences of coming from a stone age village to graduating from a modern University to representing his nation at international conferences, rubbing shoulders with foreign ministers and diplomats from the most advanced nations of the world explaining, defending and guiding his nation's policies were all so extraordinary but also frightening. He understood from his own experiences that the central crisis of his people was the need to learn too many extremely important things and ways of solving problems in too short a time which advanced societies have learned properly from their trials and mistakes over many centuries. He wrote his autobiography and called it *10,000 Years In A Lifetime*.

We cannot disagree that the title of his book correctly describes the crisis we Nagas are also going through. Let us consider how we are responding in our own situation and how that is shaping our society.

Speaking of a people in a certain situation G K Chesterton observed, 'It is not that they do not know the solution, it is that they do not know the problem.' This too is saying something about us.

We Nagas know all the solutions. Indeed we want only the best solutions. But it seems the solution we need cannot be achieved unless we first understand our central problem and address it. And that indisputably is our inability to respond correctly and properly to the challenge, difficulties and opportunities the world has brought to us.

Many of the shortcomings and mistakes in our responses to the challenges in our changing situations, are beyond our control. We cannot be blamed for many of them as we have not confronted them in our journey before, but we too should realise that challenges are going to increase, that they are the most essential parts of the journey all peoples undertake to go forward, that we are to accept them and learn to respond to them. Making mistakes and failing to respond adequately resulting in serious consequences is also part of the journey. But dishonest denial and justification of our mistakes and failures due to pride, fear and selfishness, and not learning from them is our crime and sin, which have rapidly increased evil in our society.

The 70-year political struggle by the Naga to defend their history and pursue their aspirations can be said to be the most deeply felt experience of all Nagas. It was their response to the challenges the changing world made them to face. As we all know the changes and the challenges increased rapidly for us in all other fields of life also. Thus, a

### *A Naga Speaks*

people, not used to being familiar with other processes of politics, culture, religion and social and economic development taking place in the wider world, found themselves compelled to learn totally new ways to survive and succeed.

Not surprisingly, majority of our people have found the experience to be a slow-motion nightmare that seems to be unending because in so many cases countless families have collapsed repeatedly due to their inability to match the multiple changes and challenges, and their despair has become too heavy for them.

*10,000 Years In A Lifetime* is the heartbreaking crisis of our people also. Those who are not getting beyond the hand-to-mouth dance of daily existence dream of one day rising to the level of those who now seem to be 'successful'. Those of us who have 'succeeded' or are succeeding, look modern, smell modern, talk modern, driving around in traffic – clogging automobiles that contribute Nagaland's humble share to the carbon pollution of our planet, becoming thereby qualified as modern men and women! Yet from our perilous perches of success we wonder how we too have become a part of such a costly venture that seems to be going nowhere and causing so much damage?

What then are we to do? Is deciding not to do anything the solution? Because to do anything seems to add to the wrongs that are already there? Some of us may be tempted to draw this dangerous and misleading conclusion from the confusing questions of life.

To grow fully is the whole purpose of life. And that boils down to learning to respond to the challenges and needs in the situation we face daily.

The first thing to do in learning to respond to challenges is to examine honestly our lives as individuals, and our society's or people's struggle. This will clearly reveal where things are going right or going wrong. Without this honest examination or evaluation the life of a person or the struggle of a people become worthless, meaningless and impossible. We know this from what is happening to the Naga struggle and from our own lives.

How to examine my life or your life? From numerous examples in history we know the only way to properly examine and evaluate what has happened or is going on in order to know what is to be done is to give sufficient time daily to listen to the still small voice inside ourselves,

to listen to others within and outside my own family. This must be done daily with discipline. The best time to do this is early in the morning. If my purpose of life is big enough I will need to actually write down the thoughts going on in myself as I listen and reflect and meditate. At first, and often, this extra discipline of experimenting with listening to discover the truth and to obey it will be awkward and seem unnecessary. But the serious nation-builder will find it to be normal living to be effective.

The discoveries that will be made from such a continuous process of experiments with reality are endless and life becomes adventurous with unexpected initiatives and breakthroughs. This is true because if I dare to ask what is really going on in me I will see what needs to be done. Faithful obedience to what I am shown by God in my soul, conscience and mind will prove that God and Satan indeed are fighting to control me in the big things and in the small details of life which I often ignore as unimportant which is foolish. Big doors swing on small hinges, it is said. According to my response, God or the devil wins. Both are helpless without my cooperation.

The story of every nation is told in the quality of the responses of its citizens, individually and collectively, to the challenges and requirements of the situations the nation has lived through.

The story of Sechü-Zubza has just started. But already it is becoming the home of people from different villages, tribes, races, religions and educational institutions. We are even told before too long it will be an important railway station. With the priceless, still serene and beautiful ecosystem of the mountain ranges towering above Kiruphema, Sechüma, Mezoma and Thekrüdzüma and beyond in its background, this well-watered town that started out as an obscure settlement has a promising future. The pioneers who started its humble story could not have imagined what we are beginning to see today?

The question for all of us who have made, and will make Sechü-Zubza our home is what will make us citizens who are truthful and farsighted, and people who care for the endangered trees, streams, rivers and the delicate balance that keeps the mountain slopes undamaged and all the insects, birds and animals in them safe? Or will our thoughtless destructive living simply increase the despair and cynicism of the Naga about the future?

## Perth - Ramingining - Panchgani

October 1990

In 1990 as the time approached for our return to Panchgani from Australia, it occurred to us that we might leave from Darwin, instead of Perth, and include in the process a visit to Ramingining in Arnhemland, Northern Territory, accepting an invitation Ron and Cynthia Lawler had extended a year back. They wanted to discuss an idea they had of some of their Aboriginal friends visiting India and also for us to meet those who had shown some interest in the venture.

So when Ron confirmed that the invitation still stood, we set off from Perth by bus on July 30 at night. It was difficult to say goodbye to our family at home and at the station. Our good friends Doreen Walters and the Cartwrights also drove across the city to see us off. Vipulie wrote his uncle David from Darwin, 'You must all be so sad as we are.'

We broke journey at Broome for 24 hours, catching up on some rest. Seeing the famous pearling centre on the north-west coast was worthwhile. Our next stop was Darwin the capital of the Northern Territory. We spent a most enjoyable 36 hours staying with Christine's aunt, Colleen, and her husband, Roly Mousinho. In between extensive drives seeing the beautiful spacious city with its many races, we sat in their spa in the garden. On August 5, we sat off again on the last leg of our journey to Ramingining, 400 kms to the East. Arriving in Kakadu after the two-hour bus journey, we were met by Ron, eight-year old Teresa and Peter Minyngululu, an Aboriginal fellow worker. We spent the rest of the day seeing Kakadu National Park.

One would like to write so much about Kakadu. But it would be possible to give only a few facts from the tourist brochure. Roughly 20,000 sq kms in size, almost the entire drainage basin of the South Alligator River flowing North in to the sea lies within its boundaries. Within Kakadu are found most of the major habitat types of Australia's 'Top End'. Many of the variety of plant and animals found here are rare or occur nowhere else and species new to science continue to be found. Some of the birds fly in from as far away as Scandinavia in their yearly migration.

There is scientific evidence that the first Australians arrived here about 25,000 years ago, perhaps even 50,000 years. The archaeological and rock art sites in Kakadu provide insight into Aboriginal culture and

*A Naga Speaks*



the environmental changes witnessed through the centuries. We saw the cave paintings at Anbangbang beneath Noorlangie Rock. Gazing at the distinct but fading artistic expressions on the stone face one felt linked to something from the Dream Time.

This unique park has qualified for UNESCO's World Heritage listing on the basis of both its natural and its cultural values. The Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service runs Kakadu with the fullest participation of the traditional owners of the land. (Evidence this year confirms a minimum of 65,000 up to 80,000 years of Aboriginal habitation in this area.)

Early on August 6, we packed into the four-wheel drive Toyota Landcruiser that Ron had brought and set off for the nine hour drive equipped with the permit from the Land Council required by all outsiders to enter Arnhemland Trust area. On the way, we saw brumbies (wild horse) and water buffaloes roaming wild in the extensive forest of Pandanus palms, tall grasses, towering termite mounds and eucalyptus. At 4.30 p.m. we arrived to a warm, homely welcome by Cynthia and 2½ year-old Timothy. We had covered 4,500 kms by road since we left Perth!

The Administrative Township of Ramingining was established about 20 years back to service programmers of development for the Aboriginal communities in the area. About 550 traditional people and 50 or so whites called *balandas*, who are teachers and technical advisers live here. The Resource Centre of which Ron is the Chief Coordinator functions as an incorporated NGO. They work closely with the Northern Land Council, which is part of the framework provided in the N.T Land Rights Act of 1976.

The council comprises traditional landowners representing the 20,000 local Aborigines whose home is the Eastern part of the Land Trust. The Land Trust, one of many across Australia created by an Act of Parliament, is 100,000 sq kms. The Native Australians have full control of the respective Land Trust they live in, according to traditional claims.

Travelling across Australia one inevitably reflects on what has happened in the unequal encounter between the Aborigines and the Europeans. Outnumbered and pushed to the margins in their own land, the Aborigines face a superhuman challenge to survive as a viable community. The rules of the game of economic progress run counter to their traditional ways and beliefs to which they have been attuned for centuries, thereby deepening their despair. Tiny ethnic groups elsewhere in the Americas,



Africa and Asia are similarly placed. In the terms in which mankind assesses racial strength and success, the humiliation suffered by the Aborigines is total.

One naturally asks why defeat so complete should be the lot of many people? No satisfactory answers emerge because history has numerous examples of conquests and defeats that seem so unjust. However what is undeniable is that the humiliation and defeat experienced by the Aborigines has become the measure of the humility that white Australia in their conscience know they should accept for themselves.

Is it not true that the Aborigines in their suffering hold the standard with which Australia's stature as a nation will for ever be judged? It is certainly true that more Australians than the world will be aware of, today accept that standard as the basic of their own lives. If we let him, God does seem to recycle our worst defeats, hurts and shames to produce new life for the world.

In trying to understand the trauma of the Aborigines and the burden of blame the whites are subjected to, one finds there is no room for self-righteousness on anyone's part if one is really truthful. Had Asians, instead of Europeans, possessed of the requisite venturing spirit, colonised Australia, would they have treated the Native people better?

Not likely, judging by the examples of extreme cruelty in the history of Asian nations. And knowing the mess and chaos so much of their continent has been reduced to, it may be nearer the truth to assume that Asians would have been more destructive colonisers both for the natives and the environment. What about Arabs and Africans? They too will not find it easy to claim more than what their records warrant.

The Dalai Lama of Tibet, while paying tribute to some great examples of Europeans showing care and compassion for those in need through practical service, observed, 'We in the East tend to do it by meditation only!' Would this have some bearing on the quality of the care and attention individual Asians would have shown to Aborigines? One must not generalise but one must be open in searching for the truth. The main question out of all this is possibly how many of us as individuals do live so that at the level of our races and nation there would be less cruelty and exploitation.

In the *Sydney Morning Herald* in August 1989, Charles Perkins made a forceful call to his people and Australia. A football hero in his youth and a

formal head of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Perkins is a nationally known personality. Stating that his people had come to a watershed in their historical development, he said, 'History cannot be undone. There will always be difficulties, but we must stop carrying the cross of history into the future. White people must be released from their conscience about the past of new positive relationship between the black and white... the essential goal for the next decade would be for Aboriginal people to be given and grasp the first real opportunity to create their destiny and control their affairs. The Government should facilitate the construction of an appropriate environment to allow Aboriginal people to grasp more readily the options that arise. However the real key lies within ourselves. It is ours to create. We have to provide the leadership. We have to overcome the often self-inflicted "poor bugger me" syndrome. And we can. The time for crying in our beer is over.'

Pointing out the healing role, the Aboriginal people are now required to play to take Australia forward, he declared, 'Aboriginal people have the power to help unite this nation and give it a real reason for being. We Aborigines must struggle not only for our dignity but also for that of Australia. Our country needs us and we need it. If we find ourselves, we can create a nation and what a great nation it can be.'

In Ramingining you come face to face with what the two races finding themselves and creating a nation together boil down to when the project is attempted in real life.

The day after our arrival, Ron told us during lunch break how savagely he had been criticised and maligned by one of the men from an outstation at the meeting surveying development priorities. As the charges were unfair, the outcome of political machinations of certain factions, Ron clearly wondered if what he was attempting was worth its while at all.

That afternoon we ran into the same gentlemen with members of family when we went to see various facilities being installed at one of outstations. The family was about to start their barbeque by the side of a beautiful *billabong* (big pond with fish, crocodiles, turtles and water birds surrounded by trees). They had shot a wallaby on the way back from the meeting referred to. Their tractor and trailer were parked near the fire-pit where mud bricks cut from termite mounds were already red hot. Without hesitation Ron walked up and shook hands with the man who had so maliciously attacked him only hours before.

We were introduced to the family. It all seemed as if nothing had

### *A Naga Speaks*

happened but we knew that Ron was deliberately paying his share of the price to help create an atmosphere of cooperation and goodwill that Perkins had appealed for. Meanwhile the wallaby had been singed and our friend started to cut open the animal, explaining the quickest way to do it.

Christine who had shown some reluctance in getting down from the Toyota because of the phalanx of dogs that had welcomed us counted that eighteen of them were now intently watching the surgery in progress, some of them tilting their heads to get a better view. As we drove out we met the tractor that had gone a few minutes back returning with leaves of a particular tree to be used in the barbequing of the carcass that would be placed on the burning bricks.

We understood why Ron's firm line against using the centre's vehicles for hunting expeditions, in accordance with council rules, was unpopular. I was reminded of the government jeeps and trucks in Nagaland being similarly used by high officials and their families. Ron and Cynthia using their own Toyota for private errands have helped to establish some simple but much needed norms for the operation of Resource Centre.

We were astonished by the number of well-known painters we were privileged to meet as we visited some of the individuals who may come to India. One day we met George Millpururru in the arts centre where we had gone to see the latest collection of bark paintings from the area. One could sense the strong personality of Millpururru. He barely uttered a word sitting on his haunches on the floor.

As he left clad only in a pair of blue cotton drill shorts we found it hard to believe that this man walking back to his temporary shelter near the water tank had for a number of years sold his paintings to collectors and public art galleries in Australia, Europe and North America. Last year he earned \$65,000 from his paintings. He is expected to do much better this year.

While visiting Albert Djiwada, one of the senior most leaders in Arnhemland, we met 'Dollar' David Malangi, known for his artwork on the Australian one-dollar note. Another artist who showed no sign of his celebrity status was 'G'dayG'day' of well-known TV documentaries. His full name is Phillip Gudthaykudthay. Otto Bulmaniya, another artist, also plans to come to India. He told us money from a bark painting would pay for his ticket.

His father, Brian Nyinawanga, gave us emu feather whisks as a

souvenir when we called on him. Sitting next to him on the ground was Wally Lippiwanga who had just returned from a concert tour of West German cities. Again there was not the slightest sign from him to indicate that he was 'foreign-returned' as we say in India.

One of the most beautiful outstations we visited was Gattji, an hour's drive to northwest. The drive took us through flatland wooded with short-statured trees. The seasonal road, which disappears during monsoon flooding, was bumpy whenever it was part of the buffalo tracks. As we reached the treeless plains we were on the edge of the Arafura Swamps. In the distance we saw a semi-circle of white cutting across the brown grassland. As we drove near the white arc heaved and soon thousands of big water birds were graciously rising into the air.

How tranquil and pleasant the evening was as we sat under a massive banyan-like tree with the cool breeze blowing in from the sea. We heard the muffled roar of the tractor Noel, the lone mechanic of the centre, was using to uproot the trees and level the ground to provide the tiny community with an airstrip. We learned that every outstation will be similarly provided eventually.

As we left several young men drove in, in a utility truck. They went over to the ever-live radio set and talked to their friends in another settlement. As every outstation is equipped with a wireless set, whatever is said by anyone is known by everyone in no time. I expressed my admiration and envy for their communication which in many places like mine one could only dream of. For one thing it would be impossible to secure permission for the wireless sets.

Ron told us on the way back that the senior elder whom he had been talking to had confirmed that his parents and other relations were shot in the fifties by white cattlemen who tried to drive them away from their land. One understood the still raw wounds and the distrust that people like Ron across Australia have to work with in their efforts to generate economic development so that 'Aboriginal people may grasp the first real opportunity to create their destiny and control their affairs.'

A conversation that I will long remember was with Jimmy Wululu. Seated on the ground outside his house he called for his guns and fishing spears to be brought for us to see, just as a Naga patriarch in his house would have done. Listening to our replies about our work in India he suddenly said, 'So you believe in God? I believe in God. Last month I was in Darwin. I was gambling and I lost \$100. Only \$200 was left in my pocket.'

### *A Naga Speaks*

God said, "Jimmy stop it. You know you shouldn't be doing this".

He then told us about his visit to New York with other artists from the area. At a reception in the home of a very wealthy man, their host asked him to at least sample some of his expensive liquor. Jimmy stuck to fruit juice because he had decided against alcohol and *kava* knowing what they are doing to his people. (*Kava*, a herbal extract, used in traditional ceremonies in Fiji, recently introduced in NT to fight alcoholism but fast becoming a serious narcotic problem). He said some of his friends couldn't stand straight at the end of the party! Jimmy said he was very keen to visit India and he would also sell one of his paintings to cover his travel expenses.

We no longer doubted the lawyers' claim that there are more artists to the square inch in Arnhemland than anywhere else on earth. According to Wally Camana, Curator of Aboriginal Art at the National Gallery in Canberra, 'The work of leading Australian Aboriginal painters represent a major chapter in the story of art today.' We were fortunate to have met some of these artists who so warmly welcomed us to their community. And while on the subject, a word of appreciation should be added for the kindness and friendship we received from Djon Mundine and his wife. They have developed the Ramingining Art Centre to what it is today.

An Aboriginal from New South Wales, Djon is the art advisor for the area. He is said to have played a key part in placing the work of the Arnhemland painters where it is in the art world today. We had the joy of meeting him a few times. Every time he patiently explained the complicated details of the paintings as he is well informed in the traditional beliefs of the people and therefore the meaning of art. Quite frequently he receives calls from distant cities in Australia and the West commissioning local artists to supply specified numbers of painting for private collections art galleries. He fixes the prices on behalf of the artists. He told us about his extensive travels in India some years back.

Of course we had two encounters with crocodiles during our stay! The first one was when a baby croc was passed around at Otto's place for close inspection. The second time was when we saw a grown-up one slide smoothly into Glyde River. Not far down we had crossed the river twice for the visit to the outstation from where David Gulpilill of *Storm Boy* and *Crocodile Dundee* fame comes.

Having noticed that right from Kakadu, Ron made sure he was sufficiently near us and kept a watchful eye for movements whenever we

### *A Naga Speaks*

went near any stream or *billabong* we learned to respect the skills of one of nature's cleverest and fastest hunters. For short distances a croc can outrun horses!

Many vivid pictures of Ramingining stand out in our memory: Teresa 'attending' her morning 'School of the Air' classes sitting by her two-way radio and skillfully operating the set conversing with the teacher in Katherine, hundreds of miles to the southwest; Tim going off to school, all dressed up and returning with his pants and shirt on his shoulders often surrounded by a herd of camp dogs who hide him up to his shoulders, suggestive of Charlie Brown and his daily travails.

Teresa showing strong signs of soon founding the region's first branch of the SPCA and Tim indicating what he'd be prepared to do to these local dogs that roam and bark around him freely; Cynthia cooking a chicken and preparing corn-beef sandwiches so that four senior ladies and an invalid boy may have fresh meals every day. They receive their Social Security dole but are unable to cook for themselves. And for someone from a country where villagers collect the smallest twig for cooking, the tonnes upon tonnes of fallen trees rotting or burning away in the forest for miles and miles in every direction are an unforgettable sight.

To all that we had seen and experienced with much gratitude, especially the friendship and hospitality of our host, we had now to say goodbye. As the twin engine Cessna C-4 of Air North International climbed into the sky, we could see the Lawlers' family Toyota returning to Ramingining in a trail of dust. The generous support they and friends in Melbourne extended had enabled us to make a visit to one of the world's unique regions, which not many can afford to make.

When our little plane took off again after the brief stop at Galiwinku on Elcho Island, the dramatic moment for Vipulie occurred. The Japanese-Australian pilot allowed him to sit next to him facing the array of meters and gauges. As we flew west along Australia's northern shore to Darwin we could see the Alligator River spread out in giant loops tapering away into the horizons, evoking images of some of the serpents of the *Dream Time* that one had heard of somewhere in Arnhemland.

One last event we had wished could be included in our itinerary awaited our participation when we returned to Darwin. We greatly appreciated the evening spent with some Burmese friends hosted by Maung Maung Thaung and his wife Mimi-ay. They were receiving Bertil Lintner, journalist and author of *Outrage*, which documents the tragic

situation in Burma today. One of the friends present turned out to be the first cousin of Roland Chan Htoon, an old friend from my Mackinac Island IofC days. We were distressed to learn that Roland was back in jail for another eighteen years for the consistent stand he has taken for the return of freedom in his country. With other friends in India we are endeavouring to do whatever we can to help their causes.

I shall conclude by quoting what Reg Blow said on the phone from Melbourne just before we left Perth. He said, 'We Aboriginal people at this stage have money flowing through our ears, but our problems are not getting solved; in fact they are getting worse because we are becoming too dependent on the government and others to solve our problems'. For a number of years, Reg was Aboriginal Affairs Advisor to the state of Victoria.

Expressing appreciation for the two visits he himself has made to India, once with Ron, he said something like this, 'India is the place more of us should go and see. It is a land of vast problems and challenges. But countless people there are tackling their own problems and finding inspiring solutions to some of them without the kind of financial aid that we get from all sorts of sources, being available to them. I want our people to go and realise that we actually have a lot to start with and return and get on with the job with due appreciation for what we do have.'

### Saddam Hussein

Soon after he was executed on 30 December 2006, at 6 am Baghdad time, people started to dance and celebrate. A high official who was at the hanging declared, 'He died instantly, Iraq has the latest type of gallows.' A bizarre achievement of a country suffering so much from extreme lawlessness, shortage of water, electricity, medicine and most other essentials. But a telling commentary on what is happening in that richly endowed, fabulous ancient land of the Tigris, Euphrates, Ur, Babylon, Assyria and, it is believed, even the Garden of Eden. Yet, so fragile today. Saddam was buried next to his sons, Uday and Qusai in their village outside Tikrit. They were killed at the start of the Iraq war.

Raised in a desperately poor home, Saddam rose to become a terrible dictator and killer. There were valid reasons for his distrust and hatred of the West. And his ambition to avenge the humiliation of the

### *A Naga Speaks*



Arabs was understandable. But his megalomania stemming from his tragic slavery to himself destroyed hundreds of thousands of lives and finally him. The world is now looking back on the trail of destruction he has left behind.

Iraq's ambassador to the UN looked shaken and thoughtful as he told CNN he would not have gone to see the execution if he was in Baghdad and invited. To him Saddam's execution, following the pulling down of his statue in central Baghdad by American soldiers, was a defining moment when all Iraqis should be thinking of building the future together. But the possible fate of Iraq obviously weighed heavily on his mind as he tried to be positive.

Those who raise the sword shall perish by the sword. Those who execute others shall themselves be executed says the same thing.

The day Saddam was hunted to the 'rat hole' and captured, a journalist wrote about his childhood of suffering due to poverty. His stepfather was a cruel man. He told the adolescent boy to wear his shoes only while inside the school, and insisted he should walk to school and back with his shoes tied around his neck because the soles of his shoes had to last a long time. Later in life Saddam on occasions told his colleagues how deeply this treatment had humiliated him. What might have happened if someone had sensitively helped Saddam to find healing of his childhood hurts and bitterness?

Abraham Lincoln's mother died when he was very small. He terribly missed her. But he had deep affection for his wonderful stepmother because she understood the boy's crisis and made him feel fully loved and cared for. In the log cabin in the Kentucky village where he grew up there were no oil lamps. So his stepmother would make blazing wood fires in the evenings to enable Lincoln to lie flat on the floor to read the two books available in the home, the Holy Bible and the works of William Shakespeare. His famous speeches later that inspired and helped to 'bind up the nation's wounds' owed their depth, cadence and beauty to these childhood readings and experiences made possible by his caring step mother.

Saddam's story is a grim example of the truth that 'Hurts not transformed are always transferred.' Not all danced over his hanging. Close observers believe his execution will make him a martyr. The questions being raised about the fairness of the trial process, his hanging at the very beginning of Eid, Sunni anger, and their fear of the strategic gains being made by Shi'ite Iran are realities that can produce more destruction. Will



the hurts of his people, now driven deeper, ignite greater violence in the whole region? Hate unhealed breeds hate uncontrollably.

And Lincoln's story demonstrates the opposite truth that hurts if transformed produce healing, hope and growth.

Was it Pascal who said 'The devil is in the details'? The details of the childhood hurts of Saddam were felt and nurtured by him alone in silence. Those around him could not help him for diverse reasons. 'The hidden child' in Saddam never let him forget the details of his humiliations. In due course they produced the Saddam who gassed the Kurds and shot his own colleagues. The accumulated poisons from his unhealed life were in time transferred to all those he considered were obstacles on his path to complete power.

In a farewell letter to his people Saddam wrote, 'I call on you not to hate because hate does not leave space for a person to be fair and it makes you blind and closes all doors of thinking.' Saddam seemed to have looked back into the past and realised what had 'closed all doors of thinking' in his own life, and when? He became vulnerable again but it was too late to save his life. When he was a vulnerable child, no one really understood the anger and hate burning inside him and helped him to become free.

The people who knew him from childhood had no idea their lowly, bleak and rough village would produce a monster such as Saddam Hussein. One vital truth to grasp from Saddam's story is clearly that the details in our lives are important because our response to them decide what we become. The 'big' events and processes catch our attention. But we ignore their small origins because we seem to forget that everything comes from nothing, or what seems to be nothing.

Some may recall the following lines from the musical *Song of Asia* that toured India, South East Asia and Europe in the '70s:

*Who will break the chain of hate?  
Who will break the chain of sorrow?  
Ancient wrongs shed blood today,  
Wrongs today shed blood tomorrow;  
Who will break the chain of hate?  
Break the chain of fear and hate?*

We should know that God is also in the details. This has been proved by many lives in history.

***A Naga Speaks***

## Alcohol And Drugs - Are They WMD?

Saddam Hussein used chemical poison to terrorise and control his opponents. Accusing him of making biological agents and nuclear bombs also, Bush and Blair invaded Iraq to destroy Saddam's Weapons of Mass Destruction. The Iraq war has shown WMD are a global issue.

Alcohol and drugs are chemical agents that are disabling and killing Nagas in alarming numbers today. Speaking from my family's costly experience I agree with the view that for Nagas alcohol and drugs too are 'Weapons of Mass Destruction'. Yet this article is less about drugs and alcohol and more about our human errors and mistakes, which make these chemicals such dreadful killers of our people. What follows is a layman's grappling with the crisis.

Drugs and alcohol do not kill brutally and instantly as military WMD do. But their destructive impact on society turns out to be equally fatal because addiction creates spiritual 'black holes' in families, like those in outer space, into which everything disappears – lives, hope, joy, creativity or development of any kind. The virtual massacre by addictive substances taking place makes no news as the killing occurs softly, silently and slowly, with the victims' families suffering the prolonged agony equally, probably humming the beguiling song '*Killing me softly*' in resignation.

Reduced to watching slow-motion suicides taking place in their midst, most families wrestling with addiction withdraw from life's vital challenges which weakens them further. Addicts bent on denial and those who can 'handle' chemicals are likely to say it is not that bad and I should not generalise my experience. Others will likely say I am being too negative and melodramatic. Yet addiction has become a many-headed monster of a crisis and can it be denied it has seriously paralyzed our society?

Our tragic error is we fight the wrong enemy leaving the real enemy free to destroy us. Nuclear bombs or RDX explosives are extremely deadly weapons. But they are inanimate, mindless things that can do no harm if left to themselves. They are not the enemy of mankind. Drugs and alcohol too are lifeless chemicals that cannot harm anyone if we do not foolishly misuse them. We use drugs and alcohol to make us forget our problems. We think we have solved them if we forget them for a few hours. Our mistake is we refuse to sacrifice our selfishness, pride, fear or prejudice to be responsible for doing what is right, best or necessary. We end up being

*A Naga Speaks*



“solved”, or miniaturised and enslaved. These errors mislead all of us.

In my own attempt to understand addiction I have found Jung’s insight the most complete and convincing. Addiction is a psycho-spiritual crisis and it can only be resolved there. The crisis gets worse if we go elsewhere for solutions, to chemicals other quick-fix trips for instance.

The meaning and purpose of life is fulfilled through all-round growth of body, mind and character. The price is changing often.

I believe these two observations show us where the battle is and how we are to fight to ‘grow fully’. Let us not think only ‘addicts’ are afflicted by neurosis.

Scott Peck has said, ‘Thinking has become a grave issue in our increasingly complex world. If we don’t begin to think well, it’s likely that we may end up killing ourselves.’ (*The Road Less Travelled and Beyond*). He says his books are a crusade against simplistic thinking because life is difficult and complex and there are no easy answers and all are required to ‘be the change you want the world to see.’

We can say God required Cain to go beyond his neurosis of bitterness and self-pity and live that he may build the society needed by his growing community! Acceptance of responsibility by him would be legitimate suffering to do what needed to be done.

Neurosis starts in us when we respond to situations only at the nervous, emotional level of our likes, dislikes and fear, pride, praise or selfishness. But we become dissatisfied with our neurotic responses because our conscience, spirit and soul are telling us to be something else. The inevitable result is guilt, unhappiness and insecurity, or neurotic obsession. It is at this point of acute vulnerability that we most easily turn to mind-altering chemical substances and other addictive diversions. For many, by the time the unreality of the instant paradise that chemicals can create is discovered, addiction has already taken over.

When Christ said, ‘Remove this cup from me’ I believe he was, and I love and trust him all the more for being transparent about his crisis. And my life is given to him because he showed the way for mankind, accepting to obey God’s will, rejecting what he wanted, thereby inaugurating Christianity.

Christ accepted the ‘legitimate suffering’ involved in doing what he knew needed to be done. Neurosis was impossible in his truthful response. (Was Arjun also facing and defeating the neurotic fear/temptation not to

*A Naga Speaks*



fight the battle that confronted him on the Kurukshetra plains that fateful day?)

The price we pay to be responsible human is legitimate suffering. When we decide to be and do less, the substitute is always neurotic insecurity or spiritual crisis. All addictions originate in unresolved spiritual crisis controlled by neurosis. We are 'fearfully and wonderfully made' to fight with all our heart, mind and soul to worship God, to grow fully and wonderfully, changing as often as necessary; deteriorating fearfully if we refuse to do so. To 'worship God' means to wholeheartedly be and do as we are meant to by Him.

'You desire truth in the inward parts and in the hidden part you will make me to know wisdom.' David discerned this when God brought him face to face with his terrible crime. If like him, we too choose to obey the 'wisdom' God does show us deep down, we make a fresh start instead of slavery to neurosis or addiction. Drugs and alcohol need not be WMD for us.



## Women

*She told us nothing malicious about anyone*

What My Mother Means To Me	179
Naga Women's Commitment	181
Women's Rights Violations	184

## What my Mother means to me?

**M**y mother is 104 this year. I talked to my eldest sister this morning in Kohima to thank her for looking after our mother so selflessly, so affectionately. My sister is 84. She said, 'I thank God for keeping me well to care for our mother.'

We are eight sisters and five brothers! So you will understand why I am not a passionate campaigner for birth control. Some of us were born in Tenning and Phek, some in Wokha and Mokokchung, the places where father was posted as a government doctor during his working years.

Someone said, 'Remember your life is the first book your child reads. For many children it is the only Scripture they may ever read.' An education philosopher said, 'What a child does not receive, he seldom gives later.'

Before her memory had deteriorated too far and she was still speaking, I asked my mother a few years back, 'Mother, what would you say is the most serious weakness of the Nagas?' She said, 'Let me think,' and a bit later said, 'We Nagas have become too thoughtless. We are living now without thinking sufficiently. This is our most serious weakness. God can guide us only if we think with Him.' That was the last thing she said to me.

The following points stand out from my mother's life:

1. Quiet courage in facing the realities and challenges of life. I have not met anyone who is so afraid of leeches, spiders and snakes. But in facing situations of human interactions, I have not met anyone as fearless and wise as my mother. I think of how she dealt with Japanese soldiers who tried to raid our house in our village on their way to the Kohima battle during the Second World War, and Indian soldiers when she was fleeing with her mother and a dozen of her children and grandchildren through Zeliangrong forests during the worst period of the military operations in Nagaland.

And what she said to Morarji Desai, when as Prime Minister he visited Kohima and my sister Rano Shaiza, Lok Sabha MP for Nagaland, took father and mother to see him. Morarji was never at loss for words to reply anyone who talked to him. Rano said she was impressed mother said just the right things and he listened!

2. Generosity and faith in God's provision. My father often thought mother was perilously generous! Her generosity came from her faith and

*A Naga Speaks*

experience that God provides unfailingly if we care and share as He guides.

3. Absolute dedication to the protection and preservation of life because she played a heroic role in the creation and nurturing of her children's life.
4. Her incorruptibility and freedom from demand and ambition for us to succeed by questionable unethical means. By example she taught us to work hard, but left us completely free to do and be whatever God guided us to do and be with our lives.
5. Her freedom from bitterness towards anyone. She told us nothing malicious about anyone. I came to realise this was really remarkable.

Mother is not a saint. I think her weakness was a tendency to feel every problem or crisis needed her advice and help. I have the same weakness besides others of my own that I need to watch constantly.

As we look back we are deeply moved and hurt recalling the tough struggle, and the pains and humiliation and shame Mother specially had to face raising a big family with severe shortage of money every month because father's salary was meagre. Of course, many other Naga families suffered much more because for them resources from salaries were out of question or totally nil.

The most real and most important experiences for every family are the hurts, grief, failures and defeats which are the common lot of all families. No family escapes them. They are the most important opportunities for us to discover proper growth.

Therefore I think the most important issue for all families is what we do with our deepest hurts and memories of shame and pain? Do they harden our hearts and conscience and suffocate our soul so that we are bitter and prepared to sacrifice our moral values and even take what should belong to others also in order that we may succeed and never experience pain and humiliation again?

Or do we take our hurts and pains to God and let Him heal them and He makes us more human, compassionate, sensitive, more caring and incorruptible?



*A Naga Speaks*

## Naga Women's Commitment

A Grateful Salute

On behalf of Co-ordination Committee of the Naga Hoho. 19 October 2001

The missile strikes and bombardment of Afghanistan are getting all our attention. We too should give a lot of thought to what will come out of the war that has just started. But perhaps many of us have not given enough attention to the artillery-like blasting that the recent Naga Women's Conference, through the speakers, has directed at the wrongs and weaknesses of our society?

Whose side God is on in the escalating war in Afghanistan is being hotly debated. But a reading of the Resolutions and Prayer of Commitment published by the Conference clearly shows that God has inspired Naga women to rise out of our suffocating crisis to boldly declare what needs to be done and how it is to be done by each one of us.

Too many of our conferences produce thought-provoking statements only. But this time we have something that promises to be action-provoking perhaps because the commitment has been articulated in words that compel us also to be committed. The pledge made in the prayer is to be 'Salt and Light' and to be 'Honest and Hardworking' in order to be 'Instruments of Your Peace ... For the Task of Transformation of the World We Live in', starting by rebuilding our homes. The speeches and declaration of commitment are refreshingly free from the kind of riskless, pious, tranquilising words that in fact hide a steely determination to stay safe and selfish, producing no change.

It is easy to praise the Women's Conference. But the organisers and speakers must be tired of praises now. What they are praying for now must be God's inspired guidance for implementing the commitment made. This tribute is being attempted not just to express admiration, but also to try to increase public discussion of the ideas for change that have been declared. The intention is certainly to pledge one's own commitment also to the battle. The battle cannot be anything less than spiritual warfare waged truthfully in the hearts and wills of each one of us so that Satan's strangulation of our society will be ended. How else is God's kingdom built?

Satan's take-over of our society has not happened mysteriously. Satan could not have invaded every area of our society without our willing co-operation and even planning. Let us not waste our breath and time

*A Naga Speaks*



denying how strong he has become in our families and classrooms, in our shameless abuse of power and position overground and underground, in our businesses and contracts, in the running of our NGOs and Village Councils, and so on. God has been praised but disobeyed and wilfully kept out of our lives. Do we think we have fooled Him?

But Satan should be disturbed by the declaration of non-cooperation by the women of Nagaland! But the situation will become truly critical for the Devil when specific wrongs begin to be put right, wounds and hurts healed through transparency and honest apologies resulting in anger and vengeful hate melted in forgiveness because of justice done through our simple obedience to God's guidance.

Naga Christians are second to none in condemnation of sin. But the lack of honesty about the connections between the scandalous wrongs of our society and individual citizens ensures Satan's victory. Hell starts to grow in society when no truthful answer comes to the ordinary citizen's question, 'Where has all the money gone?' and those in power and advantageous positions in governance and public bodies keep hiding the truth. The repeated scandals like the CAG reports and the Referral Hospital, to mention the best known, are prime examples of how we treat God and fellow human beings. They reveal our thinking as well as our Christianity where giving stones and serpents, instead of bread and fish, to one another have become normal. Has not this kind of irresponsibility towards society made many to feel that their extortion and other dishonest ways of quickly solving their problems are also ok?

As a contribution towards the spiritual warfare we need I would like to share the following story that has been reported in papers in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Australia.

Joseph Wong, a timber businessman in PNG attended a seminar of businessmen, men and women in education and civil servants in Melbourne earlier this year. The theme was 'A New Dynamic in the Workplace'. The discussions dealt with work ethics, personal integrity, quality of governance, teamwork in organisations and the high cost society pays for irresponsibility and selfishness. Some participants shared their experiences of taking a stand for incorruptibility and accountability in multinational companies, private business and government offices and in their families.

Joseph Wong spoke at one session. He acknowledged that irresponsible, shortsighted timber businessmen like him were destroying

*A Naga Speaks*

the magnificent forests of PNG for their own immediate gain without thought for the coming generations. He declared his decision to pay honestly taxes he owed his government, which amounted to over one million PNG kinas, equivalent to about Australian \$650,000, or over Rs 15 million (1.5 Crores).

On his return to Port Moresby, capital of PNG, he went to the Income Tax office and paid the amount as he had promised. The media came to know about it and naturally reported the unusual story about a businessman becoming a revolutionary Christian! A public discussion started on what was happening to the national forest wealth. The outcome of it all was the formation of a National Commission by the Central Government to start a thorough investigation into the rapid destruction of the nation's virgin forests and ecology, a sensitive part of the ecosystem of the whole South Pacific.

When Joseph Wong heard the 'still small voice' to do what he needed to do, he had no idea his simple truthful obedience would lead to the National Commission to tackle the huge national scandal of which he had been a part. The important point of Wong's newfound adventurous Christianity is that when Wong said 'Yes' to God, He immediately corrected an erring businessman and then directed him into action to build His kingdom. Others are finding hope and courage seeing that 'If he can do it, I too can do likewise'.

Joseph Wong returned his crores to his nation because he owed her that much in taxes, instead of evading his debt. May his tribe increase in all nations! One is reminded of Amitabh Bachchan's TV programme about becoming a 'crorepati'. How much more helpful it would be if he were to popularise returning what is not yours so that others too may have their rightful share for development?

Could the Women's Department of the Church start a special cell that would help think out how putting wrongs right, making practical restitutions for damages or wounds caused to others, may become a focused teaching of the Gospel in our churches? The idea that because Christ died for us it is ok to keep on doing as we like because we are Christians has clearly become too well established in most of our minds. This has to be emphatically undone, not just for going to heaven after death but to ensure peace and fair economic development in this life also!

Our ancestors did not believe it was possible to escape God's punishment for telling lies and committing sins. Even after elaborate

sacrificial rites were performed to say sorry to God the sense of guilt and fear of punishment haunted their consciences. We definitely feel superior to our fellow villagers who still cling to the traditional religion because of our Christian doctrines of grace, atonement for sin, salvation and so on. But are we aware of their bafflement over our embarrassing lack of guilt and shame for our corrupt and permissive ways!

But because of the ways in which we have ruthlessly distorted the sacred Christian doctrines to suit ourselves, could it be that the Naga 'pagans' are more Christian in their spirit and behaviour and we Christians have become barbaric, vicious exploiters of society? Could it be true that their fear of their Creator is far more acceptable to God than our arrogant and rude ways of treating Him as if He is a harmless, sentimental, stupid, do-gooder Santa Claus?

If 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and the knowledge of the holy is understanding' is true, then the humility and reverence of our ancestors for the 'Great Spirit' may well be what God wants us to rediscover for our Christianity.

### **Women's Rights Violations: Global View: Nagas' Situation**

National Socialist Women's Organisation of Nagalim 4<sup>th</sup> General Conference,  
Hebron Camp, Dimapur.

3-6 September 1998

*I* believe God has guided you to adopt the theme, '*Change Through Women*'. Change is our most urgent need. And change is what we Nagas also try hardest to avoid. But change is the law of life, which enables us to grow. And without change growth stops. As women are down to earth, and endowed with a more reliable instinct to guide them, we can trust them to bring about the kind of change we need at this time.

My mother is almost 99 now. She is the oldest citizen of my village. Her younger sister now about 95 holds the second position. Some of the finest thoughts for my life have come from them. One of the abiding beliefs of my mother is that the world will increasingly pay attention to the practical wisdom that women can often bring for the solution of problems. She believes that because women have to solve tough problems every day to keep their families going, they are instinctively realistic and practical,

*A Naga Speaks*

and their heart power is their extra strength.

I have had the privilege of working with Naga Mothers Association in establishing Mount Gilead Home, the first professionally run rehabilitation centre for drug and alcohol addicts in North East India. The fight to meet the challenge of drugs and alcohol abuse in Nagaland was of course started by Naga women – a natural expression of their close touch with reality and their ability to respond in a practical manner.

So the process of change that NSWON is starting now generates hope that something new will be born to help heal the damaged relationships within the Naga family. The divided, hate-and-suspicion-filled Naga family urgently needs the compassion, understanding and healing touch of our women, our mothers and our sisters.

Now to come to the topic under discussion today, 'Women Rights Violations: Global Views: Nagas' Situation'. I should state here that what I shall say about women's rights violations will be references to situations but without statistical data of precise figures. I have no access to data, nor have I had the time to look for them.

The first part is 'Global Views.' It can now be said that the battle to protect women's rights to entitle them to equal status with men in all areas of life, and above all to protect their dignity and safety is well and truly launched. There is still a long way to go to achieve the desired objectives. But the process has started and it is irreversible. This will be considered one important development of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Let us list some of the instances of violations of women's rights that have captured world attention in recent times:

1. Prostitution has been the oldest and longest lasting of all abuses of women. Today prostitution is connected with sex-tourism, particularly in South-East Asia. As in brothels in Indian cities, which have drawn girls from destitute families in Nepal, thousands of poor girls from Burma, Thailand and the Philippines have flocked to cities of South-East Asia to be exploited by tourists from many nations.
2. Japan forced many women from Korea, China and the Philippines to accompany Japanese soldiers as "comfort women" during World War II. The women who survived the terrible ordeal and humiliation have spoken up to condemn Japan and to ask for compensation.
3. The traditional practice in some African countries of operating on adolescent girls to diminish their sexuality in order to keep them under

control in adulthood.

4. The highly restrictive education policy for girls adopted in fundamentalist Muslim countries designed to keep women backward so that they will stay traditional in their thinking and lifestyle thus help protect values and traditions of Islam from the impact of permissive Western ideas and ways. The harsh measures being enacted by the new Taliban rulers in Afghanistan have made this a highly controversial issue.
5. The very high level of sexual abuse of young girls and adult women in Native American communities largely due to excessive use of alcohol by both men and women to blank out the ugly realities of their existence as a defeated, oppressed people in their own land. Happily this grim tragedy is changing fast because of a profound spiritual and mental renewal taking place among the native people.
6. The forced separation of Australian aboriginal children from their parents to be brought up in white Australian homes, and institutions run by the Church and Government Social welfare agencies so that they may forget their language and their traditional ways and get assimilated into white society. It was a plan to solve the recurring “problems” caused by the native aborigines. But it turned out to be a naked attempt at cultural genocide of the aboriginal people. It caused deep bitterness and despair especially in the women and their children. Happily again this shameful atrocity too is being put right. In May this year Australians held a Say Sorry Day to enable all Australians to take part in a national act of restitution. All across the nation many wept as they tried to express their apology. A significant start has been made.
7. Sexual harassment of women in offices, factories and other workplaces. In the rich nations like the USA this has become a hotly debated issue. The Anita Thomas case a few years ago against a lawyer who was appointed a Justice of the US Supreme Court, and the present Clinton-Lewinsky case have made the issue a high profile debate watched by the whole world.
8. Under this heading come all the terrible violations of women’s rights the world over perpetrated in the names of diverse political causes. This century has produced history’s worst atrocities against women.

Countless German women were raped by the invading forces of the USSR during World War II. The innocent women paid a terrible price as

other nations avenged what Hitler and his war machine had done to them.

During the liberation war in Bangladesh thousands of Bengali women were raped by Pakistani soldiers who were allowed to do their worst to terrorise and subdue the local population who had revolted against Pakistan.

Nearer to today, the unspeakable cruelties and humiliation that were forced on women in the break-up of Yugoslavia, and the killings and raping of women all over Algeria in the ongoing war between the Islamic militants and the military rulers of the country are all only too fresh in our memory and imagination.

Now let us come to the situation as experienced by Nagas.

I accepted your invitation despite my inadequacy to talk on the topic given to me, because of my belief in the rightness of your conviction to bring change through women.

I have tried to guess the thinking of the organisers as to the scope of the topic. I hope I have sensed it rightly. I have naturally asked if we are ready now to be completely objective and to examine the issue in its totality. I have asked this because the right of human beings is an indivisible, total, moral concept like peace and freedom. These concepts originate in the greatest truth about man that God made man in His own image, and 'man became a living soul' when God breathed His own spirit into him.

There is a natural and very legitimate place in politics for human rights. But we have to understand and respond to human rights in its totality because of its indivisible moral quality. God and life do not allow us to do it any other way whatever the compulsions of given situations may be. Because God made us to be morally responsible for our special identity and growth according to His design, we have majestic rights and equally majestic duties and responsibilities, which we can ignore only at our own peril.

I do not know you personally. But I know I stand before Naga women who have risked and sacrificed greatly for their deepest convictions and aspirations for all Nagas. I am sure you do not want or need easy human praise or sympathy for the price you have paid and are paying for your beliefs because you are doing what you believe to be right. But the price you and others before you have paid has become extremely costly.

And if I have correctly understood the topic, the purpose of this

*A Naga Speaks*

conference is for us to understand and appreciate fully the goal of our people for which such a high price has been paid. So I am sharing my thoughts today with deep awareness of and respect for all that you are because of what you must have gone through.

Our people have suffered repeated atrocities perpetrated by the Indian security forces. The violations of the rights and honour of our women in these acts of repression and terrorisation have in some instances equaled some of the worst that have happened elsewhere in the world. You know much more than I the specific occasions and instances of the brutalities, most of which have occurred after ambushes by Naga fighters.

The Indian security forces obviously have a standing clearance to respond to such ambushes in the most vigorous manner to achieve the objective of terrorising and weakening the spirit of our people, reducing the numerical strength of the Naga fighters in the process.

Here I have reached the critical point of my topic. Reflecting on the theme I concluded that the idea of the organisers of this conference must be more than to make a list of the instances of violations of the rights of Naga women by the security forces only? Making such a list definitely serves a purpose. I am not under-estimating the suffering of our people. What I am saying is that in an armed struggle excesses are bound to keep occurring and we must accept that. What, I believe, we are being challenged by our crisis to do is to think out together a concept of struggle in which we go beyond the use of arms to achieve our objective. It is here that I wish I knew the scope of the topic intended by the organisers.

Our discussion now brings us to a new dimension of the topic. What do we say about the traumatic loss and grief of Naga mothers, sisters and daughters who have suffered because of the deaths of their husbands, fathers, sons and brothers at the hands of fellow Nagas in the course of our political struggle? Can politics or any other exigencies be sufficient reason for rationalising away the wounds to their human rights? I believe our evil will become an uncontrollable monster that will overwhelm our children if we will reject transparency at this initial stage. Our mistakes due to error of judgment or other reasons which we have hidden or justified have produced the deadly poison of distrust and hate that has alienated Nagas from fellow Nagas.

It has been rightly said that reconciliation through honesty and restitution is the real realpolitik that produces lasting solutions. To continue any longer the factional politics of blaming one another is to

*A Naga Speaks*



burden our people with a struggle that cannot make any headway except to suicide because the thinking in the struggle has become barren and bankrupt, and therefore has lost the power to generate confidence and hope.

Today I am exercising my privilege as your guest to freely and honestly share my deepest concerns about our situation. But if I have missed the point or I am talking along a line that we should not yet enter, you must feel free to guide me with your wisdom.

Needless to say I am venturing this far not with any sense that I know how to deal with the issue but with a deep conviction that sooner or later we Nagas will have to come together and do what needs to be done which will enable God to enter our affairs again. The first point we are all clear on is that no one has clean hands or heart clean enough to qualify for judging others.

Clearly what we are now required to do to restore unto ourselves a struggle that will take us forward instead of destroy us is to start a genuine inter-Naga conversation in which our chief interest is to listen to one another? To 'walk a mile in another man's moccasins before you leave him condemned forever', as the Native Americans put it. We need 'a tough mind and a tender heart' to do this, as an Irish woman said recently about her attempt to build bridges of understanding in the crisis of Ireland. 'There are reasons, but no excuses, and no one has clean hands,' she said talking about the need for change in everyone.

I believe our politics has reached the point where human wisdom has to make way for God's higher wisdom; and we go from who is right to what is right where we all rise to something higher than ourselves. Whatever our apprehensions may be about such politics, can we build the nation we want by adopting an easier course, which leaves our selfishness untouched? I find that when I start to do what needs to be done, I am insecure and I am 'poor in spirit' which Christ said was the way to build his kingdom on earth. Naga women who will accept the challenge of your theme will experience this truth and show us the way.

We will all agree that the starting point one of Christianity is, 'For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.' If we accept this then we should not be so defensive of our mistakes, or so surprised that we make them frequently!

The NSCN (IM) has boldly pointed out certain mistakes of A Z Phizo



and those close to him. Though deeply painful for those at the receiving end, I believe the uninhibited expression of disagreement, distrust, frustration and sheer anger, will be assessed by history to be a most significant breakthrough which enabled the Naga struggle to expand into the future. It will be seen to have helped the Nagas to grow, the equivalent of dynamiting of rocks to continue the construction of the Naga highway. Had not the vast distances kept them separated for so long would our leaders have succeeded to some extent in removing some of the suspicions and resentments deeply felt on both sides, and Nagas would not be as fragmented as they are today? This will remain an intriguing question never to be answered satisfactorily but carrying an important lesson.

The NSCN leadership will know better than others that they too have made serious mistakes. I trust I can say this as a fellow Naga and by counting on your revolutionary realism and wisdom. Demonstrating remarkable decisiveness, courage and competence, the NSCN blew forward to the horizon like a hurricane. But as in the wake of a hurricane, countless lives and values and traditional relationships that are vital for keeping our fragile society together have been uprooted and destroyed.

Let us wisely recognise that we are at a truly perilous stage now when our cynicism and vengefulness can go completely out of control due to the drying up of the spring of trust and faith in our hearts. Or by a miracle of letting God guide us to an unbreakable unity grounded on truthfulness, trust will be born. It is NSCN's great responsibility and opportunity to turn back and look at what has been damaged and repair them. This will be anticipating history's verdict. It will be the equivalent of gifting a completed extension of the highway to the Nagas on which they will continue their journey.

I repeat that our most desperate need now is to deliberately find a way of coming together to listen to one another. If Nagas will listen to one another they will start to listen to God also. No problem will then be too difficult to solve. We badly need one another's understanding and forgiveness to put right the wrongs we have done to one another. In equal measure we need one another to do the great challenging tasks together to give our coming generations a heritage they can accept with pride and build further.

In daring to fight for what we naturally believed to be right and best for ourselves we have achieved much that is priceless. But as inevitable with people who venture out, our errors too piled up. Whatever has gone

*A Naga Speaks*

wrong is not beyond the power and goodness of God to heal and restore. All we need to do is to reverse the process step by step under His guidance. The fruit of our obedience will be the establishment of a relationship among all Nagas which will enable us to undertake any challenge.



## Tribal Issues

### *Can Nagas Become One People?*

Embracing Tribal Identity: Overcoming Isms	193
Will Advanced Tribes Show The Way?	197
Making Tribalism Our Servant Not Master	198
Repeopling Nagas For A Better Tomorrow	201
Challenges In Fostering A Stronger Nationhood	209
Rebuilding The Tribal Relationships	214
Can Nagas Be One People?	217
Foundations Of Naga Peoplehood	220

## Embracing Tribal Identity: Overcoming Isms

Morung Lecture, Elim Hall, DABA, Dimapur. 16 September 2017

‘*K*now yourself’ said Socrates to the youth of Athens. More than 2000 years later we see its relevance and urgency for us today, including for our struggle.

All human ventures or struggles for aspirations and dreams, not examined and adjusted to the new challenges that the ever-changing world brings, deteriorate and become unworthy of respect and impossible to pursue. They end up destroying themselves and the people for whom they got started. History is littered with countless examples. Don’t we know it from what has happened to the Naga struggle underground and ‘over ground’?

Our human longing to become a people and a nation produced the political struggle that has affected all the Nagas. It grew out of our intuitive awareness of the threat and fear we perceived for our survival and security. The struggle was our response to the challenges that changes taking place in the world brought to us in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. So the struggle and today’s society have been produced by all of us. The motivation and the struggle cannot be suppressed and snuffed out whatever happens in our relationship with India.

Our struggle and our society as they are today have revealed the poor quality of our responses so far to the challenges. This is not because we are worse human beings than other peoples elsewhere. But one very big reason why our responses are so inadequate is because we are so unfamiliar with the many new demands on us the changing world is compelling us to handle. Most of the costly mistakes we have made and are making are unintentional, but due to our unfamiliarity with the new challenges and requirements of today.

But we should correctly assess ourselves and know the progress we have made. We need to understand the kind of response today’s changing challenges demand from us, not underestimating or overestimating what we have achieved. In 1965 Dr J H Hutton made this observation (*Morung Express*): ‘Now it is possible to look back and take a wider view and see the Nagas as a people rather than an assortment of tribes or even villages.’ Hutton was the Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills District of Assam in the second and probably the first part of the third decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

*A Naga Speaks*

He was clearly more interested in his scientific research work on the Nagas as an anthropologist, than in his given job as a British Civil Servant in a remote fringe of the Empire. His scientific books were about 'an assortment of tribes or even villages' as observed by him. He had not seen them as a people who had consciously evolved together a common identity. Thirty to forty years later, in 1965, now a professor at Oxford University, he said the Nagas had become a people – an objective, authoritative assessment by a scholar who knew his subject well.

I am sure many of us have asked at times, 'When God was making the Nagas into so many tribes, did He make an unintended mistake because He was preoccupied with some larger projects of creation like the Chinese, the Indians, the Egyptians, the Europeans and so on? And did He make the next mistake when He put into the hearts, minds and feverish imagination of all Naga tribes the common desire to be a people?' As God makes no mistakes we have to conclude that God simply means the many members of the Naga family to learn to care for and cherish one another so that we show true greatness is in making others great! Christianity with the message of the Cross – the way, the truth and the life – came to us just when we needed it most. Our journey to become a people and a nation in the modern world was about to begin.

We are so many tribes, each fiercely proud of ourselves, at times to the point of unbearable vanity. Yet the same fire burns in all of us with equal intensity. Isn't to become responsible human beings to be worthy of our noble aspirations the most important point for us now?

The Naga struggle for India and the world to recognise their sovereignty as understood by our pioneers was absolutely authentic, honourable and also right, I believe. Our pioneers simply stated their position as warranted by the facts of their history as they understood it. That position was that Nagas were not a part of any of their neighbours. In stating their position they were not being anti-India or against India. Their neighbours also had not regarded them to be a part of them. It was only when the British came and made the western slice of the Nagas a part of their Indian Empire that some Nagas started to become a part of an outside nation or power for the first time.

But many, especially the young generation today, are asking if their grandparents did the right thing in launching the Naga struggle, and if we have achieved anything after all the heavy price paid for the struggle by all Nagas?

I am convinced we have become a people and our nationality is a fact that can no longer be disputed by anyone because of the stand taken by our pioneers at the beginning and the sacrifice made by all the Nagas for that stand.

We may think it is too small an achievement to be of any significance to be happy about. But we should know to become a nation is the most difficult, slow, complicated process of human growth and development and what we have achieved, though very small, has strengthened us in 'our inward and hidden parts'. It is a precious psycho-spiritual asset we must not underestimate for the onward journey of the 'Naga caravan'.

But no Naga will dispute the reality that the struggle has produced a very destructive, lawless society that has gone out of control because of the mistakes and errors we have committed, harming and wounding one another grievously due to our common human frailties of short-sightedness and other failures.

In 1968 Martin Woollacott of the London *Observer* wrote on what had happened to what was Yugoslavia: 'The most terrible process of all is not the war-making that takes lives and destroys villages and towns, but the irreparable damage to the majority who survive. The killing may stop... but societies undermined by distrust, deformed by a literally hateful politics, ashamed of a murderous past and burdened with criminalised economies, do not easily recover.' Is this not a correct description of the society our struggle has produced?

I shall also quote what W B Yeats wrote of his beloved Ireland struggling desperately to emerge from a much-damaged history,

*Out of Ireland have we come,*

*Great hatred, little room*

*Maimed us at the start.*

An assortment of loosely related tribes and villages living next to each other in the same geographical habitat, gradually brought together into a 'little room' by the pressures of the changing world to become a people and nation, we too have seriously maimed one another at the start of our journey. This happens to all peoples.

We should realise we have maimed each other 'at the start' and we need to be responsible about the consequences because one terrible truth of history is that 'Hurts not transformed are always transferred.' Will

***A Naga Speaks***



the 'advanced major' tribes who have done the maiming of each other and rendered the progress of all Nagas virtually impossible, now truthfully claim ownership of the places where they have maimed and weakened our people's struggle and our society? Such an inward searching of ourselves will result in all of us discovering our failures and shortcomings that God and others see but we do not and which cause cynicism and resentment.

Even if the tribes do not go to the extent of making public expressions of regret to one another, the beginning of internal acknowledgement within the tribes of the harm done by their tribes to themselves and to the wider Naga family will give an opening to God to enter our crisis. The eventual result will be new relationships among the tribes because of rebirth of trust and hope among them. Our small steps of obedience and change God will use to open unexpected doors to others and show us how we can do the greater things together for our common good. Our weaknesses and failures must thus become our common strength.

The first thing a baby does soon after birth is to go for its mother's milk. For the months of the first year, and even more, a child is just totally selfish and narcissistic for the sake of its own biological survival to start with. But gradually it discovers it has to learn to do the exact opposite, i.e., to care for others also, the adventure of becoming a responsible human being. This exact opposite requirement becomes more and more demanding. Societies and nations grow or collapse depending on whether their members learn to grow in their selflessness and responsibility, or refuse to grow.

It is as if all our tribes have come up to a plateau where we are meeting one another today. The individual and shared hopes, desires and fears of the members of the tribes have preserved each tribe and kept each tribe struggling to come thus far. This compelling urge or drive and obsession for survival and progress in each tribe we may call tribal narcissism.

On this plateau where we are meeting today we find we are required by the new challenges of existence to do something we have not done before. Today we have to inspire one another to develop mutual goodwill for and cooperation with one another in order to survive and succeed together. As we have not needed to do this kind of selfless caring for others before, we are doing it very badly at this early stage of our journey. But we have made a beginning. The church has played the pioneering role in bringing the Nagas together.

*A Naga Speaks*



I believe what we must not do is condemn our natural feelings and inclinations for our own tribes. This will not help. We must give the correct recognition to it for the role it has played to bring us all thus far. The impulse of tribalism is a natural energy like that of human sexuality that is alive in each human being. We must appreciate the tribe-centered struggling in each tribe that has brought all of us up to the present level today as we see in Dimapur and Kohima. But the time has now come when we need to know when we should say to our narrow tribalism, 'Thank you for what you have done so far. But you do not go further beyond this point.' And from now we are required to start to learn to rise to a higher level of being a people and a nation, accepting the new ideas, attitudes, ambitions we require for the challenges of the journey ahead.

If the expensive payloads of satellites are disdainful of the powerful roaring booster rockets that bring them up to their majestic heights that will be so unfair. They should instead say to the boosters, 'Thank you for bringing us up here. Without your help there's no way we can get here!' and let them drop away. From this comparison we should learn how we should do the right thing with our raw powerful urges and compulsions that have brought us to where we are today so that we may learn how we inspire one another to continue our journey ahead.

Glorying and embracing our God-given tribal identity is not the problem. The selfishness that produces divisive, exclusivist tribalism or nationalism is the problem.

### **Will the Advanced Tribes show the Way?**

*The* 'advanced' Naga tribes are showing the way - the wrong way.

By invitation and personal conviction I am associated with the efforts of Naga Hoho, the Churches, and other public bodies trying to create the inter-Naga relationships that will enable our fighters to negotiate with Delhi for a settlement that will be honourable, acceptable and workable. I believe nothing is more important than the truths that have produced our present relationships.

We need not fear but just try to understand the tough realities controlling our relationships and holding up our progress.

The Naga struggle over the past half-century has uprooted and torn

*A Naga Speaks*



apart our traditional society that had stayed undisturbed for centuries. We cannot really complain, as all struggles tend to be highly disruptive. Sooner or later they happen. And struggles have to be viewed as signs of a society growing by responding to changes impacting them. But people in most cases are unprepared and inexperienced so their responses are full of mistakes and inadequacies. Look at what we have produced in our underground and overground struggles? And the level of chemical abuse in our society shows clearly what many have done in frustration over difficulties in responding to challenges. It should be said that addicts are often more honest about their frustration. The tragedy is their addiction makes them skillful liars to avoid facing reality, which ends in their defeat.

In endless discussions and arguments Nagas have analysed the struggle. We all know the mistakes and wrongs that have produced the distrusting, fears, divisions and vengeful hates that have produced the present situation of deadlock. Not knowing the reasons is not the problem. It is the pride and lack of courage to be truthful due to moral and spiritual bankruptcy of the so-called advanced tribes that have paralysed our society and our struggle into a most dangerous stagnation.

The concept of peoplehood and nationhood expresses an aspiration that is above tribalism. It is indeed the wider common Naga identity that is a vision, an idea that all Nagas respond to with strong emotional feeling.



### **Making Tribalism our Servant, not Master**

*T*oday we are compelled to evolve a wider common identity as a people to survive in a fast changing world. Many of the wrongs we have done to one another seem to be linked to our having to make this comprehensive shift from a village/tribal paradigm to a wider identity. The crisis compels us to break out of our familiar, known ways of the past to new levels of thinking and responsibility that we are not used to. We have to change so much in such a very short time. We are insecure.

Here we need to take an objective look at the power of tribalism in our politics. It is fashionable to condemn it just as it is fashionable to condemn caste and racial prejudice elsewhere. But these prejudices are immensely strong psychological defences. Therefore condemnation alone does not work. Calm understanding and honest acknowledgement can

*A Naga Speaks*

transform it into a positive energy. Is it not true that our society and politics are paralysed by what can be called 'tribal narcissism' that is motivating us from within?

One of the intriguing mysteries of God's plan for life is that selfishness is the normal condition at the initial infantile level. But soon it is gradually rejected by a personality development process in a growing adolescent that results in a mature person capable of caring and sacrificing for others. What is the meaning of this spiritual process, or personality development from total narcissism to altruistic, selfless caring for others?

It is God's plan that we start with self-love, a largely biological instinct for self-preservation. We should not condemn it because it enables us to get launched in life. But we are required by life to grow out of our initial familiar 'comfort zone' in order to develop the exact opposite – a stronger, more open and resilient personality needed by us to go through life. Our failure to do so results in mental, spiritual and physical retardation or worse.

We should not condemn our tribalism. It is, as in infantile narcissism, the self-preservation instinct that has brought all the different tribes up to where we are today. Tribalism has correctly served its crucial purpose. We should grow by learning to build on what it has given us without letting it wrongly control us further.

I do not mean anything derogatory or disparaging about the age or maturity of our mental capacity. What I do mean is that our preoccupation with our own tribes is because somehow we think a changing world will allow us to continue to live in the past with its protective comfortable prejudices. This thinking now threatens our chances of surviving by cooperation and mutual appreciation.

So tribalism, the booster force that has brought all of us thus far, too has to be transformed, not with condemnation but with gratitude, for what it has done for us. We will then learn to harness our authentic strength in our tribal roots, put in us by God, to strengthen our common identity. Tribalism is an intense, restricted love for a restricted purpose. God requires that love and passion to be stretched for greater purposes and meanings. We will need to walk the golden road of the Cross together, to help one another discover the change needed by all of us.

I am certain God meant for Nagas to develop humility and compassionate care for one another so that our weaknesses and difficulties

of differences will become our common strength. Discovering this meaning and purpose for us, and deciding to fight for it, is our destiny as a multi-tribe people. To ignore this divine wisdom and instead be guided by our own cleverness and pride and fears is to create hell without intending to. Are not our baffling difficulties meant to Christianise our politics and our religion? God's ways are so unexpected and even humorous!

Tribalism can become our strength if it is correctly understood and made our servant not our master.

My own Angami tribe, like others, has much we can be proud of. But some of our attitudes and ways, which we do not think much about, make it very difficult for others to work with us. Just ask the other tribes what they have felt and seen and they will tell you. It is amazing how others see and feel so clearly certain things in us that we do not see. If with God's grace we listen to them and change, we will be freer, happier and wiser, and hope grows in us, and in those we hurt. We do not become smaller by being sensitive and truthful.

He saw clearly the chaotic years ahead for the world and the thinking needed to respond adequately to them. We too should see what lies ahead with realism and complete willingness to do what needs to be done. 'Arm me with a willing spirit,' as David prayed in the Psalms 51.

There are so many tough issues we need to resolve together to make our society function successfully. Opportunities are vanishing fast and time is precious. *Who is right* is a debate that takes us nowhere. *What is right* for all Nagas can unite us because it is big enough and will require all to change equally for a higher alternative. The logical conclusion of elimination and exclusion of one another is total instability. We need to draw the best instead of the worst from one another to build the future together. Some may say this is idealistic nonsense for heaven only. The reply is we create hell on earth immediately if we follow any other doctrine of life. And the inter-related instability of our whole region of Asia is such that to relax and pursue our selfish interests is like painting one's cabin on a sinking ship.

The tribal narcissism mentioned earlier is an extremely tough reality we have to transform together. Its toughness and threat come from the fact that it is so much a natural part of us. God will show us how we are to change this common threat into our common strength, because He surely is the one who has given us the idea and the desire to be a people.

The prospect of Nagas need not be in doubt if we will show more interest in caring for the health of the slowly growing Naga tree than in its fruits. If caring for the health of the tree is more satisfying to us than enjoyment of its fruits, then we have the philosophy of life that builds the kingdom of God on earth! The society we will build will be just, demanding our highest to maintain it. If enjoyment of its fruits is our passion, we will have neither the tree nor its fruits. This is true whether we are overground or underground Nagas.

A dear friend from my village wrestled with his hate of a man from another tribe he burned to kill to avenge the deaths of his kinsmen. He wrestled with God in his heart. God seemed to say, 'You are too sensitive to where others hurt you but not sensitive enough to where you hurt others. If you can have the courage to kill a man why can't you have the courage to love him enough to make him a different man?'

As a guerilla fighter he was ready to die for his people. He decided to live for them by first apologising to the man he tried to kill. He became free from hate and God has used his obedience since then as a bridge builder and a heroic carer of others – the new type of person we need today.

### **Repeopling Nagas for a Better Tomorrow**

Talk given at Consultation of Council of Naga Baptist Churches.  
Pfütsero, Nagaland (1993)

*I* want to thank the organisers of the CNBC consultation for inviting me, a layman, to share my perceptions and convictions on the future of our people.

I have had some uncertainty about the precise meaning of the subject. I felt 'repeopling' should normally mean repopulating. After some enquiries I have taken it to mean roughly 'renewing', re-strengthening Nagas and bringing them together for a better tomorrow. Today I shall be stressing the very obvious truth that to have a better tomorrow, we need better Nagas. I trust this is not too far from what the organisers have in mind.

There is a story of a passenger on the ship who kept on painting his

private cabin although the ship was sinking. Obsessed with what he wanted for himself, his sense of priorities become defective. He could not realise that he and his highly improved cabin were both rapidly going down to the bottom of the sea.

There is an important lesson for us in this story. Our aspirations to become a people are a precious reality for us. It has evolved over the years, fired by the logic of a longing in all Nagas to establish a common nationality and a common homeland. Many have paid a heavy price to keep this vision alive. But increasingly, especially in the last twenty years, some serious inadequacies in our thinking and character have come to light. We are being destroyed by them. The greatest threat to our survival comes from within ourselves although in politics it is thought to be more clever to focus on the external ones, underplaying the internal weaknesses.

We know what kind of society the state of Nagaland has produced, run by Naga overground politicians, Naga civil servants at all levels, and a host of contractor suppliers etc... Suppose by some unexpected development, we became an independent country tomorrow- would the new Naga republic with her own flag and a member of the UN etc.. run by various Naga underground leaders be very different from the government we have today? Would it be different from what the republic of Somalia has become today?

It is also vitally important to realise that we are part of the world that is being violently reshaped by forces of change that show no respect for borders. There is a population explosion and pressure on limited resources, and the hopeless inability of the poor nations to solve even their basic economic problems because of lack of unity, resources, discipline and work experience. The consequent corruption and lawlessness by frustrated people have led to the collapse of governments in Africa and Asia. Is it surprising that a sense of doom and powerlessness is gripping the collective mind and spirit of mankind?

At a time like this, to talk of a better future is to risk being accused of naivety, uninformed optimism or plain simple-mindedness. As for us, unless we find the unity and wisdom needed to change self-defeating, suicidal tendencies in ourselves and learn to face great challenges together, there will simply be no future, let alone a better one, to talk about. With our blindness and our slavery to instant gratification in everything, are we like the man painting his cabin on the sinking ship?

The 20<sup>th</sup> century will be known as the century of 'high ideals,

*A Naga Speaks*

and not long after, the dark dead-end of man-made schemes' as a song puts it. The triumph of communism in vast areas of the world was hailed as 'the wave of the future'. Countless intellectuals, opinion-moulders, sincere idealists as well as opportunists, fell under the spell of 'the brave new world' that the scientific materialism of Marxism had produced and which promised to build a 'classless society'. Rapidly, the states ruled by communist dictators become anything but classless.

The doctrine of Marxism-Leninism, as it soon became, when implemented, produced a system of terror and oppression as monolithic and cruel as the Fascism produced in Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy. Although the communists boasted that they were the sworn enemy of Fascism, they behaved no better than their materialist cousins. How could they not, descended as they both were from the godlessness of mother materialism? The world has seen the final verdict on communism.

The other spellbinding drama of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the worldwide freedom struggles, which brought independence to virtually every part of Asia and Africa colonised by European powers. Today the world is watching an unprecedented political and historical phenomenon unfolding across Africa. So much of the continent is now torn with years of bloodshed and too weak to rise again. Some of these countries are immensely rich in natural resources. Angola has the potential to become an oil power.

In Zaire are some of the richest deposits of copper, diamond, silver, gold, lead and other precious metals. It is one of the big African countries. But the recent editorial in *The Telegraph* of Calcutta says: 'Zaire is a study in the process of national dissolution. If its steady submersion into anarchy was not extracting such a high human toll, it would be worthy of farce. The currency is now worth 2.5 millionth of the dollar, its security forces are the main source of arson and looting in the country and its Prime Minister has declared the President impeached and vice versa. The government is in such a shambles it is difficult for foreign governments to exert pressure for the lack of any institution with which to interact.' The editorial ends with the advice that the lessons from Zaire are 'fables that should be required reading for developing countries.'

The question is this: were the communist revolutionaries wrong to have attempted to create a just and classless society? And could the nationalist leaders of Africa and Asia have done anything other than to fight for freedom of their teeming millions? The simple answer is they could not

have.

But there are some fundamental lessons from their mistakes, which no responsible people can afford to ignore for their own sakes and for the sake of the world peace and a better future. What are they?

Dr Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, foremost pioneer of Africa's struggles for freedom said to his continent: 'Seek ye first the political kingdom and all else will be yours.' Intoxicated by the adulation of his continent fighting the common enemy of imperialism, Nkrumah in his vanity thought he could prescribe his own cheaper stand for African nation building. He arrogantly changed what Christ has said.

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels in the famous communist manifesto declared, 'Workers of the world unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains!' They also decreed that to achieve a classless society, any methods including deceit and murder were justified.

Mahatma Gandhi said, 'Things of fundamental importance to the people cannot be secured by reason alone. They have to be purchased with their suffering.' He also rejected the use of impure and dishonest methods to achieve noble goals. He insisted that if the means adopted were impure the goals, if achieved, become poisonous and destructive.

The high ideal, the great goal, is in each of the four declarations above. But the means to achieve the goals are fundamentally different between the first two and the remaining two. In the first two, the goal is all that matters and to achieve it, any method is allowed, no matter how immoral. Think of the high ideals of Lenin, Stalin, Idi Amin, Milton Obote, Mobutu, Pol Pot, General Ne Win etc... to achieve freedom, prosperity and justice, but in due course their man-controlled schemes led to dark, bloody endings.

In the second two declarations the emphasis is on the price to be paid for the purity and truthfulness of the means to achieve noble goals.

Let us note that in the prescriptions given by Christ and Gandhi, the only acceptable way to achieve the right goal, is by paying the price of suffering to reject the dishonest ways. For the power and glory belong to God, not to human beings who so easily become intolerant and murderous because of their demand that they should have the power and the glory for the success of their enterprises.

Mahatma Gandhi who perhaps more than anyone else tried to live by the Sermon on the Mount said, 'The only tyrant to whom I bow my knee



is the still small voice.' What a magnificent example of freedom from self he showed.

Christ's response to Satan's tempting offers was a clear cut 'no' because the price Satan required was totally unacceptable to God. The fundamental choice we are confronted with is to do things, even good things, our own way so that we shine, or God's way so that he is the boss and he is glorified.

What do we really expect to get for ourselves when we talk of a better tomorrow? Compare that with what God wants established for everyone. Many will react with impatience and annoyance to the suggestion that a people in the midst of their national struggle should consider the ethical, spiritual aspects of life, and thereby risk being taken advantage of by those opposed to them. But the unchangeable lesson of history is that sooner or later wrongs committed exact a heavy price if they are not put right.

If my own success and glory is more important than the guidance of God, I am intolerant and create distrust, rivalry and tension. The factionalism in the Naga movement as well in overground politics is not due to mysterious reasons. Division is the hallmark of the struggle where what I want for myself becomes more important than what is right. Unity is born the moment I say to God, 'Your will, not mine be done', rejoicing in the growth and greatness of others. The great challenge before us is to draw the true battleline where we can look for what is right not who is right. 'What is right?' requires all to change to rise to something that unites all. 'Who is right?' divides and destroys.

These details of ethics and morality are so often brushed aside as being less important than the tactics and strategies of politics and diplomacy. But they decide whether peoples and nations and their economies grow on firm foundations or disintegrate into factional violence, corruption and hopelessness. At the risk of being laughed at, I might add that when I honestly analysed my motivation as a young Naga nationalist, my chief motivation was to be a Naga VIP, perhaps an ambassador of Nagaland, or some such thing! The development of my friends or anyone was of no interest to me.

With Africans we seem to share some shortcomings that are proving fatal. For centuries we have lived in the subsistence-level economy. In term of nutrition, shelter, clothes, transport, we have been used to a harsh life-style of poverty and deprivation, and this is still the condition



in our villages. Such a people must not be judged too harshly if they show gluttony and greed when food and the good things of life become available to them. This has happened to us. And we have to accept the consequences of our surrender to greed and irresponsibility.

While others produced and enjoyed after years of hard work and discipline, we simply grabbed, when these were presented to us, and started to enjoy them without having done anything to earn them. Our political upheaval has caused this sudden change. Delhi concluded after some observation that Nagas could never be forced to forget the stand they had declared to the Simon Commission, their declaration of Independence in 14 August 1947 and all that they had suffered to uphold their stand.

Pandit Nehru did what was easiest to him. He created Nagaland. This deeply divided the Nagas, who though proud of their aspirations, had not yet developed adequate motivation for a united, prolonged struggle. Nehru and his advisers knew that a people struggling to evolve a common identity could not withstand the havoc created by an economic carrot crudely dangled before them. They perhaps thought that their clever stratagem had solved the Naga issue. What actually happened was that the cynical manipulation of Naga weakness has harmed the long-term interest of both Nagas and India.

The hasty acceptance of the hasty gift tainted both the giver, Delhi and the recipients, those Nagas who for a variety of reasons accepted statehood in an atmosphere of collusion without proper democratic debate. Once Delhi decided to ensure the success of the state and thereby to pacify the majority who felt double-crossed, the generosity of the funds to finance development plans has never been in doubt. Unable to withstand the onslaught of Delhi's policy of pacification, virtually all Nagas have been forced to become enmeshed in what is called 'the development process'.

Nagas hate themselves for the feeling of cheapness within themselves. Nagas also feel insecure and humiliated because we have lost control of our lives to policy manipulations and impersonal forces far away. The result is this: the shameless irresponsibility and greed of our people have become so enormous that our society and government has become unmanageable and totally dysfunctional. B K Nehru, the former Governor of Nagaland, about two years back, declared in an extensive press interview that 'the creation of Nagaland was a mistake.' His main charge was that the whole deal was too hurriedly concluded to serve short-term policy compulsions of the Home Ministry.

### *A Naga Speaks*

This consultation I believe is addressing all those who truly are for the Naga people. We have reached the stage when a sense of futility and powerlessness is taking over spiritual and mental faculties. This dangerous abdication of moral responsibility has been caused by our inability to do anything about the glaring wrongs we see committed before our eyes, which we watch in helpless rage. To mention some of the chief wrongs:

1. The massive immorality of our elections, which have become periodical orgies of the most shocking type revealing the shallowness of our Christianity.
2. The brazen use of force and violence by individuals to unjustly acquire and retain power for personal gain.
3. The absence of the spirit of service and justice in the entire political and administration machinery of the state, with very few exceptions, and
4. The terrifying damage being done to the greatest of our assets, the human resource of our youth, due to drug and alcohol abuse and the spread of AIDS.

We are at the critical juncture that is full of dangers and opportunities. I believe the historic task and calling of the church in Nagaland at this time is to restore the way, the truth, and the life of the cross of Christ in all its simplicity and triumph, so that our people may know again what deliverance from evil means. Can we escape the charge that rampant corruption and self-seeking predominate because too many of us piously say we believe in God but think and behave as if He never existed?

Could it be that our Christianity has become so saturated with doctrine and dogmas of salvation that we have lost touch with the inspiring reality of spiritual victory and character growth which comes from living a life in which we die daily to self and the world, as St Paul demonstrated.

Some of the wrong things are so gigantic that we easily disassociate ourselves from them because we regard ourselves to be not all that bad. But the answer to these wrongs crushing our society will start when we admit where we are part of the corruption and the decadence. I find that my contribution to the problem starts with giving into covetousness, envy and the desire for human praise. The moment God is replaced in my heart by anything I covet, my slavery starts.

Last week I set out to go to a central government agency to ask for

their tractor to dig a fishery pond for my family. My argument was that I was trying to help rehabilitate the unemployed young people in my family. We would pay for the diesel. We would save the high cost of the hiring of a private tractor, which we could not afford. Sensing the deep uneasiness in my spirit I stopped to listen to what was going on inside. The clear thought that was shouting to be heard was: 'Don't do it. It is wrong to put such a request to that set-up. They'll be obliged to say "yes" for various reasons. It won't be fair to them as they can't say "yes" to all who come.'

I shared the decision with my wife and my sister and they were clear I should not disobey the guidance of the Holy Spirit! Peace returned to my heart. I knew God would provide what is right for our needs. I felt I was experiencing the reality of the wonderful promises in Isaiah 55:3, 'Incline your ear and come unto me: hear and your soul shall live.'

When we have done something wrong, I find God wants us to be specific and not vaguely talk of sin in general. When I first tried seriously to give my life to God, I sat down in silence to listen to him. The first thought that came to me which I wrote down was: 'You are a very selfish man. Your hatred of others and your jealousy are rooted in your selfish nature.' It was so simple, so shattering but so practical. I find that if we seriously want to be guided and used by Him, He first corrects us and then directs us. How amazing that both always go together. We would be destroyed by the correction alone.

Some months ago I became agitated when I read in the *Nagaland Post* that during the President's Rule, the Ministers and MLAs of the previous government had left a huge bill for their phone calls, much of them private calls. I had to simply decide to go to the secretariat and offer to pay for the STD calls I had made to my wife near Bombay from the office phone of a politician. The Governor's adviser was amused when he heard that the amount was only Rs. 600! He said he couldn't take it and there was no bill for it.

He readily agreed to my suggestion that I should donate it to Mount Gilead Home for Drug Addicts, where I work. I was concerned lest others think I was trying to show what a good man I was. But my thought was that if everybody misused public facilities as I did, the facilities could not function properly. So I obeyed the thought. I discovered the real significance of a simple obedience when I returned the money to MGH. For the counsellor and the drug addicts the practical example was a most useful teaching model to show what truthfulness should mean. Drug addicts and

alcoholics start to recover only when they learn to be honest and truthful.

I believe the process of renewing and reconstruction of our society will begin if God is restored to leadership in our lives in small and big things. That will be repeopling Nagas for a better tomorrow.

The existence of individuals who have kept themselves clean is not doubted. But the blatant take-over of our society by godlessness and viciousness shows that perhaps good men have not allowed God to use them enough. Regardless of how overwhelming the problems have become, some Nagas who care have got to step out and draw the real battle-line which is the eternal battle between good and evil, compassion and cruelty, exploitation and responsibility. It is not between tribes, classes or communities.

Those who decided to care in this manner will show how they prepared to sacrifice their selfishness for their society instead of sacrificing their society for their selfishness. They are likely to be a vulnerable minority to start with. But if they are dedicated and will act intelligently in unity, they will become what historian Arnold Toynbee calls 'the creative minority' who, he says, decisively initiates changes at critical junctures in history. They become catalysts of change.

I want to end with the following lines.

*Once to every man and nation  
Comes the moment to decide  
In the strife of truth and falsehood,  
For the good or evil side.*

Let us be sure such a moment has come for everyone of us.

### **Responding to Challenges in Fostering a Stronger Nationhood**

**T**he Editorial Committee of the Angami Youth Organisation has done a very timely thing in focusing our attention on the subject of Response to Challenges. It is seldom discussed. The attention it receives is negligible although it is so crucial. The reason must be because we are still at the beginning of our journey and the decisive part of the way a people respond to changes plays in their development, is yet to be taken seriously by us.

*A Naga Speaks*

The challenges of the past have been comparatively simpler to respond to. But we are finding it is difficult to properly respond to today's challenges because they are increasingly complicated. So the significance of the discussion the editors have started should be grasped and developed and not dropped. The issues confronting us now are serious.

Forging a 'stronger nationhood' as stated in the subject, reveals the hard questions today's Nagas are asking about the legacy they have inherited from their parents and grand-parents, namely, the struggle to be a nation and the inevitable crisis from it. Equally unmistakable is their acceptance of the legacy with its crisis and the responsibility that goes with it. This is a clear sign of the younger generation of Nagas developing their own understanding of their people's struggle and its crisis, and resolving it to become stronger, instead of shirking their responsibility to do that which will invite sure disaster. This is stirring and encouraging.

The inherited legacy can be understood as a project. It is to become a maturing people and nation we can be proud of because we are learning to face the challenges of healthy development and growth. The responsibility that goes with it is to learn to become the human beings each one of us is meant to become so that the project will succeed through us sacrificing our selfish ways for aims bigger than ourselves, building a just society through mutual goodwill and cooperation.

Why is response so important? Risking being thought a repetitive oldie I'll say more because the issue is so crucial for us. As Toynbee pointed out, whether societies make progress or become stagnant and destroy themselves is decided by the quality of their response to the challenges that changes bring to them. So we can compare the challenges of life to the bricks, stones and other materials used for building a house or a structure. The house or structure will stand or collapse depending on the quality of the materials.

Whether we will grow properly and survive and continue to grow to all dimensions of life we are capable of as designed by our Creator is decided by the quality of our response. We fail due to our casualness, ignorance and poor, or incorrect, response. The subject is an urgent wake-up call to our society to understand the dangers and the opportunities confronting us and to respond to them correctly.

Yesterday's Nagas claimed an identity and a political status for themselves realising that the facts of their history fully justified their claim. Nagas have since found out that a people do not just claim an identity and

### *A Naga Speaks*

status and live happily ever after without learning to sacrifice selfishness and narrow agendas and attitudes that divide, weaken and sabotage their efforts to build a just society.

We tend to treat 'response to challenges' as something very ordinary or neither here nor there, and there is nothing in it to get worked up about. But it can be said that one of the oldest recorded expressions on response to challenges is in the Ten Commandments, 'Worship the Lord your God with all your heart.'

If this great call to human beings from the Creator is misinterpreted and reduced to mean some mere worshipping observances inside temples, churches and cathedrals, it becomes a 'pious drone' by priests and pastors to be heard and endured briefly by 'the faithful' and safely forgotten.

But if you and I are alive with the breath of life that God breathed into the image he had made in His likeness, then the correct, fullest meaning of the Commandment becomes clear. And the life of each human being, no matter how ordinary or famous is charged with meaning and purpose not to be treated casually.

Response to challenges of life is an existential issue. There is a reason and meaning in it as it is an essential part of existence. We are to understand it and act according to what it shows us.

Our response to shifting situations and paradigms comes down to how individuals and societies respond. Sant Tukaram, the saint poet of Maharashtra in the 18<sup>th</sup> century taught from his village of Dehu, near modern Pune, 'Every moment of our lives we face the challenge to reject what is wrong and to choose what is right.' Most of us are likely to consider this to be needlessly too high a standard for a response to the challenges of life. But its soundness and correctness cannot be disputed.

The response you and I make to the situations we face daily, will be correct, as good as human beings are capable of, or casual, poor or incorrect, depending on our character and the meaning and values of life that guide our lives. Tukaram's standard shows the highest that should guide us if we are to steadily progress by improving our responses. This is true for families, tribes, peoples and nations.

P D Stanhope said, 'Whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing well.' There is a lot of wisdom about response in this very simple thought.

Stephen R Covey, the management guru, says, 'Between stimulus and response, there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our

response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.' He said that idea hit him with incredible force. He reflected on it again and again and it had a powerful effect on his paradigm of life. He said, 'I began to discover in that space my own ability to make a consciously chosen response.' (*First things First*). So response is something that is taking place all the time, most of the time in our very small thoughts and acts. And the responses from millions of 'ordinary people' make up the response of nations to challenges that changes bring.

Let us now come to examples of right, correct, wrong or incorrect human responses to challenges in different situations.

The simplest and most frequent instance will be found in the life of a young child starting life. Very early in childhood a child becomes aware that life is full of challenges, of things to be done properly. Carl Jung calls the things we are required to do properly, truthfully, in order to grow properly 'legitimate suffering'. We can say this is carrying the cross consistently in all the big or small things we do to live out our lives.

The child becomes aware of exams that require adequate preparation. Here is a case of response to challenge where the quality of the result is decided by the quality of the response, or the preparation. Depending on the character and spirit in the child, and the values he or she has started to accept from the examples of parents, the child will develop his or her response skills and keep growing properly. Or the child decides to go the easy painless way in the different situations of daily life. This most often ends in despair, addiction, crime, evil and all-round destructiveness. The right or wrong response is clear here.

At the level of the fates of societies and nations, the role response plays is also equally identifiable. One of the frequently cited examples is that of Japan, the nation that had kept herself shut in as a hermit nation undisturbed by other nations for centuries. In the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Commodore Perry of the rising US Navy forced Japan to open her ports to world commerce and trading. The Japanese were shocked by the crisis. But they wisely drew from the ancient wisdom received from their Chinese neighbours and mentors who had taught that a crisis was a good happening to be welcomed and responded to properly so that the next steps of growth may be discovered.

An individual or a people confronting a crisis full of difficulties must welcome it as part of the plan of life. And if the opportunity revealed in the crisis is identified and responded to properly the next step of growth



becomes possible. If that is not done for whatever reason the danger in the crisis takes over and the crisis becomes destructive.

The response of the Japanese was correct. They assessed themselves objectively, humbly accepted the defeat of their traditional attitudes that had been proved to be outdated. They decided as a people and nation to learn all that they needed to learn from the world. They accepted the reality that Japan had to survive and compete possessing only water, soil, plain rock, trees and some coal to develop her industry. Japan had to import all the other vital raw materials for industrial development such as oil, iron ore, copper, silver, platinum, rubber, etc... to manufacture machinery, diverse precision instruments of the highest quality so that the world would be compelled to buy them.

The decision made was followed by young men and women being sent out to the developed nations of Europe like Britain, France and Germany to learn all they needed to learn, to return home and bring their nation up. The Japanese diplomats to other countries were instructed to note down everything the developed nations practised and send them back home to be studied and adopted. Within a century Japan was transformed. What Japan has become need not be discussed here.

The case of Japan too shows what correct response to challenge means. If the Japanese people had decided to stay at the level of using excuses, self-pity and short-cut easier methods in order to avoid doing what needed to be done to solve their national crisis, Japan would be a totally different story today.

If we are to bring the issue down to what each one of us has to do to match our crisis today, we will be taking the first steps toward doing the right thing! It will be found that you and I have to face the truth about ourselves and decide to change and live as we should.

This will mean setting aside sufficient time to listen, reflect, think, and learn, to start to 'Be the change you want to see in the world.' This becomes doable if I decide to listen to the direction that clearly comes when I listen to the 'still small voice' inside me and learn to obey it.



## Rebuilding the Tribal Relationships

16<sup>th</sup> NBCC Triennial Convention, Tuensang, 1 February 2004

*I*n choosing this subject for discussion, NBCC is indicating the Church's recognition of three important points:

1. The Naga tribes are one common family;
2. There is a purpose and meaning in the Naga tribes being a family; and
3. The relationships among them are damaged and they need to be rebuilt for the fulfillment of the purpose and meaning.

It means the Church understands the Naga dream for their identity to be more than the political aspect alone although we tend to think and talk only about the political one. The Church recognises the profoundly spiritual nature of the dream to be equally important. The Church therefore clarifies the truth that unless we rebuild our relationships and achieve healing and reconciliation, the whole dream, which originates from God, will become a nightmare due to human manipulations.

This position of the Church is a much-needed clarification. It will prove to be a highly significant contribution to the discussions now building up on integration of the Naga ancestral homeland and other issues of Naga identity in the world. As for Naga integration, at the moment there is no question that is more sensitive and important to us as well as to our neighbours and Delhi and Rangoon. This is one reason why reconciliation through healing of relationships among Nagas is so crucially needed.

Yesterday's Naga tribes lived out their lives within the narrow confines of their respective ancestral lands. There was a general awareness of common cultural, linguistic and blood affinities among the various tribes. But there was no wider prolonged exposure to one another among the tribes. The British brought peace, stability and the rule of law, which started the process of Nagas coming closer and meeting one another. This led eventually to their search for a common identity. And the fight for this identity has brought today's Nagas to intimate interactions with one another.

Let us try to examine what may be the meaning of the Naga struggle and its connection with our subject. It is also true that individuals, families, tribes and nations move forward on the same basis of their response to challenges. And they become stagnant, destructive and go downhill if their understanding of the challenges and their responses are

*A Naga Speaks*

incorrect or inadequate. Our thinking, our values and goals of life decide the quality of our response.

The ideas of political liberation and the birth of nations started to gain strength especially in Asia and Africa in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These ideas erupted in revolutionary upheavals, which brought new nations into being and Western empires ended by the middle of the century. The Nagas too started to think about their identity and future place in the world in the boldest possible terms. They chose to assert themselves on the basis of their history. Their statement in writing revealing their thinking was the declaration made to the British Simon Commission in 1929. The Naga struggle to get the world to recognise their sovereignty, as they had conceived, from 1929 onwards up to today's negotiations with the Government of India, has represented our people's response to the challenges of changes impacting us from the world. The overground political, administrative processes of governance in which Nagas have been engaged in the different states have also represented our response to the situations that confronted us.

The last six decades of our history reveal how we Nagas also have responded to the challenges of changes. The Naga response has been the political struggle to get India and the world to recognise our identity of sovereignty based on the facts of our history as our pioneers understood. As we all know the story, I do not need to go into the details except to say that the struggle has now come up to the present talks between NSCN (IM) and Delhi for a negotiated settlement.

We also have the overground story of our politics. The creation of the state of Nagaland by some Naga leaders was a direct offshoot from the original struggle by the NNC for sovereignty. This too was therefore a Naga response to the prevailing challenges as perceived by those who decided to act. The all-out support Delhi gave to this Naga initiative enabled it to succeed. This does not disqualify it as a Naga response to challenges. It has today become the main arena of action involving all Naga tribes in various ways. The state should be regarded as an interim, provisional administrative/political plan needed equally by Nagas and India pending a settlement acceptable to both sides.

Today we do not need to waste our time and energy quarrelling over the two responses. We should instead accept them as inevitable and unavoidable developments in the given circumstances. The split in the Naga struggle into overground and underground has not, in any case, altered our

common conviction and belief that we are one people pursuing our vision to be a nation. But what we do need to honestly examine is the quality of our underground and overground responses thus far.

Our failures should not be judged or condemned too harshly. They should be seen against the huge sizes of the challenges and the extremely short time within which we are having to learn to tackle them. However, this does not mean we can treat lightly what our responses to changes have revealed about our thinking and character as individuals and as a people. We cannot, must not, go on giving excuses for our weaknesses and wrongs, and fail to change and do things differently.

Yes, Nagas too have responded to challenges as we have understood. I believe the way we started was right. I do not condemn our underground and overground political responses. They represent our people's normal attempt to grow. But I believe we are all deeply disturbed, even shocked, that our two political initiatives have uprooted our society and rendered it decadent, extremely selfish, irresponsible and destructive.

We are worried and are asking why our normal attempt to grow has produced the kind of society we find rising right across Nagaland, culminating in, or imitating, what we see in the streets and shops of Dimapur, and the government offices of Kohima. In Dimapur and Kohima our people are doing too much of what we should not be doing to a weak society, and doing too little of what we should be doing to build the Nagaland our people urgently need.

Dimapur and Kohima are Nagaland in miniature. They are the previews of what Nagaland will be like tomorrow, depending on what we do today. They set the pace and style of doing things and it seems the rest of Nagaland has virtually no choice but to follow their powerful examples because through all the tribes represented in Dimapur and Kohima the culture and philosophy of life developed in these two crucibles are transmitted directly to all our villages.

The already discernible positive, creative potential and manifestations of this emerging society, demonstrating itself in Dimapur and Kohima, are excitingly thought-provoking. But the negative, virulent potentials and manifestations, also equally discernible, are alarming and frightening.

We easily put the blame on our politicians for so much of the things that are wrong. No doubt what some of them have done with public

money for their own enrichment is shocking. But we the people also need to admit that the pressures we the people put on them for what we want for ourselves – in return for our votes – are so very great that they are forced to be much more corrupt than they may choose to be. And they have no leisurely time to think for performing their tasks properly. Some of the homes of the MLAs/Ministers become public kitchens for entire tribes!

So the distressing question in many Nagas today is, 'Can we survive the destructive culture, philosophy and practices coming out of Nagaland's most important cities?' Will Dimapur and Kohima create the socio-economic, and moral 'black hole', which will suck in all of Nagaland? The crisis of these two political and economic centers projects the urgent issues we have to understand and tackle if we are to survive. That is why I have focused on them. They represent all of us.

### **Can Nagas be One People?**

#### **The Battle We Must Win**

Tangkhum Katamnao Long – The 40<sup>th</sup> Annual cum Freshers' Social, Shillong.

24 August 2002

*The* chief contribution that I think Naga Hoho, with all its shortcomings, is making to Nagas is providing a common platform and forum where Nagas are able to discuss the questions that are most important to them with expectation that we can search the right solutions together.

At the Naga Hoho meeting where all tribes took a pledge to examine themselves, one of the decisions taken was to create a Naga Hoho Coordination Committee with members drawn from all the Church groups Nagas belong to, the All-Naga organisations like Naga Students Federation (NSF), Naga People's Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR), Naga Mothers Association (NMA), Naga Women's Union Manipur (NWUM), United Naga Council (UNC), All Naga Students Association of Manipur (ANSAM), and individuals representing the different regions. It was envisaged that the Committee would help Naga Hoho focus its attention on the most urgent issues facing Nagas today. It was resolved that the first assignment for the Cocom was to bring about reconciliation within the Naga family.

#### ***A Naga Speaks***

Accordingly the Naga reconciliation process was launched on 20 December 2001. It was an impressive, moving ceremony held at the Kohima Football Stadium. It was just before Christmas. The theme was, 'To heal and rebuild the Naga family with the Prince of Peace.'

As the Convenor of the Committee, I have found myself having to travel very frequently to various parts of Nagaland and Manipur, and twice to Bangkok to meet the different tribes and the leaders of the NSCN - IM and K, NNC and Federal groups of the Naga struggle. These close interactions with our different tribes and the conflicting groups underground have been, and are being attempted to establish a human connection at the level of conscience – or to create a level ground of transparency and objective understanding among all members of the Naga family. We have called these initiatives internal journeys of conscience for understanding, friendship, healing and peace to the different Naga tribes and fighting groups.

We have also started external journeys of conscience to our neighbours and to civil society across India. We have to realise that for over half a century we have fought Delhi's policies but we have not tried to reach the people of India to help them to understand our history and why we have had to fight.

This concept of interaction at the conscience level is expressed in that 2001 Naga Hoho pledge.

I should add here that responses to the reconciliation ceremony have come from different parts of India and the world. I give one example: Rajmohan Gandhi, reputed author and a former Rajya Sabha MP and Indian delegate to the UNHR Commission read the declaration and pledge which went out on the internet. He sent a message congratulating Nagas for their boldness and faith. He mentioned the pledge to a group of Afghans who had come to see him earlier this year. He urged them to learn from the Naga pledge for the healing and rebuilding of their shattered nation.

He pointed out that Nagas could have continued blaming India for all that they have experienced for over half a century. But that would help no one. Nagas are attempting to put things right by claiming moral ownership and responsibility for what they themselves have done to one another. It would be correct to say that the Naga reconciliation initiative is being watched by others with considerable curiosity, interest and even admiration. The challenge is how do we take it forward?

The longing for reconciliation and healing is a most powerful force surging in the hearts and minds of Nagas today. This is because although the vast majority of the Nagas are convinced the Naga struggle for their political aspirations based on their history is right, we are all deeply disturbed by the reality of the wounds we have inflicted on one another. The historic journey Nagas decided to take over 50 years ago has involved immense sacrifices. Nagas have demonstrated great courage and capacity to endure the sufferings that a struggle for aspirations inescapably brings.

While we are proud of our resolute fight for our beliefs, we are baffled and worried by the serious shortcomings and weaknesses we have discovered in our inter-tribe relationships. So, we rightly look back with pride but what we are seeing and experiencing today is causing us deep questioning. I believe the questions the Konyak leader asked which I mentioned at the beginning are being asked by all of us. I think we are insecure and afraid side by side with strong conviction for our struggle. It would be foolish and shortsighted to pretend we are not. We should welcome our feeling of insecurity because it is said, 'Man's extremity is God's opportunity.'

Apprehension and unhappiness are, I believe, always a sign of God saying something to us to accept for our good, for our growth to the next stage in our journey, and we are resisting it in fear. Cain's story showed that God understands the things that make us unhappy, angry, bitter and leads to despair.

He takes them most seriously because they represent the moral and spiritual battle raging in our souls when we are strongly tempted by Satan to do the wrong thing or choose something that is not the best, which quickly becomes the worst. Can we doubt that God is asking all Nagas, all tribes, all leaders, overground and underground, the same question he asked Cain at the very beginning, because he understands the tough battle going on in us and he does expect the highest from us?

Nagas have started to take tentative halting steps towards reconciliation. I am going to mention a few instances. They are very small, measured against the huge wrongs we have to answer so they must not be overestimated but I should say it would be equally wrong to underestimate them.

I believe these are tiny openings revealing the beginning of the souls of Nagas responding to the spirit of God at work because we are turning to Him.

### *A Naga Speaks*

It is to be expected that strong and even dangerous accusations and counter-accusations are breaking out all over among Nagas after these initial steps mentioned above. We must know that Satan also is interested in the reconciliation process and he is telling all of us to do it our way to suit ourselves not God's way which will be for the good of all.

Taking part in the sensitive battle for reconciliation through transparency is like trying to walk through a heavily mined field in a war zone. Every step is a complete step, which is to be taken with fullest respect for every bomb buried underneath. So the bad news is that the field is full of buried bombs. The good news is that if each bomb is fully respected and identified and handled correctly, each one of them can be removed and the field can be made safe again.

Personally the attempt to tackle the Naga minefield has taught me many things. It has certainly made me examine my own motives and the things that drive me. The interactions with the various leaders and with our people in villages and district headquarters have meant saying what I believe about the wrongs we had done to one another and caused deep wounds.

But when you do this, you find that you are reaching a struggle for which many have suffered many great pains including the ultimate sacrifice for the common honour and dignity of all Nagas. You hesitate to proceed because you are told by the different groups that you have no right to say anything critical about their mistakes because they ask, 'You are a self-styled peace maker who is imposing yourself on the Naga crisis', or, if you speak up more than others, 'Where were you when others were standing up to Indian soldiers during their operations to suppress the Naga struggle?'

I can understand this kind of reaction from people who have sacrificed greatly for their beliefs for our people.

### Foundations of Naga Peoplehood – Road Maps. Role of Reconciliation

*The* Naga story started to come alive and to become audible gradually in the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. What must have happened before that, when our story, buried in mysteries of the dim past, flowed

*A Naga Speaks*



silently for centuries like a river hidden under deep forest cover, is still largely speculation. The facts await scientific investigation and construction. Our scholars have much to find out and put together for us.

I am conscious of the risk of mentioning too often the observation by Socrates that 'A life that is not examined is not worth living.' But there is a priceless truth in it for us that must not be overlooked. An aspiration or a vision, that is not constantly examined, becomes unpursuable because the unavoidable errors in thinking and perception need to be constantly rectified and the right perspective and course established in keeping with changes occurring in the world. I am inspired by the fact that we are asking questions that are most relevant about our existence and growth.

All human enterprises and ventures get started because of some common needs or aspirations that are equally felt by all their members. The family starting with a man and a woman getting married can be said to be the prototype of all human ventures to achieve some clear goals. Just as the relationships within a family, revealing the health and strength of the family, require constant attention and nurturing, the human relationships within the larger ventures too need the same attention.

The struggle of our people to consolidate our identity as a people and a nation is our common enterprise. It has achieved much for us. What we have felt and fought for most deeply for over half a century has begun to be recognised by the Indian people and the world. The Government of India has responded to the talks by declaring officially that the Naga struggle is unique compared to the other struggles in India.

But the consequences will turn out to be too costly if we underestimate the unhappy developments in the relationships among the tribes that make up the Naga family, pretending they will go away without profound moral and spiritual changes in us.

I am aware that this is not a popular subject. Indeed it is a hazardous undertaking to draw attention to it. Not because the problem is not there, but because it calls for a high level of transparency and vulnerability for the sake of creating a relationship of trust among Nagas.

Our differences and our aspiration for a common goal are the two central realities in our story, which we simply cannot ignore. Indeed they seem to be the equivalents of the negative and positive charges that produce electric energy and so both are to be understood to be essential for what they are to produce together.



We human beings are more interested in the glamour, power, glory and success associated with our aspirations, and that is why our aspirations excite and stir us so much. It would seem God is more interested in how we let our differences teach us humility, patience, selflessness, truthfulness, caring for one another - qualities without which aspirations become nightmares. 'The high ideals, and not long after, the dark dead end of man-made schemes,' as a poet puts it so well.

What right do I have to say anything about the Naga struggle and questions related to it?

Like others I too have asked myself what I, a citizen, truly think about the Naga struggle. As I look back to the beginning I am convinced again and again that it is the greatest, most significant, thing Nagas have done. I see that Nagas have adopted the right and wise way of responding in a crisis which is, 'When in doubt choose the course that you feel in the depth of your heart to be right and true on the basis of your history and your most cherished values.' Today we seem to be resorting to the disastrous formula which says, 'When in doubt and the going becomes tough and confusing, get drunk to remove the doubt and confusion, or choose the option that is most profitable to you. A temptation resisted is a temptation wasted.'

The severe difficulties we are experiencing today, overground and underground, point clearly to philosophical, ethical, spiritual issues inbuilt in our struggle, as in all struggles. The time has come when we are forced by the opportunities and dangers of our struggle to squarely face the issues and establish the choices and alternatives and the positive and negative consequences of our decisions. I believe this is what we are trying to do in such exchanges of views and convictions.

It is with this understanding that I am going to try to show some views on reconciliation.

Reconciliation, like peace, unity or development, can easily be abused and perverted and used as slogans for political gimmicks and tactics. This must be jealously guarded against. But we dare not treat reconciliation lightly and arrogantly nor think it is up to us to manipulate it to suit our self-centered schemes.

True reconciliation is the end product of costly transparency, or unquestionable acknowledgement of wrongs, errors and mistakes committed that have produced hurts and wounds to life, physically and

spiritually. I believe one clear lesson from history is that unless historic wrongs are fully addressed and those hurts experience healing, openly expressed, as a result of forgiving and being forgiven, the internal poisoning of society spreads like a malignant growth. Such a society stays deeply incapacitated by injustice or violence and corruption. This long term impact of unhealed wounds on the lives of nations is strongly evident right across the Latin American nations like Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Argentina, Columbia, Mexico and so on. In these nations the terrible wounds inflicted on the natives by the Spanish *conquistadors* and their descendants have never been sufficiently recognised by the ruling class and establishment.

On the other hand, we have the all-out fight put up by British civil society of the day in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries against the slave trade. It developed into an open, prolonged, systematic debate on national character, national conscience and values. Because the slave trade had become the backbone of British economy and the immediate threat to Britain posed by Napoleon across the English Channel was very real, the pro-slave trade forces tried to characterise the fight against the trade as anti-national.

William Wilberforce, the eloquent and dedicated Christian MP, leading the fight from inside the Parliament, and his fellow fighters spread across the nation convinced the nation that unless the moral evil and curse of slave trade that had become like a cancer was ended, Britain was in danger of collapse and ruin from within brought on by national decadence and moral bankruptcy. They won and the slave trade was abolished by an Act of the British Parliament. It was official recognition of a massive wrong.

The historian of no less stature than G M Trevelyan said that the significance of the victory was in the fact that one of the greatest social wrongs of society was ended not by force but by change in individual lives which created a public opinion that was strong enough to produce an Act of Parliament. Trevelyan said the great triumph prevented the whole of Africa from becoming a gigantic slave farm and saved Europe from destroying herself through greed and decadence.



# Ethical And Spiritual Challenges

*God Challenges Us, The Devil Tempts Us*

How Do We Respond To Our Crisis?	225
Test Of Our Maturity	228
Moral Integrity	230
Going Far Enough	236
Selfishness: Violation Of Human Rights	240
Dealing With Your Part In The Problem	241
Dealing With Conflicts	245
Back To Integrity For Progress	250
Quo Vadis? Whither Goest Thou?	255
Growth For Survival And Victory	259

*A Naga Speaks*

## How do we Respond to Our Crisis?

Naga Christian Fellowship, Old Delhi, 6 May 2018

**15** of us associated with Forum for Naga Reconciliation have come to Delhi as part of a renewed pursuit of conviction to inspire Nagas to listen to one another for the sake of our common future. We are encouraged by the experience so far that when we listen to one another we start to listen to God also.

If we allow the deteriorating crisis of our society to get worse, the little we have achieved together will be destroyed. All Nagas are clear about this.

In St Mathews 16, Jesus said, 'When evening comes, you say, "It will be fair weather, for the sky is red," and in the morning, "Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast." You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.' Jesus expects us to think widely enough about the issues changing society and the world and to live responsibly.

I find this very thought provoking and fascinating indeed. He was making it clear that only that way we will build the kingdom of God on earth. And that should be normal thinking for each one of us.

Before coming to Delhi there were two public-interaction meetings, first in Dimapur, and then in Kohima. The main challenges conveyed to the Forum were - it must not be corrupted and sabotaged by vested interest of any kind; and the search for reconciliation must go far and deep enough to the actual wrongs, hurts and wounds Nagas have inflicted on one another, so that forgiving and being forgiven becomes real and breaks the terrible chain of hate, fear and revenge.

One senior citizen said he decided to come disregarding the distance because he had sensed FNR's initiative must not fail and that he should accept responsibility for the task. He added, the Nagas are so worried about their society that FNR must not give false hopes but stay truthful and bring changes that are urgent.

In one of the lively, intense sessions yesterday at Nagaland House in Delhi, one participant warned about 'long- distance nationalism' and another warned about 'easy social media politicking' because the wounded relationships within the Naga family and with our neighbours are such, the consequences of indulging in vengeance or quick-gain politics can go out of

*A Naga Speaks*

control.

Historian Titus Livius in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC said of his decadent, hedonistic Roman society. 'We have reached the point where we cannot bear our vices or their cure.'

We cannot deny this is precisely true about us, and our society also, as well as about nations across the world today.

A leading politician in the newly formed Government in Nagaland told some of us just before we left for Delhi, 'Our government has promised much again as we have to, but we don't see how we can now bring any development and change because the selfishness, lawlessness and irresponsibility of our people have become so established. We have created an unchangeable and undevelopable society. Personally I am afraid and at a loss...'

We do not need to doubt that the Naga struggle for our deeply-felt aspirations originated from our soul put in each of us by God Himself for us to live, develop and grow properly. As happens in the struggles of all peoples, our struggle also produced changes and opportunities we had never encountered before. Because, individually and as a people, we have responded to the changes and opportunities in our way, not God's way, we have produced the dangers and wrongs already mentioned and our society is unable to move forward.

Our sense of desperate need is evident in the reactions narrated already. And the sense of need we are acknowledging is a sign of God coming into our crisis! 'Man's extremity is God's opportunity.'

We know now from very bitter experience that if the struggle by a people for their identity, nationhood and development is not examined boldly and corrected, the struggle also becomes worthless and uncontrollably destructive.

The struggle underground and the struggle 'over ground' by the State Government are both destroying themselves and the people for whom both were launched. This cannot be denied.

What we now urgently need to do is to restore the health of the processes of all our efforts, underground and 'over ground', so that we may build ourselves up, instead of destroying ourselves as we have done for a long time now.

What FNR is attempting is a part of this battle. This battle is to be fought and won in the heart, soul and conscience of each one of us, or it is

*A Naga Speaks*

lost there. And if it is lost there, it is lost completely. This decisive, eternal battle is fought nowhere else. We see so clearly here the titanic wrestling between God and Satan that Dostoyevsky described.

Every time I think of the time and the place in which it was said, and who said what to whom, I am stunned by what I see and I am just so challenged, inspired and reassured by the realisation that in God's mind the battleground in me is important to Him.

What I have learned from this started the process of change in my life. When I am unhappy, regretting, feeling depressed, sad and angry, bitter or filled with hatred, vengeful and so on, it is the unmistakable sign that God is trying to show me something most important for me; and the Devil is at work to sabotage it.

What I am called to be, and to do with my life is being fiercely attacked by the Adversary. God's sensitive guidance to me is being countered by the Devil giving his opposite plan. My unhappiness, anger, depression, jealousy or sadness does not necessarily mean the Devil has won. But it does mean the wrestling between God and the Devil is raging fiercely indeed! If the Devil has won, then my character starts to breed evil.

What Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount should, I believe, be understood as referring to this silent but titanic battle going on inside us so often: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.'

In the conversation between God and Cain (taking place in the presence of his younger brother Abel), God was trying to teach the elder brother to become a man who will rejoice in his younger brother becoming a greater person, a greater success even, than himself. God was revealing His formula for the building of His kingdom on earth as it is in heaven, the just society on earth. If Cain had risen to God's doctrine for life on earth that day he would have experienced he was building the kingdom of God right away. That was what God wanted him to discover.

God *challenges* us: to accept pain and sacrifice in order to grow towards His likeness. Satan *tempts* us: to always choose the easy, selfish, deceitful way, which leads to defeat, decadence or death of the individual and his/her society.

I found jealousy a real problem as I grew up when I came to see that so many were more talented and successful than me!! I became a sad, bitter and angry person. Genesis 4 helped me to find what God means by what is right, really the only sensible, worthwhile thing to do with one's

life! In my attempt to understand my jealousy and unhappiness, I sensed God was telling me to discover whatever I had and to build on it with all my heart, soul, mind and strength, instead of complaining and demanding that I should have something others have.

When I looked into what I had, I found I had what everyone else had – love of truthfulness, justice, peace, and such other good things.

God seemed to be telling me that these desires and longings were not small things, and the wisest thing for me to do was to concentrate on learning to be truthful and transparent, the opposite of my nature and character! If this can be worked out with my wife, it works in all situations outside!

To reflect on it and on ourselves is to discover how quickly things can go terribly wrong or wonderfully right because we are designed to be guided by our Creator, and yet we are so vulnerable at the same time to be tempted away by the Adversary crouching at the door and tempting us with the opposite purposes.

This fierce battle for our loyalty is again and again made clear to us in the Bible.

The most difficult thing for an individual or a people to do is to respond correctly to the challenges that crises bring us to. But that is God's plan for making growth possible. It is fearful and wonderful. We Nagas have to realise we too have to accept the plan as part of the privilege of being a people on earth.

And the battle and the drama take place in each one of us, nowhere else.



### **Test of our Maturity**

Niketü Iralu and Wati Aier

**W**e, the public, do not know the details of what happened at the recent talks between Th Muivah and K Padmanabhaiah. The announcement by L K Advani about the deletion of the words 'without territorial limits' regarding the ceasefire is not easy for the Nagas, after all they have said and done to protect and retain the ceasefire with these three words. Given the circumstances in which the Indo-Naga talks are taking shape, our reaction

*A Naga Speaks*

is 'so far so good'. We say this because in the sensitive crisis, the right step at the right time is the only way to proceed through the gauntlet to a satisfactory solution. It is hazardous to say anything at this stage.

Unnecessary misunderstandings are easily created, but Nagas must speak to one another in order to develop the best consensus through fearless exchange of convictions. We humbly believe that Th Muivah and S C Jamir have both said the most helpful things possible in response to the present heightened crisis. The Chief Minister has told the media, 'Let us remember the ceasefire and the peace process (that started in 1997) and let it continue.'

The lone voice to defend the Bangkok agreement at the N.E. Chief Ministers' meeting with the Prime Minister on July 27, he said, 'A beginning has been made after many decades of mindless violence and therefore the Naga peace process should be carried to its logical end.' He has called for 'a holistic strategy to normalise the post ceasefire situation,' in the whole of the North East, as reported in the media.

Commenting on what L K Advani announced on the ceasefire area coverage, General Secretary Th Muivah talked of readiness to understand 'the extreme difficulties of the Government of India.' He also indicated in an interview that for a settlement to last, Nagas cannot ignore the needs of our neighbours. If we have understood correctly, our two leaders have dared to raise the ultimate question of what is good for all. We recognise that what is right for all, requires all to rise above their entrenched, rigid positions to something higher and equally honourable. In rising to achieve what is right, opponents have to transcend the victor/victim dilemma. All are winners.

On the other hand, to stay at the level of who is right often results in a joint suicide. Are we seeing more than is narrated when we think we are getting a glimpse of statesmanship in the words of Muivah and Jamir? If we are, it shows how desperately we are asserting our faith and belief in the possibility of miracles occurring at the heart of the Naga crisis. Our wild imagination also shows that we have a sincere vision for our leaders, all of whom we consider to be crucial for an inspired solution.

At this particular juncture, as human beings, many of us will be tempted to express our anger and frustration by resorting to violent acts. While this would be fully understandable, we Nagas stand to lose all that we have gained so far, if we are to do what is easiest and most tempting. So far, many in the Indian civil society have watched with disbelief the restraint Nagas have shown, especially by our Naga brothers and sisters in



Manipur.

Nagas are known for our 'ability' to be violent to defend our stand. We have followed that false guide for long enough and we know there is no future in more violence. The coming days will certainly test our maturity and wisdom. Can we not show that we have come of age? We believe that in showing understanding of Delhi's 'extreme difficulties', Th Muivah has portrayed moral courage without harming the Naga position ultimately.

We earnestly call upon the IM leadership to do all they can do to win the confidence and trust of all the national workers of the Naga struggle and its people, the Nagas. This is their moment to reach out to all those who have been hurt as well as those they have hurt, in order to remove the ill will that some of their actions and ways of doing things have generated over the years.

The Naga public know that the NSCN (IM) too have been grievously wronged by their opponents. We pray the group that has prevailed will take the lead in bringing healing, so that what has been consolidated, by them may not be wrecked again, as before in our story. The dogged pursuit of our common goal for over fifty years has brought us thus far.

The extensive media attention given to the chaotic protests in the neighbouring states over the ceasefire area issue and Delhi's response to it indicate the level of recognition the Naga political struggle has been accorded. We call upon the government of India to recognise that the time has come to work out an acceptable settlement with the Nagas acting with complete transparency, imagination, seriousness and the needed political will. The past strategies of dividing the Nagas to defeat them should be discarded. They have not worked and they will not work. They are not worthy of India.

Nagaland Baptist Church Council, Kohima, 24 January 1995

*The* story of man starts with God making man in His own image, endowed with mind, emotion and will to manifest the spiritual and moral nature of His Creator. A Biblical commentary on the first chapter of Genesis says, 'God created mankind so that it would be capable of fellowship with Him.' So this subject of 'Moral Integrity' has its origins in the divine

*A Naga Speaks*

meaning and purpose for which man was created.

In a few words of dramatic power first with Adam then Cain, God's serious destiny for man to be a morally and spiritually responsible being, capable of fellowship with Him, of knowing good and evil and choosing good by rejecting the tyrannical demands of his own selfishness and pride, is vividly expressed.

He also says to us, 'Be still and know that I am God.' (Psalms 46). 'Listen carefully to me, and let your soul delight itself in abundance. Incline your ear, and come unto Me. Hear, and your soul shall live.' (Isaiah 55).

How wonderfully clear it is that despite our sinful nature, God expects us to be totally different. His stirring promise to us, if we come to Him and hear Him, is that our soul shall live! Our soul coming alive is the beginning of our moral integrity. 'Thou hast made us for Thyself, And our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee,' said St. Augustine, explaining our deep hunger and thirst for our Creator.

Most of us live lives shaped by what we see of ourselves and what others see of us. What others see is often very near the truth. That is why Robert Burns talked of 'The gift to see ourselves as others see us.' But the extra thing in God's view of us is that despite seeing the worst in us He has a destiny and plan for us. We human beings very often don't see in others what God means them to become because we are too preoccupied with our own success.

Moral integrity is the quality of character that is developed in us when we allow God to make us grow into the person He wants us to be, the person He sees we can be. If we will with His love, dare to accept and love what He wants us to be, we grow to our full stature. God's vision and plan for each one of us is total growth and maturity, mentally, spiritually, morally which He can use to build His kingdom of peace and justice on earth. So moral integrity is what happens when we rise to a purpose and meaning greater than ourselves. It is the fruit of our saying 'Yes' to God. It means to be whole and firm and consistent in standing for your deepest convictions, vision and values whatever the cost may be.

Here we must not ignore the other reality that has produced the Hitlers, Stalins, and Pol Pots of history, the inevitable fruits of human beings saying 'No' to God and 'Yes' to Satan, or the worst in themselves. This other power works relentlessly to control us, and the world through our selfishness and pride. What should be understood is that we are made

to obey a master. If we turn away from God, we condemn our sinful nature to obey Satan.

I believe NBCC has chosen this subject because the Church recognises that the human element is the central issue of our crisis. We have already experienced Nagas doing the most heartless and cruel things to one another. Unless we, with God's grace and wisdom achieve a miracle of change, of rebirth of trust and common vision as a people, and care for one another, we stand helpless and defenceless against the worst happening to us. What I have in mind is the total collapse of law and order as has happened in Cambodia, Rwanda, Somalia, Sierra Leone, Angola, and so on. I believe what we must prevent at all cost is this type of tragedy overtaking us also while we struggle for our goals and aspirations.

Let us remember that in all these situations people believed that political independence would solve all their problems. They allowed unsolved problems to accumulate to unmanageable levels. Those in positions of influence who could have done something, showed the worst examples of selfishness. Hopelessness and destructive anger took over, and the terrible process of the worst given for the worst started. And in all these disastrous situations the roots of the hates and distrusts were left untouched and unhealed. So the expensive efforts that tackled only the consequences produced worse problems and deeper despair.

Let us now look at the story of an unbelievable change that occurred in history. About two hundred years ago Great Britain became the world's leading, slave trading nation. Her ships brought African slaves from West Africa to British, French and Spanish colonies in the New World for the sugar, cotton and tobacco plantations. In many cases African chiefs caught and sold entire villages under them to the slave traders. It became so profitable that the trade became the mainstay of the economy of Britain, as well as a vital factor for the security of her growing empire.

However in due course the disturbed consciences of individuals began to speak out against it. Eventually the issue reached the British Parliament where the decisive battle was fought for its abolition. William Wilberforce, the popular and respected MP, was the man who led the fight to get Parliament to stop the trade. He was supported by a highly dedicated team of men and women who came from all walks of life. One of them, John Newton, the slave ship captain who became a pastor after a deep conversion to Christianity, played a key part in helping Wilberforce to give his life to Christ. He wrote, 'Amazing Grace.'

***A Naga Speaks***

Wilberforce like many others became convinced that toleration of the near-total dependence of the nation's economy on the slave trade was largely responsible for the extreme decadence, cruelty and injustices of British society in the 18th century. The wealth that kept the nation going came from an evil source. Wilberforce accepted 'The Abolition of the Slave Trade, and the Reformation of the Manners (morals) of England' as the two great tasks God had given him. He was widely recognised as the one to succeed his friend, Pitt, as the next Prime Minister. His decision to take on the abolition fight meant saying 'No' to the highly tempting opportunity to be the most powerful man in the nation. The fight in and out of Parliament was stoutly opposed by some of the most powerful in the land because their comfortable standard of living was at stake. But the trade was ended by an Act of the House of Commons after 20 years of resolute fight by the abolitionists.

Historian G M Trevelyan, described Abolition as 'One of the turning points in the history of the world.' He said for Africa 'It was only just in time. If slavery had not been abolished before the great commercial exploitation of the tropics began, Africa would have been turned by the world's capitalists into a slave farm so enormous that it must eventually have corrupted and destroyed Europe herself, as surely as the world-conquest under conditions of slavery destroyed the Roman Empire.'

This story poses a direct challenge to us. The daring obedience of Wilberforce and his team to do what needed to be done enabled God to change the spirit and laws of the nation. A violent collapse of society that was expected was avoided. It powerfully demonstrated the truth that 'When man listens, God speaks; When man obeys, God acts; And when men and women change, nations change.' To restore the moral integrity of the nation was the issue.

Before he was able to take on this most demanding task, Wilberforce accepted a deep transformation that touched every area of his life. This is the lesson for us. To be able to change the wrongs of his nation he made sure that the wrongs of his own life were surrendered to God, as regards how he used his wealth, his time and his body. For a highly popular social figure like him the changes he accepted were costly. He was realistic.

As his biographer has written, 'He worked hard to strengthen not only mental but spiritual stamina. He saw himself embarked on a pilgrim's progress, not idling in green pastures beside still waters; for with awareness of God's presence went a sense of the 'strictness and purity of

the Christian character', a desire not only to do good but to be good, never content with attainment. He adopted rigorous self-examination. With paper in front of him he would examine his motives, conduct and words. In planning moral reforms he showed awareness that politics is influenced more by the climate of an age than by the personal piety of statesmen and politicians. Wilberforce believed, nonetheless, that England's destiny lay safest in the hands of men of clear Christian principle, and that submission to Christ was a man's most important political as well as religious decision.' (*William Wilberforce* by John Pollock; page 44, Lion Publication).

Historians agree that the abolition was achieved without violence largely because the public trusted the intention and transparent moral integrity of those who fought against it.

The urgent question for us is how do we develop moral integrity to answer the challenges we face? If you are like me, you are likely to think it should start with others! But we will get nowhere with this kind of blind self-righteousness. We have to start with ourselves!

Allow me to share something from my own experiments, which I started at college. It was to ask what God had to say to me in addition to praying for what I wanted. I started to write down the thoughts that came as I tried to listen honestly. It became clear He wanted me to tackle the 'small things' that had kept my life selfish, ineffective and bitter. I had to write letters to put things right.

I certainly discovered that true prayer is a two-way relationship with God.

I found writing down the thoughts that came when I listened for God's guidance made a real difference. 'The palest ink is stronger than the strongest memory,' the Chinese say. What is written down challenges you to make a practical start. For a lazy, casual, indecisive person like me, this kind of discipline is important. Otherwise truths come and go as beautiful insights producing no change. As an Australian farmer has said, 'What God puts in front of us is what requires our attention, whether it is a small thing or a global decision. It means making truth and wisdom practical. And if it is practical for the individual, it is practical for the community. All of a sudden, things unfold in an uncanny way.'

The first steps of change in my life did not change the world. But what happened was that I started to take a stand for right against wrong in the world, beginning to put things right at my level of a very ordinary

person. I understood the Cross meant crossing out my selfishness and pride to simply follow God's guidance. The first thought I wrote down during my first time of listening was, 'You are a very selfish man. You hate others because of your selfishness.' The simplicity of it captivated me. I was like a miner who was going to keep digging to reach the Pearl of Great Price buried below.

I find my integrity starts to form with the choices I make to obey God and put Him first before what I want for myself, and my fear of what others think. They cease to be small steps if God is able to use them. Covetousness is my most constant and ever deceitful temptation. So the prayer of David always moves and grips me completely, "Turn my heart toward your statutes and not toward selfish gain. Turn my eyes away from worthless things; preserve my life according to your word." I have to be very alert about covetousness, as an addict has to be about drugs!

One day a simple thought hit me hard. It was, 'Instead of wanting to own only some acres of land why not claim the whole of Nagaland and decide to care for it and all the people in it!' I can say this thought has helped me immensely. It must have come from God! Oscar Wilde said, "There are only two tragedies in this world. The first is not to get what you want. But the far greater one is to get what you want!" Wilde's typically mischievous way of putting it may not be the final word on covetousness. But he has expressed well the futility of covetousness. If you decide to want nothing for yourself you begin to care for the whole world.

The only answer to my selfish cravings is in the deep satisfaction that comes from a clear-cut surrender to Christ crucified to co-operate with him in building his kingdom on earth immediately in my situation. I believe Christ's kingdom in our case will be in the rise of men and women who will create a just and caring society where everyone will have enough because we care enough for one another as sons and daughters of God.

The purpose of our discussion is not to define moral integrity. It is to help one another to find the thinking and commitment of life that confronts and cures evil in all its manifestations. In other words, to meet the deepest needs of our people at this crucial time in our history. This engagement with evil takes place not by our goodness, but by our all-out willingness to let God the builder build His way, using us as His instruments. The greatest obstacle that keeps God out most often is the self-will of good people like us who want to build His kingdom our way not His way.

The integrity God requires of us starts to form if we accept to live by the standard beautifully indicated in Psalms 51. I would like to end with a few lines that 'wonderfully and fearfully' describe the kingdom of God with majestic defiance. This hymn has never failed to help me.

*Jesus I my cross have taken,  
All to leave and follow Thee,  
Destitute, despised, forsaken;  
Thou from hence my all shalt be.  
Perish every fond ambition;  
All I have sought, or loved, or known.  
Yet how rich is my condition,  
God and heaven are still my own.*



*The Golden Missive Vol. I ASUS Newsletter. June-September 2002*

**M**y family has an excessive number of members who have been seriously disabled by drug and alcohol addiction. So a great deal of my time, energy and resources during the past 12 years have gone into helping my family deal with this extremely difficult problem. In due course I started to work with Naga Mothers' Association in helping to establish Mount Gilead Home near Kohima. In collaboration with Kripa Foundation, Mumbai, it became the first professionally-run counselling and rehabilitation facility for drug and alcohol addicts in North East India.

Since leaving University in 1957 I have worked full time with Moral Re-Armament (MRA) in various parts of India and the world. (Initiatives of Change is the new name of MRA).

Developing human resource through a radical change and renewal in people is my field of work. So by a gradual and natural progression I have become involved in the attempts being made by Naga Hoho and the Churches for resolution of conflicts, healing and reconciliation in our society.

From what I have experienced in working with others who share the same convictions for a better future, I have reached the conclusion that

***A Naga Speaks***



the key to life is in making sure we go far enough. That is what I want to discuss in this article I have been asked to write for the newsletter Angami students in Shillong are bringing out.

Some readers may well say going only as far as it serves your own success and ambition is going far enough! So why try to be so saintly and think of going beyond that? The answer is if you don't go far enough as God guides you, you not only fail to be the person God means you to be, but you very often end up actively going far enough with the Devil. Some may again say to believe in the existence of the Devil is superstitious and unfashionable for educated people. But the proof of his reality is soon demonstrated to anyone of us by what the Devil does to our character and integrity if we choose to ignore what God says to us. He does not fail to capture anyone choosing not to go far enough with God. In life we either fight to follow God's way according to His guidance, or we go the Devil's way. Both of these alternatives are processes that develop according to our choices in situation after situation, day after day.

Repeated instances in the Bible make it clear that the key lesson God wants us to learn to live out our lives on earth is going far enough. Why? Because He needs our cooperation to build His kingdom on earth 'as it is in heaven'. Science has also revealed that the whole Universe too is the result of processes that go far enough.

### **Jesus and Going Far Enough**

Jesus always took people far enough. It was so important in his teaching that he conveyed it with dramatic emphasis. He talked of 'going the extra mile'. To the question "How many times should I forgive someone who has hurt me? Is seven times not enough?" he declared, "No, that will not do. Seventy times seven!"

He was so against playing safe, lukewarm half-heartedness, tentativeness, and indifferent neutrality in responding to situations and other people. He taught we should be all-out in our giving of our best so that others may find faith, hope, and change in their lives and growth to what God means them to be.

He was highly imaginative in communicating his ideas because he knew people are far more likely to get inspired and act only when they grasp clearly how goodness or evil is born. Fish and bread, snakes and stone express so vividly what giving our best and giving our worst mean. The truth is, not to give your best means giving your worst. It always works



out that way in life.

For Jesus going far enough eventually meant going through the terrible despair in Gethsemane in helpless obedience, then enduring the blood, sweat and tears of complete humiliation, carrying the awkward, crushingly heavy Cross along the crowded road to Calvary and ending up on that Cross. And once there, it was 'My God, why have you forsaken me?' Going far enough for him was to stay faithful through the terrible 'dark night of the soul' so that God's will, not his own desires and wish may be done. By going far enough he did a complete job of what he was entrusted by his Father, and thereby inaugurated Christianity. The Cross came to represent forgiveness, healing, joy, freedom, salvation and complete triumph over evil.

### **Doing What Needs To Be Done**

In life we face three options all the time:

1. Do nothing difficult.
2. Do what can be done.
3. Do what needs to be done.

To do what we can is not a bad thing at all. But if we do not consciously, deliberately decide to wrestle with what needs to be done, doing what can be done after sometime becomes the same as doing nothing. If we boldly examine what needs to be done, life ceases to be routine and boring. Things come alive because what needs to be done is where God is. He calls us to come there and make what needs to be done our responsibility.

What needs to be done goes deep enough to the places where things are going wrong in our own lives and in society and the world. And if we dare to go there, the guidance and plan of God begin to be revealed to us. What needs to be done is where the Kingdom of God on earth begins to be built by our obedient response and co-operation. And it is also where the Kingdom of the Devil and hell also starts to be built.

When we fail to find out what needs to be done due to our laziness and selfishness and choose to live only as we like, we help to create hell right here on earth. I believe therefore the battle between good and evil, God and the devil, is fought over what needs to be done. The devil does his best to be sure we concentrate only on what suits our pride and selfishness, and to hell with what needs to be done!

Perhaps what I have said here can be called a theoretical analysis.

***A Naga Speaks***

The surest way to test the truth of the theory is by applying it to any of the problems we are trying to solve today.

### **Recovery From Addiction**

Take the case of chemical addiction, and all the other forms that prevent us from growing up to God's fullest stature for each one of us. An addict can never recover unless he/she decides to go far enough and learns to do what needs to be done, patiently, point-by-point, day-by-day. His/her family can never help the addict unless they decide to go far enough and do what needs to be done. Which means to confront his/her untruthfulness and at the same time care for him/her adequately. Such a total response enables the addict to face reality and to find hope as well which starts his/her struggle for recovery and a new life.

### **Beyond Politics To Reconciliation**

In the struggle for reconciliation, what is first needed is real transparency and total willingness for the truth. This opens the door to understanding, trust, forgiveness and healing. Unless some one in the conflicts decides to go the extra mile, or far enough, in transparency and willingness for the truth, reconciliation becomes a political exercise, making the conflicts more complicated and far deadlier than before.

The Naga Reconciliation Process that was launched in Kohima on 20 December 2001, has become well known. It was the fruit of the united thinking of Naga Hoho, the different Christian denominations, NMA, NPMHR and NSF. A joint Declaration of endorsement and a Pledge were read out by the Presidents of all the Naga tribes present from all Naga inhabited areas.

### **Will Nagas Go Far Enough**

The power of the Naga Hoho pledge of readiness for self-examination lies in the fact that it goes far and deep enough to the point where wounded, hurt and bitter people meet God and one another and discover they need to help one another instead of blaming. Jesus made this truth real when he told the crowd and the woman they had caught in adultery and brought to him, 'Let him who is without sin cast the first stone.'

If any one of us would sit down and honestly looked at what we are unhappy or fearful about and obey as God showed us, and go all the way, we will learn to become God's instruments to help our people win through to a new future. That is why I am most interested in going far enough.

*A Naga Speaks*

## Your Experiment

I would like to suggest to all who read this article to do a simple experiment with God. Remember Gandhi's *My Experiments With Truth*? Suppose you were to sit down with a cup of tea and write out the places and ways in which you have so far given your worst instead of your best in your family, your hostel, your classroom, or workplace? Are you prepared to change to start to give your best from now in every situation, fish and bread, not snake and stone, by the way you live and do things? If you are, you will start to build the kingdom of God right away. It is certain you will find it so satisfying and convincing you will not give it up for something less.



## Selfishness: Violation Of Human Rights

Urgent: Quit Notice to it.

**W**e have to do something about selfishness. Just because it is everywhere like mud during the wet season and dust during the dry months and we cannot say

Selfishness is our common enemy. We have to start with this recognition of where the root of the problem is and confront it, if we are to save our people, our society, and the things we are justly proud of in the Naga story. We are doomed if we will not confront it, resolutely, equipped with a vision and purpose of life more satisfying than selfishness. Selfishness, like addictive chemicals and all pointless diversions, is notoriously popular for giving instant satisfaction. Alas it does not last and its proven capacity to destroy everything in its path is discovered only when it is too late when we are too used to the deceptive comfort of its fatal embrace.

If we will stop for long enough and reflect we will discover that a moral virus is paralyzing our society in all fields of life - politics, religion and the (mis)use of resources for developing a just society. And the culprit is selfishness, overground or underground.

I am writing with the confidence of an authority on the subject. When I decided while in University to experiment with listening to the still small voice within, in addition to the prayer to God I daily did and continue to do, the very first thought that I wrote down after some listening was

*A Naga Speaks*

‘You are a very selfish man. You are jealous of so many people and do not love any one...’ I have good reason not to be modest in considering myself a leading authority on selfishness, given the assessment from the highest authority, God himself!

If we will not discipline ourselves with regard to unabated selfishness we will neither meet the needs of the poor nor ensure the future of the rich.



### Dealing with Your Part of the Problem

The changes taking place in the world in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that started to impact the Nagas also vastly increased in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The impacts gradually became inescapable challenges to all that they had become down the silent unrecorded centuries. The story of their response to the challenges is the story of the Naga struggle.

If the totality of our people’s response to the challenges and all that has happened to them as a result is thus viewed, we see the Naga story is like the story of a river - many hidden mountain springs and streams flowing into one another and becoming a visible river that flows out to the world and to the ocean as all rivers do.

This way of looking at our past and our present gives the correct overall view of the reality that has happened. We see and understand we are all part of the same river. The underground with the different factions, the overground political parties, religions, denominations and all the civil society organisations have resulted from our response to the challenges that changes have brought to us.

We cannot ignore or run away from the relentless changes that shape the world. But we can do something about the quality of our response. What is, honestly, the quality of my and your response? This is reducing huge and seemingly impossible tasks down to manageable sizes and solving them using your intelligence and the best you have in you. This is, to give an example, how the royal hornets we love so much to eat remove massive amounts of earth many times their size to create space for their perfectly constructed combs!

The meaning of the Naga struggle that has manifested itself in diverse ways is that it is the story of their response to their deepest

*A Naga Speaks*

aspirations to become a people and a nation. This is what all human beings do to evolve an identity for themselves. In history some of them became China, Korea, South Africa, India, and Brazil and so on. Today some of them are where Tibetans, Nagas, Chakmas, Bodos etc. are. Given our history and our understanding of it, we too have done the right thing, to have fought to defend what we believed to be right for ourselves as a people.

It is said, mistakes are made only when we do something. Thank God we Nagas have tried to do something. And we too have made mistakes. Our heroic, all-out struggle has revealed to us our strengths, weaknesses and inadequacies. Undoubtedly the Naga struggle is our most precious common asset. But five Presidents of the Naga struggle from far-flung bases and hideouts giving their solemn Independence Day messages to their countrymen and women on August 14 as has just happened, shows a drastically honest examination of ourselves and our struggle, is long overdue.

This year the messages mentioned do indicate a very significant change that has started. They no longer carry mutual recriminations for inter-factional killings. This is the much-appreciated gift the FNR has given to our society.

Judging from the way we have floundered for some years to our present dividedness today no one can dispute that healing and reconciliation to restore our relationships and the health of the Naga family is the new Naga struggle. And in this new struggle we 'crusade for God in ourselves, not against the devil in others', so that there will be 'truth in our inward parts, and in the hidden part' we will be guided by the wisdom of God, not our selfishness and pride.

Having given this long introduction, I shall now end it with an experience that for me is dealing with the part our present crisis where I too have my share.

Permit me to share a personal experience here which I have come to believe is relevant for me in my attempt to understand the truths about our crisis and what we are to do. I was grateful my friend Isak Swu kindly invited me to attend the Consultations in Niuland and Bangkok. I went to the first one in Niuland and I think to Bangkok thrice. When I arrived in Bangkok for my last time I found myself in a situation I did not know how to handle. My crisis started as soon as I got into the beautiful bus that was to take us to the hotel and venue of the gathering. The sheer efficiency the NSCN (IM) cadres had shown in receiving us and putting us on luxury

### *A Naga Speaks*

buses, showing no sign of shortage of funds at all, and so on, that I was seeing was revealing something deep inside me. The confidence I felt during the day had been replaced by acute insecurity. I did not greet the friend sitting next to me.

At the hotel the young cadres quickly took us to our rooms. Before going to bed my room mate said he'd read a passage from the Bible and say a prayer before retiring for the night. I said, 'I am sorry I will not be able to pray because I don't know how to deal with what is going through me tonight'. He asked what it was. After an awkward silence I said I had a crisis that started after our arrival at the airport and it was getting worse. Seeing the organisational perfection of the Consultation, the evident abundance of resources with which everything was being organised, and so on, seemed to have stirred up envy and jealousy inside me. I said, 'How can I pray pretending as if all is well?' He said I was talking about something very important. He prayed and we went to bed.

He slept soundly. I could not sleep as I saw more clearly my problem and its implications. I was most bothered by how I was to manage during the next three days. I got up tired and tense and decided I'd just stay completely silent at the meetings. How I wished I had not come to Bangkok!

I sat next to Melhupra Vero, President of Naga Hoho, and his team at the first morning session. After the welcoming remarks by the coordinator, to my utter consternation, I was asked to make 'an opening statement'.

Realising that disappearing from the scene would help no one, I stood up and said, 'Mr Chairman, I do not know what to say. I am feeling unhappy and confused. If I say what is churning inside me it is too embarrassing for me. If I say something else, I will hate myself for being a hypocrite. However, as you have asked me to say something I have no choice but to "Walk in the light as He is in the light" so that the blood of Jesus Christ His Son may wash me to make possible true fellowship among us. I hate to admit it, but the thought that got into me after my arrival last night and which refuses to go away is this: I wish my uncle Phizo, not Isak and Muivah, had arranged these consultations.'

I recall saying I was envious and jealous of the efficiency and evident abundance of money with which the Consultations were being organised. That the previous night I couldn't sleep arguing to justify myself or deny the ugly thoughts. I had become known in Nagaland as quite a passionate worker for reconciliation. I believed without it we were not going to make any progress. But God seemed to be trying to tell me that

### *A Naga Speaks*

if I wanted anything for myself, I could do nothing good for reconciliation among Nagas. At this point a prominent church leader in the audience shouted 'Praise the Lord!' I said, 'Rev... I am not feeling like that at the moment'. I added I had to admit I wanted my uncle to succeed so that I could exploit it for my own advantage. I said I was ashamed and sorry for my selfishness. Left to myself I was not more than what I wanted for myself in life, which is very small.

I sat down feeling acutely awkward but convinced I could not have said anything else. I was stepping into the unknown. Chairman Isak Swu broke the silence saying, 'We thank our friend for his confession.' The meeting continued.

A few close friends said I was unwise as in their view, 'You have damaged your image in the eyes of the public.' I have reflected much on what I said on the occasion. I continue to wonder if I was unwise. But the thought has grown in me that saying what I said that morning was my small and humble contribution to the Naga search for healing and reconciliation.

It may well be that it will make no visible impact on the situation. But if what I could do to help detoxify the poison of mutual resentments against one another is to be simply transparent about my negative contribution to the problem, I should do my tiny bit without demanding that my role should be more prominent to be noticeable by others.

On August 14 our papers carried solemn Independence Day messages from five different Presidents of the Naga struggle. Churchill would have said 'Never in the annals of human history have a people been ruled by so many Presidents at the same time.' This is not said with any cynical sniggering or bitter condemnation, but with sincere concern as to what we are to do with the crisis we have produced together in our attempt to become a people and a nation.

Whatever others may say from where they are looking at us, that is exactly what we set out to do and to be, and the conviction and the aspiration cannot go away because the compulsion is rooted in the facts of our history. This is a very dangerous moment in our crisis because all the groups are equally unhappy deep in their hearts that the Naga struggle has become so divided. But no group is willing or farsighted enough to admit their share of the wrongs and failures that have caused the present crisis. Bold transparency shown by any group would have enabled them to bring all our people together again. The result is all are waiting to see what will emerge knowing what will emerge cannot but cause more troubles for our

### ***A Naga Speaks***

people.

We have tried to be true to ourselves and our history, which is so important but we have run into difficulties within ourselves and from outside which we had not anticipated. The crisis has revealed realities of our human nature to tackle which we need to help one another instead of condemning one another.

The Naga story is easily proclaimed in noble slogans because it is immediately convincing and compelling. But it is become extraordinarily difficult to be continued. I am not saying the story is wrong or untruthful and therefore should be condemned, denied and the enterprise abandoned. I am saying we should understand the nature of the price we have to pay together now to bring the story up to date, so to speak.

As in the story of a family where the joint partnership runs into trouble because of internal shortcomings, mistakes and failures in the members, the thing to do is for the individuals to acknowledge what has gone wrong and right the wrongs and restore the relationships together so that the family becomes the sanctuary and operational base for the journey ahead.

We have to acknowledge the difficulties we have run into and address them by accepting the painful changes called for in ourselves. It will never do to think of turning back from the venture or denouncing it as an un-amendable blunder. The problem is not in the venture or the road we have chosen to go on. The problem is in all of us:

1. Our unpreparedness in general to cope with the highly complicated demands of adjusting our thinking and our political position according to the changes taking place, and
2. Our denial and justification of our wrongs while we are so clear where others are so wrong.



## Dealing with Conflicts

*De*aling with conflicts is a huge subject. It is the chief concern and anxiety of the human race. The UN came into being mainly to deal with international conflicts so that local conflicts may not become global wars again. And there are many organisations and bodies all over the world, governmental, non-governmental that are operating to study conflicts,

*A Naga Speaks*



prevent conflicts, solve conflicts or to attend to the consequences of conflicts. But mankind is deeply concerned that we human beings are creating conflicts and problems much faster than we are solving them.

The gap between conflict creation and conflict solving is dangerously wide. Like others we too are deeply worried about what our mounting problems and conflicts are doing to us now. The theme of this triennial conference by NBCC Women is the healing of our society through healing in our families. I understand I am to focus on dealing with conflicts in the family.

First of all it seems we need a proper understanding of what conflicts mean so that we may have a clear idea of what it is we are trying to deal with.

In Genesis 1 and 2, we read that man became 'a living soul' after God breathed 'the breath of life' into an image He had made in the likeness of Himself. That we were made in His image and this most extraordinary thing in us, 'life' is the breath of life from God is extremely important and wonderful ideas about us human beings. We need to go back to them to understand our subject. Contemplating on the amazing physical, mental and spiritual faculties in himself, David the Psalmist said, 'I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.'

Are we such wondrous products of God's mind and soul for no special purpose? Can we live our lives as if we are just chemicals, muscles, tendons, nerves and bones without any meaning beyond physical birth, growth, ruthless struggle for success and fame, death and decay? Our answer to this question decides the quality of our life, our character and happiness, and of course the quality of our religion.

That God created each one of us with a clear purpose and the purpose is clear from the very beginning.

Modern science has proved that everything in the universe is in a process of deterioration, except one thing and that is the human spirit and soul, which is constantly rising up to something higher than itself. Nothing suppresses and kills it permanently because it rises up again unflinchingly to resume its growth. Scientists like Carl Jung, Victor Frankl, M. Scott Peck, Daniel Goleman, and many others, have concluded after the most thorough investigations that conflicts, pain and suffering are a part of the mysterious process of life. They are the result of a profound battle in the human heart and conscience, between truthfulness and deceitfulness and courage and

fear, good and evil.

Human conflicts manifest themselves at different levels of life - international, national, regional, tribal, village, clan, and family. All conflicts are interrelated and their origins are in the hearts and souls of each individual on earth. And the conflicts in individuals are immediately played out in the most intimate unit of society - the family.

We need to understand God meets us at our deepest conflicts, doubts, sufferings, fears and failures.

I shall be sharing some thoughts gathered from some desperate human conflicts and failures that we in my family are facing. Perhaps other families are also wrestling with the same issues and questions, because we are all trying to raise our families in the chaos of rapid changes. The changes are not giving us time to work out solutions. I wonder what we will find to be common to all of us if we were to make a list of the problems and conflicts all our families are trying to solve.

In my family, I find our most difficult conflicts come from despair, purposelessness, absence of initiative and the will to fight. This has naturally produced addiction to drugs and alcohol in many members, low quality of education, and accumulation of debts, some of which have become highly threatening because of the killing rates of interest which characterise so much of the circulation of money among Nagas which we call our economy.

We have found that the only way we will be able to solve these problems and conflicts of ours is to come together and talk things out so that we can remove fears and doubts, create transparency, and feeling of compassion for one another, in order to find clarity of plans and solutions. Incidentally, this is exactly what is needed to solve our political problems too.

We have all found, I am sure, that when we come to deal with our problems we are dealing with problems that started way back in our childhood and we are dealing with symptoms or a process of decline.

So much of all conflicts become increasingly harder because we do not go deep and far enough and precisely, as surgeons do, to the point where things started to go wrong. Not going to the precise root of our conflicts is our most common recipe for failure and making the conflicts worse. I think we do this because we are dealing with issues we have not dealt with before and we do not know what is required to be done. So we

wrestle with our conflicts without clarity, wounding one another more in the process.

What we must learn from Christ is that He was totally against half-way measures and attempts. He taught that we must go the extra mile, turn the other cheek, and forgive not once, or seven times, but seventy times seven to show our conviction and sincerity with the persons we are dealing with.

In our family conflicts, it will mean:

1. Someone deciding to deal with them with God's help and under His guidance.
2. The person starting a disciplined all-out approach by sitting down daily at fixed times to find from God what He has to show as to how to deal with the problems.
3. Identifying specifically the origins and causes of the conflicts starts creating transparency and trust by the person dealing with the conflict being honest about his or her own failures and being totally ready to accept corrections from other family members.
4. In faith and compassion, call the family together to tackle jointly the specifically identified issues of conflicts, fights and fears in the family, asking every member to add to the list what they feel are the issues to be tackled together.
5. Keeping it up, regardless of success or failure, never giving up the vision of a healed family.

Why I have made the above five points is to emphasise that we must deal with specific instances of deceit and untruthfulness, we must go deep and personally to the origins and we must persevere in order to enable God to teach us, guide us and change us. We will all find that to be simply honest and keeping things simple is the toughest battle in our families.

The reason why our families are breeding despair, defeat, rebellion, addiction and violence is because we have learnt to use blame and excuses to keep one another at a safe distance, thus staying safe, defeated and rotten in our protected comfort zone. In most families where there are conflicts, the sons especially have refused to go beyond dishonest, cowardly rebelling to courageous, honest initiatives of reform, change, liberation and adventurous assumption of responsibility.

The young men of Nagaland who are effectively bringing down their families, mostly the elite families in Kohima and Dimapur, from their

***A Naga Speaks***

protected, soft lives, should realise what they are doing to themselves and their people struggling to survive. They are like passengers painting their cabins in a sinking ship. They have to realise that rebellion is not good enough apart from the fact that it is so boring. As a counsellor I talk to some of these young people. They are basically scared of facing the challenges of life in a changing world.

The only ones who can help them to start afresh are their parents. I have tried to tell some of the parents to sit down with their sons and say, 'Son, why do you treat me the way you have treated me? Do you hate or resent me? If you do, please, tell me. I want to, I need to know what you have seen and felt which I have not seen and felt in order to change myself. I need your help.' Very few parents respond to this direct approach because of pride and other long-established attitudes. But wherever it is tried, the door locked for years starts to open up and healing starts to come. This approach is sound because it is the one God adopted with Cain.

For those who have travelled on international airlines you know the safety instructions that are announced at the beginning of each flight. One of the instructions says, 'In case of loss of cabin pressure, emergency landing, attend to yourself first and then your child.' It sounds selfish and cruel but it is realistic. You may be able to help save your child only if you have prepared yourself adequately to act.

Dealing with conflicts in our families, parents will need to attend to their failures and mistakes fully first in order to win the trust of their children and save them.

I know I have not said anything you are not familiar with on the subject given to me. One can say so much in a situation like ours, and yet feel one is not making sufficient progress. But I do feel that the recognition you have given to our urgent need to heal our society's and our families' conflicts and wounds is most timely, and we must keep at it. We are facing problems and conflicts we have never faced before.

We must evolve solutions from our efforts and searching, instead of postponing solutions due to our irresponsibility and lack of care and thought. By developing answers to our problems, we will be creating a spiritual and mental culture and tradition which will become our strength and our treasure with which we will be able to deal future problems which will be tougher and more complicated.

I think of Britain's unique contribution to the world by the abolition

of the slave trade and the social reforms that ended wrongs and injustices in prisons, factories and other areas. These historic national changes were achieved, not by force and violence but through profound changes in the times of her people brought on by dedicated Christian leaders. Instead of postponing, initiating changes to facilitate solutions, individuals got together fought for changes, accepting changes in themselves first.

Mahatma Gandhi came along and we know he transformed so many situations by his doctrine of politics and revolution – of leading to Martin Luther King's great civil rights victories in USA, and the peaceful changes that ended the immense dangers of the cold war. It is now seen by historians that if Britain's soul or character had not been so changed and prepared in the previous century by the Christian reformers, the British empire would not probably have responded to Gandhi the way it did.

### **Back To Integrity For Progress**

WASU Golden Jubilee, Sechü Zubza. 9 December 1998

**T**o consider progress and development we should know how to handle the powerful pressures of our changing world that are shaping our lives. To do this we should know ourselves. Otherwise our response will be incorrect or inadequate.

The biggest, fastest growing industry in the world today investing, earning and circulating the hugest amount of money, and therefore possessing the greatest power for good or evil is said to be the electronic industry of information, communication and entertainment. Bill Gates, currently the undisputed leader in this field, reportedly earns US\$500, or Rs.21,000 per second, which works out to Rs. 75,600,000 per hour! We don't need to go into how much per day, per month, per year!

The point is the unbelievable impact this industry is making on everyone on earth. Our young people want to dress, smell, look and act as the latest elsewhere. Most parents simply cannot afford to pay to keep pace with the lifestyle changes that information technology is causing virtually every month. The resultant dissatisfaction on both sides has made our society insecure, restless and unnatural. This is just one part of the changes we are having to handle whether we like it or not.

The artificial, exaggerated images and pressures created by media

***A Naga Speaks***

technology make the problem more complicated. I told an American friend that the TV programmes from the West tend to make many of our youth think that most people in developed, modern societies spend most of their time singing, screaming and jumping around with electric guitars, beating drums or steel plates, or kissing or killing one another at the slightest provocation!

He said, 'If only you could know how most of us have to work so hard to keep pace with life as we have today. Films and videos are made showing how a very few who call themselves fashion-setters decide people should look, think and act. They get the attention and money they crave for. The companies make millions selling what is so often plain trash. Then countless imitators act out what they think is the latest 'in' thing, spending huge amounts of money in the process resulting in greater unhappiness that consumerism produces.'

Winston Churchill foresaw what was coming. He said, 'We are shaping the world faster than we can change ourselves, and we are applying to the present the habits of the past.' More recently, another thinker has put it this way, 'We live today in tomorrow's world with yesterday's ideas.'

These two observations express the awesome crisis the whole world faces. We Nagas have to achieve in a very short time what developed nations have taken centuries to achieve.

We urgently need progress and development, and we need to be achieving even small breakthroughs in order to give ourselves hope and confidence that we can solve our own problems. But right now the harsh question we face is can we avoid a total collapse of our fragile social cohesion where we start to destroy one another on an uncontrollable scale, instead of working co-operatively as a community to achieve all-round progress?

Let us realise that our society too has attained the same degree of the deadly chemistry that produced the chaotic destructiveness that has overwhelmed nations like Cambodia, Rwanda and Liberia, to mention only a few examples. I am referring to the poison of distrust and vengeful hatred of one another, between factions, parties and tribes that now exist among Nagas.

Attempts are being made by the Church and NGOs in various ways to achieve understanding, unification and peace among the rival Naga

groups so that an acceptable final settlement may be achieved. But the attempts are failing to penetrate the outer defences we have all put up to protect our positions of greed, hate, suspicion and fear. We suspect and know the worst selfishness about other groups and tribes and yet we are trapped in our own selfish positions. Because all of us are guilty we each lack the freedom and moral authority needed to tackle the present situation of deadlock. God is waiting for us to start with our own wrongs so that He will be able to start to clean out the poison. This is what I want to talk about.

The quality of our thinking or our philosophy of life decides the quality and health of our society. Let us boldly admit that the philosophy of life running our society is too selfish, irresponsible and therefore too small for the challenging needs we face today. Our selfish philosophy of life has weakened our underground struggle as well as the running of the overground State government.

NNC and NSCN have both told our people to stay loyal and wait for the national workers to bring them sovereignty and freedom for their enjoyment. Our people have come to think that the only thing they need to do is wait loyally, collect money to finance the struggle, criticise other groups and even kill them, so that our goal may be achieved. Our people know money is needed for the national cause. But we are now suspicious of many of those who collect money and there is widespread disillusionment and anger against forcible collection.

Nagas have come to think that while they wait for independence, Delhi will provide. And when freedom is achieved more money will automatically come from other sources in the world! Nagas have become a waiting, expecting, demanding, bad-tempered people whose imagination and creativity has been perverted to scheming how to grab what they have not worked for. I think it will be no exaggeration to say that for Nagas the main purpose of politics is to achieve power and opportunities to accumulate wealth to enjoy material pleasure and fame.

Such a materialistic concept of politics of course allows adoption of even the crudest, most dishonest methods to satisfy one's greed, lust and ambition. Is it surprising extortion, stealing and cheating are raging like an uncontrollable epidemic? What I have said maybe confused as a judgmental criticism of our national workers. It is not. It is about all of us.

I quoted two observations of us by two very objective Indians at a WASU seminar a few years back. I feel they identified the most urgent

***A Naga Speaks***



task on the Naga agenda today. Unless we address the serious weakness in the human element in our struggle we cannot prevent the struggle from destroying itself and us. This brings us to the meaning of our subject – ‘Back to Integrity for Progress.’

As stated earlier, our philosophy of life is our main weakness. Or, our thinking, our purpose and meaning of life, is not an adequate philosophy to give us reliable direction and make us competent. Take the example of an airline jet plane. The plane cannot take off, reach cruising altitude, and reach its destination unless all its engines are running all-out and all the parts function perfectly. We Nagas took off beautifully. But clearly we did not give enough thought to what happens after that.

Or take the case of climbing a mountain like Everest. Every detail of preparation has to be given fullest and harsh realistic attention. To make critical observations like this can be taken as blanket, self-righteous and even opportunistic condemnation of national workers who have sacrificed so greatly. Most of them fought not for selfish gains but out of deep conviction and belief, and I know if I were at all in their places I would most likely have made worse mistakes. But such objective evaluations have become unavoidable if we are to survive and continue our climbing, just as all serious mountaineers do. The criticism is not targeted at individuals but at conceptual errors, which occur in all human ventures.

We have to start by first making a correct assessment of ourselves, and the struggle we have started as a people.

1. To become a people who can survive as a nation in the world, or nation building, is the biggest, most demanding task. It is much more than the struggle to become a politically free nation with a flag, membership in the UN, and having ambassadors in foreign countries. It calls for total growth in everyone in mind, spirit, soul and character, resulting in discipline, responsibility and reliability.
2. We are still at the beginning of our journey as a people, with very limited experience of the changing world. Like many other struggling peoples, we too have had to concentrate our thoughts and activities mainly on the political launching of our struggle. But political strategies and action are only a fraction of the whole venture.
3. We are what we have achieved. It is not insignificant. We made our position abundantly clear before the British left and we have demonstrated that we meant what we said. Let us learn to gratefully



build on what we are no matter how small that may be, without being distracted by what we are not. If we know ourselves and the true size of our enterprise, we will accept the needed preparation, corrections, adjustments and changes with understanding and hope instead of resentment and despair.

4. Everyone is vitally important. What each Naga gives or doesn't give, does or refuses to do will decide whether our struggle will be repaired and restored to take us forward or we will be destroyed by its weaknesses. So everyone is a VIP. Not just a few national workers will achieve what we want to become. Everyone's quality of thinking and living creates or solves problems. Acceptance of growth of mind, heart and spirit by everyone produces integrity, social dynamism and stability. Economic growth becomes possible.

The battleground of the Naga struggle therefore, has now shifted from the outside in the jungles and other places to the heart and mind of every Naga where the toughest enemy hides and sabotages us. It also means it has expanded from just political action to mental, moral and spiritual struggle and search for character, integrity and liberation from selfishness and pride. Without victory in this simultaneous battle, freedom lovers achieve nightmares instead of nationhood. We end up fighting wrong wasteful battles, if we pose and answer incomplete questions.

Religion is the flower and fruit of mental, moral and spiritual battles fought within us. Has not our religion become characterless, lifeless and formal like the dead and dried flowers that decorate our rooms these days, because the mental, moral and spiritual battles in our day-to-day situations are not fought, or are fought inadequately?

Let us now turn to the story of a people who decided to restore the integrity of their collective national soul in order that the nation may be able to face the difficult challenges that confronted her.

Wilberforce like an increasing number of British citizens became convinced that the extreme decadence, cruelty and injustices of British society in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the near-total dependence of the nation's economy on the slave trade were the two sides of the same coin. The fight in and out of Parliament that he and his colleagues resolutely waged went on for more than 20 years before the evil trade was ended by an Act of the House of Commons.

This story poses a direct challenge to us. It was said that Britain

in the 18<sup>th</sup> century became uncontrollably cruel, corrupt, unjust, violent and divided because the wealth from the slave trade that sustained the nation was unclean. The selfish thinking that opposed any change could not produce any vision or direction beyond the suffocating status quo. It is undisputed that the obedience of Wilberforce and his team to do what needed to be done enabled God to change the spirit of the nation. A violent collapse of society that was expected was avoided. It is an enduring example of the hope-giving truth that 'When man listens, God speaks. When man obeys, God acts. And when men and women change, nations change.'

Integrity means being whole, entire and undiminished in character and consistent in adherence to moral principles. It should be clear from our experiences now that whatever we want, be it development, progress, unification, peace or freedom, our greatest need is men and women whose integrity is transparent and trustable. And integrity is not something that is achieved by discussions. It is born when individuals like you and me decide to pay the price of change in our own lives to answer the needs of our society instead of waiting for others to do so.

Our crisis is clearly extremely dangerous. It must also mean that we have a historic opportunity before us to create a new future for our people, which will be built on the sound foundation stones of the integrity of many individuals.

I believe we build the right society, or the Kingdom of God on earth, when by our obedience and change the crises of life are turned into opportunities of progress in conditions of peace and justice.

### **Quo Vadis? Whither Goest Thou?**

Nagaland Peace Centre Function, Chedema Village. 6 September 2002.

**F**rom the Gospel accounts we all know Peter well as a colourful, very human character. Peter was probably the disciple most corrected and also most praised by Jesus. He always kept doing and saying what was going through his mind? He was more often wrong. But at times he was absolutely brilliant and inspired by the Holy Spirit. He was obviously a very difficult person to work with. But we know what he became.

Legend says Peter went to Rome after some years of ministry in his Palestine homeland following the Resurrection, to take the Gospel to

***A Naga Speaks***

the heart of the Roman Empire. Was it one of those impulsive decisions he often took? He found Rome too self-satisfied, too decadent, too sophisticated and too arrogant to listen to a simple fisherman from a far away province of the Empire. Like the time he jumped into the water and found himself drowning, he now found he was overwhelmed by the ways of the glittering but cruel, heartless, materialist society in Rome.

He decided to return to his fishing village. His chances of success were much greater back home. He started for home. After he passed through the city gate and entered the great Appian Way that would take him to a ship for Palestine, Jesus appeared to him and asked 'Peter, Where are you going? In Latin, *Quo Vadis?*' Peter explained and said some one more qualified should be given the task of converting the powerful city. It was foolish of him to have thought he could do anything in Rome. He was going back to where he belonged; where people could understand him and he would be more effective.

Jesus must have reminded him what he had said to him years ago, about going where he did not want to go and doing what he did not want to do for the sake of building the kingdom of God. Jesus must have also told him it was not Peter succeeding for his own glory and fame. But that God would work through Peter's obedience to change and remake Rome for God's great purposes. Peter went back to be used by God. Legend says Peter was finally crucified with his feet hanging up. In the years to come Rome was conquered and became one of the bastions of the Christian civilisation that rose irresistibly from the blood, sweat and tears shed by Peter and his persecuted fellow Christians who were helpless but obedient.

I think the main point of this story is what happens when we go beyond doing only what we can or want to do in our own strength and wisdom, to doing what needs to be done with God's guidance and strength. Peter became free from fears, demands and self-concern about his personal success or failure when he went back to the city he had come to fear and hate, to take on afresh God's task for him. The result was a very ordinary man started to do extraordinary things when he accepted to let God break him, transform him and use him.

Now, if I have correctly understood the thinking of the organisers of this meeting, what they have in mind is where are we Nagas going having come to the position where we are today. *Quo Vadis* Nagas? I shall try to say what I think. But I should add that I am going to make some of the observations with real hesitation because they touch sensitive issues

***A Naga Speaks***

so fundamental that they cannot be left out of our discussion today but for which I experience deepest inadequacy. I hope and pray my intention will not be misconstrued leading to negative reactions and consequences.

Our struggle represents our people growing by responding to changes in the world. It is our common crisis of growth.

Our long heroic and costly struggle has clearly established our position. Our battle now is to learn from our mistakes, heal our wounds, and unite our people so that what has been undoubtedly achieved at immense cost by so many may be consolidated, not wasted through our division.

Our struggle has revealed our strengths and weaknesses. Our ability to fight for our beliefs is our main strength. But our purpose and meaning of life is not yet developed enough to change and remould our multi-tribe society into a new identity that will be able to respond effectively to the changes coming to us from a rapidly changing world. This is our most serious weakness. We think mainly of doing what we want to do to get what we want by any method, regardless of the consequences for our society.

Sometimes we think of what can be done. But we seldom think of what needs to be done. The accumulated problems created by this kind of unexamined, almost unconscious selfishness are destroying us. Will our leaders and we create the thinking needed to develop the wider identity we now need?

If any solution is to work, achieved by any group, we have to help one another to heal our wounds that have frozen our hearts. Hearts frozen by vengeful resentment, pride, fear, or steely ambition produces murderous politics. Our politics has become too murderous because of dishonesty and death of hope. We have no hesitation in blaming one another, but if we were to come to Jesus he will simply say what he said to the crowd who brought the woman taken in adultery, 'Let him who is without sin cast the first stone.'

Let us not waste our time and our vanishing opportunities by indulging in strategies and schemes that will be proved by history to be futile and shortsighted. Without healing the wounds in our relationships, especially between tribes, the Naga struggle also will collapse into a futile, self-destroying venture as has happened with so many other struggles elsewhere. To ignore history's lessons results in needless tragedy always.

Nagas cannot have a viable future unless we start to think also of working out with our neighbours a common stability for the whole North East. It would be correct to say our struggle has produced all that we have today – the State, the ceasefires, the deep divisions, the Revolutionary government, the Shillong Accord, the factions and their conflicts, the corruption, the extortions, the killings as well as all the changes, good and bad, brought about by the massive transfer of money from Delhi to Nagaland in response to the Naga struggle.

Today we should see both the underground political struggle and the overground political process as parts of the same Naga crisis or struggle. And this crisis should be seen as the process of painful growth Nagas are experiencing by responding to changes coming to them.

Our crisis requires us to solve so many problems, most of them huge and unfamiliar to us, in a very short time. The challenge is so frustrating because our knowledge, experiences and skills for solving problems are so inadequate. But we too have no choice but to learn to handle it. The ancient Chinese taught that crises are not bad things to be feared and avoided. They should be responded to correctly because we change and grow only by wrestling with continuous crises.

A struggle that is not constantly examined also ceases to be worth sacrificing for. It quickly goes wrong and starts to destroy itself and the people for whom it was started. History has repeatedly shown this. A people's struggle is a huge crisis of growth. If its opportunities are abused or ignored, its dangers take over and it can become uncontrollably destructive. Is this not true of the Naga story, underground and overground? We are to answer this common destructiveness, which is coming out of all of us.

As we look back, we see much to be proud of. But we also see serious wrongs and inadequacies, which we hide or justify or are just unaware of. We are so afraid of admitting our mistakes and failures; we seem prepared to even sacrifice our people to prove we are right. This folly is suicidal.

That we are no less than what we are can be the foundation on which to build ourselves up. It is true we are way below many other advanced societies that have become stable by learning from many tough trials and errors spread over many centuries. We do not need to be discouraged. An adolescent child does not need to worry that he/she is way below others who are grown up!

***A Naga Speaks***

We need to know and be grateful that we too have covered some distance in our journey as a people, however short, it may be compared to some others. We must not overestimate what we have achieved. But we must not also underestimate it. And we dare not also be casual about the relentless efforts we have to make to keep growing and going forward. Our main achievement is our fight for what we concluded to be fundamentally important for our integrity and honour as a people. A good deal of what we are is revealed in the historical facts of our struggle. The facts of the struggle are known to all of us. So there is no need to go into them here.

The future prospects of the Nagas will be decided by our truthfulness about our past and our present reality. This depends on what philosophy of life we live by. Do we have one? If we have, is it large and comprehensive enough for life's realities? The courage and sacrifices of those who have fought for our aspirations have given us a priceless heritage. But we cannot go further unless every Naga will think out the meaning and purpose of his/her life and live it out fully.

The heritage can become a curse from the past, like the proverbial albatross around our neck, instead of a dependable foundation on which the coming generation may be able to build their future. What has gone wrong along the way has to be put right now. The curse will then be replaced by liberation of spirit and life-giving hope. May our leaders see the battle this way?

Nagas have started to vigorously discuss what has gone wrong in our story. This is a welcome change. It shows Nagas want to be responsible instead of being helpless or indifferent.

### **Growth for Survival and Victory**

To the question, 'What is the main purpose of life?', I think the answer is, to grow fully. Growth is the main programme and activity of all animals and plants on earth. Growth should therefore be examined and understood properly. A healthy ecosystem is a total environment where everything is growing fully as they should. For this article we can leave aside growth taking place in animals and plants and concentrate on the meaning of growth in human beings.

When we think of growth our first thoughts are about physical

***A Naga Speaks***

growth of our body and material or economic growth. We want economic growth to sustain the physical growth and our enjoyment of that growth. Our priorities and thinking are defective or inadequate.

But God's beautiful plan for human life is that the purpose of physical and economic growth is to provide the house, so to speak, in which our mind, spirit, values and our moral integrity are to be fully developed. Because of this close connection between the physical and spiritual dimensions of life, good health is so dependent on the health of our spirit, mind and soul. Christ called the body the temple of the Holy Spirit, giving a compelling vision for human personality.

For a people, society or nation we should add political growth to the total plan of growth that should take place. The model of a hand spread out helps to show the plan of growth envisaged by our Creator.

We give our main attention to material (physical/political) growth represented by the thumb and the last finger – somehow expecting that growth in the mental and spiritual, moral and integrity areas of life will automatically take place. Or we seem to think these qualities will be ours in heaven if we say we believe in a few right things taught in our churches. The point we seem to miss is that what happens in heaven should be entrusted to God. But what God is most interested in is that we cooperate with Him for our maximum growth in our mind, spirit and character for the building of His kingdom on earth.

Our failure to cooperate with Him results in our physical growth being destroyed much earlier than planned by God due to indiscipline and unresolved mental, spiritual conflicts or unhappiness. Our economic growth is either absent or insufficient. Or we are unhappy about the wealth we have acquired because we are not happy about some of the methods and means used to acquire it. To avoid facing our unhappiness or self-hatred, we turn to diversions that do not work. The diversions destroy our peace of mind, our integrity and finally our life.

Because of the same imbalance and defect in our collective growth, our political struggles underground and overground are destroying themselves and the people for whom both the freedom struggle and the State were started.

We can also say our life is like an aeroplane. All the engines of the aircraft must be fully revving and roaring to enable the plane to take off and fly to its destination. If some of the engines do not function, the plane



crashes while trying to take off.

Therefore, our priorities should be clearly thought out by all of us and established. Each one of us is an important project of God for His larger project, His kingdom on earth - a society where everyone has enough, because everyone cares and shares enough, and does enough.

The most important point in the picture of the plane taking off to the sky is the creative tension or explosive power produced by the ignition of the fuel made possible by the smooth functioning of the electrical and mechanical systems under the guiding hand of the pilot and engineer in charge. The needed creative tension within a human being is the sensitive relationship that links together the mind, the conscience, soul and will. If the will obeys the conscience or soul in response to the conclusion given by the thinking mind, then spiritual and moral growth takes place.

We should therefore realise that spiritual growth is really the product of mental growth. They go together. It is this proper growth that decides the healthy growth of the whole personality and life of a human being. Political, physical, economic growth takes place to keep the whole process developing the right way.

This plan of growth required of us by our Creator decides the quality of the human element or factor in any project, including the struggle of a people for their high aspirations. The aspirations may be noble. They usually are. But if the human factor is undeveloped because of shallowness of thought and selfishness, the beautiful dreams become terrible nightmares.

The people of Khonoma have played their part in the launching of the Naga political struggle. Our simple honesty about our mistakes, which others see more clearly than we do, can now be our equally priceless contribution to the current search for healing and reconciliation. Our new battle now can and must be the all-round growth of the Nagas. Whether Nagas will succeed or fail as a people will depend on the outcome of that battle. Everyone has an important, meaningful part to play in it.



*A Naga Speaks*



## Building A Nation

*We Have To Admit Our Mistakes – T SHISHAK*

Why Naga Day?	263
At <i>Imagine Nagaland</i> programme	265
Nationalism And Its People	267
Where Nagas Should And Can Meet	271
Naga Heal Thyself	272
Are We Using WMD On Ourselves	275
Crusading For God In Ourselves...	277
Nagaland For Christ	280
The Naga Crisis	284
The Direction The Church Should Take	
<i>Nagaland Post</i> – 25 Yrs. A Tribute	
The Candle In The Wind	288
The Trail From Makuilongdi	291
Response To Tuisem Shishak	296

*A Naga Speaks*

## Why Naga Day?

Khuochiezie Kohima Local Ground. 10 January 2018

The discussions and exchanges in the newspapers and social media on this subject of 'Naga Day' have been vigorous and comprehensive. They have brought out the different views and perspectives held by different Nagas, and even by our regional neighbours and others beyond. So as we meet here today we can say we have a deeper, wider understanding of the subject and one another, which is so important. There is no doubt the honest conversations during the last weeks have reopened doors people had started to shut to one another. The result would have been more distrust.

I am keenly conscious of the undeserved privilege given to me to say something at the start of this programme. Yet I would like to propose that this acknowledgement and celebration of what our history has given us should take us in the creative direction I believe God is showing us. And that is reconciliation within our society through the healing of our wounded relationships, which will enable us to grow properly with mutual goodwill and co-operation lifting us up instead of the opposite bringing us down. FNR (Forum for Naga Reconciliation) is committed to this all-important task, and it is, of course, the joint responsibility of all Nagas.

The question 'Why Naga Day?' takes us back to what happened on this day 89 years ago. In 1929, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of January, in Kohima, the historic Naga Memorandum was submitted to the British Parliamentary Commission from London headed by Sir John Simon. The points made by the 20 members of the Naga Club who signed the submission are well known to all Nagas. I do not need to elaborate them here. What Naga Club was and what it is being revived to become again will soon be made clear by another speaker.

The modern Naga journey that started with the Simon Commission declaration in 1929 till today brings to mind an African folk saying: 'He who wakes you up in the middle of the night to go on a long journey, you will thank him only after you have travelled a very long distance with him.'

Today, on Naga Day, we are looking back and assessing the distance we have covered and what we have achieved. And many today may not at all be thankful to our pioneers who in 1929 woke their people up to go on

*A Naga Speaks*

the long journey. Because for today's generation, the journey has taken them to where we are and what we are today - stagnant, corruption ridden, without a satisfying purpose of life, and paralysed, therefore unmanageably destructive, if we are honest.

At this baffling time we must not make our situation worse by denial of the facts and truth, our failures and shortcomings that have produced resentment, desire for revenge and poverty of spirit. Or, by becoming irresponsible, greedy, opportunistic exploiters of our people's bewildering crisis for personal gratification, disregarding the terrible consequences for society.

The time has come to reject the errors of hate, fear and selfishness of the past and take our society forward together. This will come down to a few points:

1. Because of the price the Nagas have paid to defend and build on the political position they articulated in the Memorandum to the Simon Commission, Naga nationality has become a reality. It is not a small thing at all. Today we must appreciate and thank one another and God for what we have achieved, ending our blaming and condemnations for what has not been achieved yet. This thoughtless mutual blaming has damaged our relationships so badly.
2. Being human, we all make mistakes of all kinds and easily come short of the perfection and glory of God. Therefore, instead of putting each other down by criticism we should learn to inspire and raise each other up to do what is right, needed and best for the common good. We inspire others the moment we point out precisely the places where we, not others, have been or are wrong! Remember: 'Walk in the light as He is in the light ... The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sins'?
3. Others are surprised by our simple truthfulness which gives them hope. They mutter to themselves 'Damn it, if this rascal can be honest I too can!' I believe this is one of God's elegant ways of building His kingdom on earth as it must be in Heaven. There's no other project on earth more exciting, demanding and satisfying than building The Kingdom right here and now, the just society on earth. Everyone building it his way is a VIP! The Kingdom up there He will take care. By making others great no one becomes smaller.
4. To create an environment where our society can grow and develop as it should, we need people - leaders and led - who want nothing for

themselves. God is able to use such people to build trust, hope and unity.

I believe all this is do-able and on this very special day, let us all make a start and faithfully keep it up for the sake of our society and for the coming generations.

Our homeland is most strategically and perilously placed at the meeting point of nations, races, religions, cultures and ancient civilisations. It is also one of the areas on the globe still quite green with rare biodiversity hot spots. And we are surrounded by complicated and explosive problems that threaten to bring destabilisation to the entire continent.

If the impact of the challenges from outside, are not to overwhelm us but make us grow stronger as we should, we urgently need to reach out to one another and restore the health and spirit of our society whatever the cost may be to our pride, prejudices, fears and selfishness. These enemies are not worth our protection.

These are compelling reasons for us to come together and celebrate Naga Day as we are doing today.



### At the '*Imagine Nagaland*' programme

When we try to imagine Nagaland we are moved to tears and overwhelmed because our people find themselves compelled to achieve impossible goals and solve so many problems within a very short time with virtually no experience and skills that advanced societies have implemented steadily over centuries.

Many other communities are confronting the same crisis, which is well described in the book *10,000 Years In A Lifetime*, the autobiography of Albert Maori Kiki. We know that in situations such as in Papua New Guinea and Nagaland, what we call development may be exciting and intoxicating for the few at the top who find themselves suddenly powerful, and rich if they are corrupt but the enterprise is in the grip of a nightmare of anger, despair, defeat and bitterness.

The point I want to make is that let us understand our crisis and chaos correctly, seeing it in the right perspectives. And that is - it is not surprising we are so baffled and confused, that we feel so inadequate

for the challenges and needs we have to meet, because we are having to achieve within a generation or two what others we call developed and advanced have achieved over a long period of time, learning the needed skills properly and avoiding mistakes by learning from the past mistakes.

I am not at all suggesting that we should find excuses for our defects, shortcomings and blunders. What I am saying is let us take our challenges with understanding, compassion and care for one another, knowing that we have a demanding, dangerous journey that we have to do together.

From what I have gathered I believe this *Imagine Nagaland* event is doing this for us to assess ourselves and our situation correctly, know our weaknesses and strengths correctly, deal with our weaknesses but build intelligently on our strengths. Your 'Appreciative Inquiry' approach is getting our people, who have felt left out of what is happening, to articulate their thoughts and vision and dreams and by engaging their imagination to get them involved in the drama and adventure of solving their own problems, fulfilling their own vision.

I believe this programme is helping us break our problems down to manageable sizes so that we find we can tackle them and solve them one by one. As a counsellor for drugs and alcohol addicts, I know this is the only way people in despair and fear learn to work their way to recovery. Like addicts we are in despair to a great extent because of ignorance.

Mahatma Gandhi said 'there is enough in the world for everyone's need but not for everyone's greed.' Frank Buchman, the initiator of Moral Re-Armament (MRA) with which I work, added 'If everyone cared enough, and shared enough, everyone will have enough... Under a God-led unity every last problem will be solved. Empty hands will be filled with work. Empty stomachs with food. And empty hearts with a purpose that really satisfies.'

This has been declared as idealistic utopianism or nonsense by some economists and political scientists. But there is more wisdom in the words and analysis of Gandhi and Buchman than meets the eye.

The severely limited nature of the resources of the world is fully recognised, and the way prescribed to make the resources available for all and the exploitation of none is indisputably correct, that we human beings have to learn to change and learn to care for one another to survive together.

It is idealistic, yes, idealistic in the sense that if you are a climber who wants to climb Mt. Everest, you have to be realistic about what it takes to climb the mountain.

## Nationalism And Its People

Naga Student's Union, Shillong. 14 August 1996

*T*he Latin roots of 'nationalism' mean birth of life and growth. Naga nationalism means the aspiration of our different tribes to go beyond their narrower entities to become a people and a nation. Our use of 'National' to proclaim our identity shows our conscious claim or assertion of a status that we aim to win and to hold.

Thomas Carlyle, the Scottish thinker, said the histories of nations are the stories of heroes who shape their nations. This view is often true but it is an incomplete one because it leaves out the roles played by the common folk in what their nations become. The roles of the leaders are only a part of the wider existential longings and struggles of their peoples. Ultimately it is the combined quality of the whole population that decides the strength or weakness of a nation. Let us see this in the examples of nations well known today because of their achievements or failures.

South Korea, Japan, Switzerland, Germany, Singapore and Israel are examples of spectacular success. In the case of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew's dynamic and clear-headed leadership has played a key role in the success of his island republic. But all these nations function effectively mainly because of the developed skills and reliability of the population. An added asset of these nations is that it is difficult for those in power to violate the established legal and administrative norms and regulations of governance to benefit themselves because the citizens are vigilant.

Their educated middle-class accept that they have to work hard to build the society they want for themselves and their children. Their nationalism is mature, realistic and responsible. The massive abuse of the democratic institutions by Indira Gandhi and her sons in Delhi and at the State levels by Devi Lal, Bhajan Lal, Jayalalitha and others reveal the continuing strength of the feudal mentality in India.

Cambodia, Burma, North Korea, Zaire, Burundi, Rwanda, Liberia and Sierra Leone are examples of disastrous failures. All of them share

*A Naga Speaks*

common weaknesses. Their citizens on the whole are poorly educated and inexperienced in organised, systematic ways of handling challenges. They all have leaders who are either incompetent or megalomaniacs and sadists who are run by their neurotic disorders. Zaire and Burma are immensely rich in natural resources. But this has not helped. All of them are independent republics and are members of the UN. Their flags fly in their embassies abroad. But they are today graded as sub-nations. They are additional proof that it is the combined quality of the people that plays the decisive part in the failure or success of a nation.

Nationalism is no longer blindly worshipped. Harsh facts of economics and politics and the huge destructions caused by the two World Wars have raised questions about chauvinistic nationalism especially in the developed nations. 'My nation, right or wrong!' is now a distrusted slogan. A rational attitude towards nationalism is taking over.

Nationalism is not condemned. It is accepted as an important natural force to bind people together, but to be used as our servant not our master.

It is beginning to be accepted that loving your people and homeland need not make you hate others; that you serve your people best if your love for them is stretched to care for the true welfare of other communities also. This type of nationalism generates the thinking that promotes stability and development. It is said the best defence of a nation is the respect and trust of her neighbours. Is this naive idealism? But is peace and progress possible in any other way?

The rational approach to nationalism in the west has produced the European Economic Community. It began with the bold far-seeing thoughts of Robert Schuman, Konrad Adenauer, Jean Monnet and other European statesmen. Will Europeans give in to the temptation to think of Europe as a fortress and a nest for themselves and forget the world?

It can be said that Naga Nationalism is roughly half a century old. If we take in the declaration made to the Simon Commission, it is 67 years old. After many ups and downs, our attachment to our aspirations to become a people and a nation has become a powerful reality, whatever the party and factional differences at times. The question is: Are we reliable individuals who can build ourselves into a nation? Can we bring our castles in the air down to earth and make them into habitable homes for our people?

Naga Nationalism is one of the toughest political problems for India, surpassing the Punjab, Kashmir and other issues. The simple reason is in the two declarations Nagas made, firstly to the Simon Commission in 1929 and secondly for independence on 14 August 1947. And Nagas have fought for their claim consistently up to this day.

Objective Indian observers have come to the conclusion that the Naga case is not weaker than that of Tibet if Nagas choose to insist on the legal, historical and political validity of their stand. Because of the clear stand taken before India became independent the Naga case has become untwistable except for short durations. Delhi's recognition of this fact is indicated by the offer for unconditional talks to find a final solution. Delhi clearly regards the 16-Point Agreement which created the State, and the highly unpopular Shillong Accord, as too vulnerable to survive the test of Naga perception of their right and the scrutiny of history because of the questionable circumstances in which they were signed.

We must understand that the challenge of our nationalism to ourselves is tougher than what it is to India.

Looking at our wild situation today one is inclined to conclude that perhaps 80% of what we call 'Naga Politics' is really inter-tribal, inter-personal rivalry, shameless pursuit of easy money, distrust and disgust with ourselves. And only 20% is genuine struggle for political principles and aspirations. It may not be too far from the truth. If we can reverse this ratio in our politics we will produce solutions, and hate and kill one another less. Is it beyond the good sense and united wisdom of the Nagas to restore to ourselves a sound politics and a healthy struggle?

Our addiction to alcohol and chemicals is well known. We are not proud of it. But more serious is our addiction to easy, shortcut methods to get what we want to enjoy for ourselves, be it power, position or just material things. Our lack of care about the consequences of our selfishness has produced a society that simply cannot function.

For how long can we go on with the attitude that someone somewhere will always pay our bills? Delhi has so far paid them, playing the part of the co-addict and co-dependent.

Our irresponsible, pleasure-centered thinking has made a mess of the State of Nagaland, our first major project. It shows disturbing signs of doing the same thing to Nagaland University, our second major project. One does not have to be a prophet to see that without a revolutionary change



in our thinking and the way we treat one another it will only create havoc with our republic if we were to get it tomorrow,.

Let us look at our thinking. Nationalism is so often thought of mainly in terms of what we want and what others should give or do for us. Nationalism leads to chaos if our success or desire for revenge is more important than the all-round growth of our society, especially those we work with. If the ideas of giving and caring are not planted at the heart of nationalism, society becomes easy prey to tyranny.

There is nothing wrong in boldly declaring and fighting for what we deeply believe to be right and natural for us, as Nagas have done. But too many of us live as if there is a tribal exemption or concession in the price we have to pay to succeed! Our aspirations are like the Pearl of Great Price for which we have to sell everything! The message screaming out of African countries, Cambodia and Burma is that we cannot avoid the price and hope to succeed.

To bring the issue down to you and me, let us look at this. We each have to perform properly and perfectly two journeys in our life. One is the internal journey of the soul towards our Creator. The other is the career or course each one of us pursues. Our society, its politics and economics are good or bad, just or unjust, according to how each one of us performs these two simultaneous journeys in our lives.

No human venture, not excluding national struggles, is exempted from the moral and spiritual principles that govern life. Our greatest responsibility is to be absolutely sure always that our aims as well as the methods and means we adopt to achieve them are clean. This is the majestic doctrine of ends and means that Gandhiji adopted for India's freedom struggle based on the strict price he paid in his own life.

Our struggle has reached the stage now where we urgently need to go and win the people of India. Commendable progress has been made in recent years to win international support for our cause. Those who have achieved this deserve our congratulations. And we should appreciate the concern people in other nations show for us. But the most important audience we have to win to solve our problem is the public of India. But we have done virtually nothing to reach the people of India.

We must understand India and help India to understand us. This venture will help us greatly because it will also compel us to face and rectify our weaknesses. Talking to the people of India and listening to

them as their neighbour will revitalise and unify us. The open process will help to reduce confusion, tension and violence and take us far towards the achievement of our goals. India too will benefit immensely from talking and listening to us. Letting her Intelligence Agencies exploit our weaknesses to solve the political problem harms India as much as it harms Nagas. If your generation will postpone this task of reaching out to India, our struggle will be imperilled.

### Where Nagas Should and Can Meet

*H*ere is a layman's attempt at examining the theology of anger, sadness and happiness and what is happening to our society!

It should be of intense interest to us that God's first recorded conversations with the first human being He had created and given a job to do, and his son, were questions He asked with anxiety for them in a very personal manner, not orders or threats! Orders and threats addressed to the mind produce fear and hate, not responsibility. Questions go straight to our soul and conscience and we are compelled to be responsible in our reply, or to take a moral stand, which decides the 'ethical fibre' and integrity of our character.

The social, political, economic consequences of our response are constructive and life-affirming, or destructive and life-negating, depending on the quality of our response.

God and Satan are both intensely interested in whether we are angry, sad or happy. Our anger, sadness and happiness originate from the depths of our souls and conscience; they are not superficial expressions that go on and off like psychedelic lights at some rock concerts.

To be unhappy, regretful, feel sad, bitter and resentful indicates the titanic struggle between God and Satan to win us to their respective sides. Does anything else explain our unhappiness and bitterness?

We sense that bold transparency will be the most Christian thing to do, which will result in the statesmanship needed to bring healing, trust and unity. But we fear to take the risk, or we are too proud and selfish to admit the simple facts of our mistakes and failures, although in reality we deeply regret them. To protect our fear, pride and selfishness we end up telling blatant lies, which we do not believe at all. The result is we are so

*A Naga Speaks*

honest and loud about the mistakes of others and so silent about our own mistakes and failures.

But how long can we go on being so superficial about the wrongs we have done to one another and hope our society will survive? Our superficiality or irresponsibility about our mistakes and wrongs have made our thinking bankrupt and paralysed our politics, underground and overground. The result is our struggle for our deeply felt aspirations is taking us nowhere, and worse, it is destroying itself and the people for whom it was launched in the first place. The same thing can be said of the overground politics we have produced together. When will we see the writing on the wall?

The oppressive, arbitrary, fraudulent, shameless collection of taxes and commissions without any accountability, some in the name of the Naga struggle, the rest for selfish individuals, are part of the terrible writing on the wall.

How long can our society sustain the ruthless treatment it is receiving?



### **Naga, Heal Thyself**

As convenor, Naga Hoho's Coordination Committee for Reconciliation

At first light on 20 December 2001, an elderly man walked with a child into the Kohima playground. They came to the rostrum built for the launching of the Naga reconciliation process. The man knelt down. That he prayed and wept was clear. He wiped his tears and, after a while, got up and walked up to the stadium with the child.

The watchmen saw it all and experienced the unofficial but real inauguration of the reconciliation process, which began officially later in the morning.

Some children came to the platform at the public meeting and their presence was enough to move many to tears as Wati Aier, a prominent Naga theologian, lifted one of them in his arms and explained that their fathers had been killed by fellow Nagas. Uncounted Nagas have died at the hands of Indian security forces in the past decades, as Nagas defended their historic position as a people.

### ***A Naga Speaks***

Alas, an increasing number of Nagas have also been killed by their compatriots in the tragic contest for political control.

A call for a moment of listening and reflecting 'For God to reveal' where reconciliation should start turned into a period of pin-drop silence that hushed Kohima, people walked up to a bonfire in front of the rostrum and tossed pieces of paper where they had written decisions perhaps to reject revenge, to forgive, or ask forgiveness, or other similar personal intentions. Orphans and state Cabinet ministers, citizens of all ages and walks of life participated in a public, symbolic demonstration of moral ownership of the reconciliation process.

All leaders of Naga Hoho (the representative body of most Naga tribes), the churches, the Hoho's coordination committee, NGOs and representatives of 35 tribes signed a declaration stating reasons and objectives of the reconciliation process. The tribe presidents and representatives pledged to 'go beyond seeing only where others have hurt us and be ready to see where we too may have provoked others to hurt us so that forgiving and being forgiven may become possible.'

These beginnings are small when measured against our short but furious history of wounds, accumulated hates, mindless greed, fears and strong inter-tribe and inter-faction rivalries and prejudices that have paralysed our society.

We must not overestimate what the reconciliation launching ceremony briefly showed. But it would be a costly error if we should underestimate these seemingly fragile openings and fail to build on them. After all, wounds and revenge for hurts make up so much of what is called politics.

Nagas decided to open a common highway to the future by launching the reconciliation process just before Christmas. The theme was 'To heal and rebuild the Naga Family with the Prince of Peace.' The response at the launching perhaps marked our arrival at the beginning of the highway.

However, the price to be paid to walk the highway together is high. Not surprisingly, we are all watching who will step out and start the journey! But only the most blind and selfish will deny it is our only hope.

The NSCN (IM), which is negotiating with the Indian government, the Congress in Nagaland, the Opposition Naga people Council, the Nationalist Congress Party and the United Forum of Naga Political

Parties in Manipur declared their support for the reconciliation process. Representatives of the NSCN (Khaplang group) and the Naga National Council were present to assess the first united initiative by Naga society.

Within days of the launching ceremony, 44 Nagas from all Naga areas in the North East went to Bangkok for six days of consultation invited by the NSCN (IM). The Bangkok statement that followed reaffirmed the common political stand which the Nagas have taken, starting with their position stated to the Simon Commission in 1929 till today, clarifying 'the uniqueness of their struggle, not as one of secession or of separation from a union they had agreed to be a part of', but because of the historical fact of the Naga declaration of Independence before the British handed power to India on 15 August 1947.

Then there is the plebiscite of 1951, and the Naga rejection of the Constitution of India, demonstrated through the boycotts of the first two Indian General Elections in 1952 and 1957.

The statement supported the present ceasefire and the talks between Delhi and the NSCN (IM), reiterating the 20 December reconciliation process 'so that, without being undermined by internal contractions, a negotiated settlement of the Indo-Naga conflict may be achieved that will be honourable and acceptable to both sides.'

The NSCN (IM) leadership pledged, 'No agreement would be entered into without the fullest understanding of the Naga people.' Positive responses are needed from the other Naga groups, underground and overground if the promising start made thus far is to progress towards a solution.

There are signs that Nagas are beginning to make space for one another in the search for a workable solution. Chief Minister S C Jamir's declared readiness to withdraw the pending cases by the state against the IM leadership has been widely welcomed.

The Khaplang and NNC groups have supported the reconciliation process. They are now evolving their responses to the steps implied by it. The Naga Hoho and the public bodies which have been mandated to take this process forward, starting from the villages, fully understand the need felt by the various groups for circumspection before coming out onto the common highway.

The Bangkok statement included a significant observation about 'the need for Nagas to be accommodative in our thinking to our neighbours,

not ignoring their legitimate interest and apprehension on their part.'

They are conscious of their unpreparedness for what it implies for them, yet knowing it is an idea they have to rise up to. Morris West said, 'We are more readily betrayed by our certainties than by our doubts and curiosities.'

This probably refers to some of the ideas that are beginning to find expression. We are curious. Doubts assail us. But the future is definitely tantalising.

### Are we using WMD on ourselves?

The crisis that has produced the war in Iraq has made us all very familiar with WMD. We are all agreed that chemical poisons, biological agents and nuclear bombs are the worst Weapons of Mass Destruction, and using them is a crime against humanity.

What then do we say about drugs and alcohol, the chemical agents, which incapacitate and kill a steady stream of Nagas year after year? Some of them are among our most talented, sensitive and able citizens. Can we quantify the loss sustained by the families of those who depart from us so prematurely and by our society? Think of the widows and their children who are left to solve problems that leave permanent scars. Here I plead with those who can 'handle' alcohol to understand my intention and bear with me.

Are drugs and alcohol not Weapons of Mass Destruction for Nagas? On the basis of the reality of my family's hellish experience I say they are. And I get the sense that countless other families will scream with me, it is the horrible truth. The true nature and size of the threat to our society posed by drugs and alcohol have to be assessed correctly. We cannot go on being casual with the truths about these chemicals and us, if we are serious about surviving to continue our journey with others in the world.

But doing something to adopt the right thinking and attitude towards the problem is not going to be easy or simple because addiction is a psycho-spiritual crisis jointly created by addicts and others who are enablers, also called co-addicts. An addict becomes an addict in slow stages due to reasons that are intensely personal. Those nearest to him/her are often not aware of what is happening and so they fail to help. Even if they

*A Naga Speaks*

start to suspect or know most of us are too ignorant or inexperienced to help because the damage is occurring at the hidden psycho-spiritual regions where a human being is making his/her fatal choice to take the easy way out. When the situation is tough and one is lonely and afraid of not succeeding, and the right thing to do is to calmly confront it to work out the solution, the would-be addict gets drunk or fixed. It works immediately - the problem disappears.

A developing society like ours is compelled to learn to respond to rapid changes in an extremely short time what other highly evolved, experienced societies have learned over many generations. Therefore our dilemma or crisis is truly heart-breaking and mind-shattering. We are bewildered and in a panic, although we are often too proud or ignorant to admit it.

It is said you cannot put a frog in a pot where the water is already getting hot. But you can do so if the water is cold. And when the fire is put on the slow warming up is so pleasant many frogs fail to jump out in time! Drugs and alcohol do not shock or frighten us because they do not incapacitate or kill us instantly as chemical or biological warfare agents do. But their ultimate lethality and power to destroy life is not weaker than that of the instant killing weapons we dread so much.

Why have drugs and alcohol become WMD for us also, as it is specially so with certain groups worldwide? I believe we have to look at what is happening in our families to find the reason. In our families there is heart-breaking failure or refusal to understand that all members need to be equally responsible to face the challenges together. This is the heart of the problem. This failure comes from insufficient thinking and understanding of how our young society has to respond to the changes uprooting us. The result is lack of clarity and incorrect or inadequate response. It is as if the ship is sinking and its members are not acting together, but doing their own things in their cabins!

We parents just do not know how to cope with the rapid changes taking place. Our ways of solving problems in the past have become totally inadequate. So we do not know what to say to our children. Very often we ignore them or tell them to keep quiet, instead of winning their trust and cooperation by our honesty and our genuine need for them to play their own parts for the family to solve the problems together.

Our lack of seriousness and emptiness of thought about the crisis cause insecurity in them. Their respect for us is replaced by resentment

*A Naga Speaks*

and contempt. They feel our scolding and authoritarian rules for obedience are unfair in one way or another and the way we live and do things destroy their hope that things can change.

The daughters are by and large still carrying the family burdens with their parents. But many of the sons are becoming deadweights dragging down their whole families with them. They use their bedrooms as their bases for staging costly non-cooperation strategies to score points to prove their parents wrong. They do not realise that their rebellion is legitimate and fully understandable for a short duration, but that to continue it beyond the 'red line', failing to go on to painful growth, creative responsibility, reformation and reconstruction is simply suicidal stupidity.

The tragedy is most of them are continuing in their self-defeating rebellion simply because they can no longer defeat addiction to chemicals they have resorted to way back in trying to escape solving their problems. Most of them turn to chemicals early in their crisis of loneliness, confusion and despair.

To correctly assess the nature and size of the impact of drugs and alcohol on our society our first need is to identify the defective mental and spiritual attitude with which we are handling the challenges of life. In all counseling and rehabilitation centres the formula adopted every day by all the participants, including the counsellors, is called HOW – Honesty, Openness and Willingness. This formula simplifies the joint search for healing, restoration, recovery and stability.

### **Crusading for God in Ourselves or Against the Devil in Others?**

*T*he ugly events during the Christmas-New Year season just ended have shaken us because the society we have created together has revealed its raw capacity to destroy us. We are discovering that the priorities and agendas guiding our society are too selfish. The result is that our responses to the unavoidable challenges coming to us are too inadequate, even destructive. The questionable values with which we have built our lives have produced 'incredible shallowness of thought and intolerable mischief of action', as Whittaker Chambers put it in his book *Witness*. Our thoughtlessness and irresponsibility have to change. Is this not the new Naga struggle?

*A Naga Speaks*



We are deeply disturbed because we know we cannot continue any longer at the dangerous level of blaming, provoking revenge and counter revenge that we have become so used to. Why should we needlessly commit joint suicide? With these questions in mind I have greatly appreciated two courageous expressions of honest convictions published in *Morung Express* on January 4. They must not be misinterpreted, as we tend to do, but understood so that we build on them. They give hope.

The first one is what Y. Wangtin Naga has shared in his survey of what has happened to the Naga struggle for their aspirations. His thought-provoking insights and observations on the creation of the State of Nagaland, the Shillong Accord, the emergence of the NSCN (IM) and K, the Naga Hoho and so on deserve proper discussion and understanding. Wangtin is agonised by his apprehension that Nagas are on the path once more 'to commit another political suicide'.

What is meant by an honourable and acceptable solution? In response to this fundamental question Wangtin declares his conviction that the time has come when we must rise above the competing egos and competing agendas that have rendered the struggle impossible to pursue and destructive to itself, and wisely thrash out together what would be right and best for the Naga family through constructive dialogue. This is what the people expect from responsible leaders.

Many are likely to disagree with his view that what happened to NSCN (K) in Mokokchung in 2002 that displaced hundreds of its members was 'the highest crime ever committed by civilians against its own national government', and the recent upheaval in Zunheboto against NSCN (IM) 'where the Naga public took law into their hands and went against the Naga national workers' was also unfortunate and 'beyond comprehension'. Given the provocation in both cases his criticism of the 'enough is enough' reaction from the exasperated public will not find many takers. But he is deeply worried the Nagas will 'throw the baby out with the bath water', as the old saying puts it, if we do not care for the consequences of our actions.

What the costly struggle has indeed achieved is the baby! We must evaluate it and understand it properly. Thank God and one another for it by fairly acknowledging the sacrifices all tribes and individuals have made for it. Then the present and coming generations will understand the precious gift passed on to them and they can be trusted to build on it.

Foreseeing 'the Naga national spirit for nationhood' withering and drying day by day Wangtin asked, 'Who is to be blamed for our situation

inviting humiliation and condemnation? And who among us will stone the Samaritan woman for her adultery when none of us is sinless? Shall we be blamed?' He then asserts, 'I want our Naga national leaders to be far-sighted and overpower selfishness, arrogance and self-pride.'

Calling for acceptance of responsibility by all Nagas, Wangtin states, 'The Naga national workers have committed immeasurable crimes against our fellow Nagas, for which all Naga political groups should apologise to the Naga public. At the same time, the Naga public should realise that they have gone too far against the nation for few erring cadres. We cannot bury our past glory and its unmarked history. The Naga national movement was not against either India or any other countries.'

His wide-ranging worries drive him to the central conviction that 'the remedial will be found only when we come together and reason together'. This opening must be recognised and pursued.

The second one is 'Speaking the truth but with love' by Rock Naga Lungleng in *The Naga Blog*.

Raising his voice in support of the apology Principal Dr Tuisem Shishak had expressed a few years back 'to all the Nagas from Nagaland for all the crimes and injustice committed by the Tangkhul IMs... standing in the gap to bring forgiveness and reconciliation between the Nagas of Nagaland and Tangkhuls', Rock expresses his own apology as a Tangkhul for 'reconciliation and unity among Nagas'. He adds his belief that 2014 will be 'a year for rebuilding our nation'.

Many Tangkhuls may disagree with his statement or the way he has put it. But his simple, courageous obedience to a clear discernment in his heart and conscience is the action of a daring pioneer treading a path all Nagas must learn to walk where we are ready to be the change we want to see in the world thus inspiring others to do the same.

I believe what the two Naga brothers from two extremities of our loved but troubled homeland have shared are examples of crusading for God in oneself.

It comes down to this – I know I am not nor my side the only ones who are wrong or have made mistakes. But what God or simple wisdom is telling me is to leave others to deal with their devilish wrongs and deeds. My greatest responsibility is to truthfully identify specifically the places where I know I am or my side is wrong and we are not happy because of knowing this. And simply do as God tells us by admitting the wrong, saying

sorry, asking for forgiveness and making restitution for the harm done or hurts caused. These are the four boosters for the reconciliation rocket to get launched and stay afloat to take us where we should go.

The sailors of the ship in dire danger of sinking in the raging storm came to Jonah and asked what they were to do because he had told them he was running away from God's task entrusted to him. Jonah, an honourable fugitive, straightaway told them, 'Throw me into the storm for I am the cause of this storm.' They did and the ship with all on board and the goods were saved. We know Jonah's extraordinary adventure that followed!

Jonah did not waste time doing all the things that would have simply created more problems. He crusaded for God in himself and let Him and His plan win. God took care of the rest.



### **Nagaland For Christ!**

Appeared in *Morung Express*, Page 7. 25 March 2013

**L**ast month it was 'Elections and Nagas'. This month it is 'Nagaland for Christ'. Some earlier themes were *Corruption and Dreams*. Through its *OPINION*, *The Morung Express* is getting us to examine ourselves, our society and the key issues in our crisis.

Given its painful history of abused usage, a discussion of 'Nagaland for Christ' inevitably becomes an examination and assessment of:

1. Human aspirations, the struggles and the slogans for them,
2. The consequences of the methods and means we adopt in the struggles to achieve our aspirations.

And what becomes clear is that God allows all human aspirations, dreams and ambitions. But there is a catch; the problem or the beauty, depending on how we see life on earth. He requires our methods and means to achieve our aspirations should be right and selfless so that in our pursuit of what we long for we are already deeply satisfied and happy, as we are contributing to the building of His kingdom on earth. Revolutionaries and reformers call it 'the just, sustainable society'.

We are discussing the purpose and meaning of life on earth, the existential issues which if we ignore produce the beginnings of hell for ourselves, and others. But to decide to face them and to simply become

***A Naga Speaks***

committed 'to be the change you want to see in the world' as God will guide you, is to discover your calling and the fulfillment of your life meant for you. We may rebel against this requirement as suffocating or tyrannical.

Or we may accept it as His infinite wisdom realising that what we mistake for His oppressive shadow over us is actually the 'shade of His hand, outstretched caressingly' guiding us to achieve the highest good for the human race in which everyone's part is important!

The coming of Christianity to the Nagas was part of the impact on us by changes from outside. The intense crisis of the struggle understandably made our people to turn to their new religion for solace and affirmation. The result was the prayer, and war cry, 'Nagaland for Christ!' which became an additional slogan of the struggle. It revealed an instinctive search to strengthen the struggle by spiritually widening and deepening its meaning. 'Nagaland for Christ!' should be understood in the context in which it was born and declared by desperate men and women as they bore the terrible brunt of the consequences of what they had launched. They had not counted the cost of the stand they had taken because their perception of their history up to their time and their honour as a people gave them no other choice but to act as they did.

The Naga struggle marks the beginning of the written modern history of our people. Our pioneer leaders concluded from the facts of our history, as understood by them, that Nagas were fully entitled to be a people and a nation, if they wanted to. This perception and conclusion produced the political struggle that has gone on actively for almost three-quarters of a century. Without doubt the majority of our people supported this struggle and sacrificed greatly for it.

But there are vital truths we need to accept from what has happened to 'Nagaland for Christ' and the heroic Naga struggle because of the way we have pursued them, and what they have done to our society consequently. No one needs to be told we are in a crisis that is truly baffling. But we should welcome it, as according to the wisdom of ancient China, a crisis means a moment of great danger and great opportunity. We will discover that if we decide to help one another to concentrate on the opportunities in our crisis we will go forward as God's plan is for us.

But we will drag one another down our jointly created Black Hole because we are thoughtless and without imagination beyond what instantly gratifies. In the Tenyidie language it is *ketheguo*. Angamis for sure are discovering what this unexamined thought from our past of severe

deprivations is doing to us. We are beginning to question our disturbing compulsive tendency to go for a picnic at the slightest provocation.

We have found the struggle of a people for their aspirations also becomes impossible to pursue, even unworthy of respect, if truthful reality checks are not done frequently, whether the struggle is overground or underground.

Looking back at our journey thus far, it will be correct to say the struggle launched by the Naga National Council consolidated and rallied the Naga tribes to take the first steps towards their common goal to become a nation. After a magnificent launching it went on to produce a series of uncontrollable mentally and spiritually disturbed children, so to speak, namely, the State of Nagaland, the Revolutionary Government of Nagaland, NSCN, NSCN (IM) and (K), NNC (Accordist) and (non-Acc), Unification and so on. Deep down all of us are proud of our clean parental origin, but we all feel guilty for what we cannot deny we have all done to our old parent.

It may not be wrong to go to the extent of saying that the overwhelming crisis produced other monstrosities, chief among them being chemical addictions, corruption and extortion. There is no room for anyone judging any one here because we have all contributed our shares to whatever we have today. We seem incapable of addressing the monsters because we find our experience and thinking are way below what is required for today's issues. This view cannot be dismissed entirely.

Like all new travellers on the road of history tend to do, (often not knowing they're doing it), we Nagas also too easily pull every new thing we find on our journey down to our level to suit ourselves instead of understanding them properly to discover what we are required to do with them, asking what our response to them should be. Our reckless manipulation of everything for instant solutions and enjoyment regardless of the consequences has made proper growth of our society impossible.

Consider our Christianity? The most obvious thing to say is that as far as God is concerned, Christianity has to be done not our human way, but His way, as His Son showed, living and carrying the Cross all the way from the beginning of His mission to Gethsemane and ending up on Calvary. Judging by what Jesus said in Gethsemane and then on the Cross, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' even for Him the vibrant dawn of Easter He gave to mankind was a discovery He had not foreseen because He was so human. But He inaugurated Christianity by his costly obedience saying, 'But your will be done, not mine.'

*A Naga Speaks*

What has happened over the years to 'Nagaland for Christ!' shows what happens when we are more interested in the fruits of Christianity than in the health of the tree of Christianity, or we are more interested in the outcome than in the quality of the process that produces the outcome. We do this if we don't understand or care for the importance of the 'Doctrine of Ends and Means', because what we want is more important to us than the methods and means we adopt to get it.

We are never more than the quality of our response to the challenges that confront us in the changing situations of life. By our judging of others for the divisions and differences of our society from our subjective, restricted perceptions only we have produced together what we have today, factions condemning one another as puppets, traitors, sell-outers, and what have you.

But if we can climb out of our tribal and factional trenches from where we have been firing murderous words and bullets at one another, we will discover that the different stands and paths different groups have taken are really different responses to the challenges of changes differently perceived by different people. If we were in the places of those we have judged wouldn't we too have responded as they did? A great thought of the American natives put in a song by David Mills says,

*Walk a mile in another man's moccasins,  
Walk a while in another man's shoes,  
Before you leave him condemned forever  
Put on his boots, there's nothing to lose;  
Live a day with another man's family,  
Live a day by another man's side -  
Years of hurt can end and a foe become a friend  
As you find that he is just the same as you inside.*

We should realise that responding adequately to challenges of changing situations is a most difficult thing to do. We all make mistakes in our responses. Therefore our urgent need is compassionate understanding and forgiving of one another within the Naga family. None of us is completely happy with the way we have responded to the opportunities and dangers our crisis compelled us to face. If we can simply be transparent about the things that deep down we regret we did or failed to do, we will be surprised by the speedy restoration of trust and hope that will result from

it. Nagaland for Christ will then be starting to happen the way it should without us being so aggressive, panicky and violent to bring it about.



### **The Naga Crisis**

What do we do with the Vision, the Struggle and the Nightmare?

Shillong . 12 November 2008

*I* want to thank *Naga Link* for inviting me to write an article conveying what I honestly think is happening in our present situation and what we are to do. I agreed to try because Nagas must come out and 'walk in the light' with one another in trust and faith, to evolve together the right way for today and tomorrow. I should state at the outset that I believe we can find the way out of the nightmare.

On another occasion at a discussion in Shillong organised by the Centre for North East Studies and Policy Research, a scholar from Imphal said, 'To be honest, we Meiteis are quite envious of the Nagas. They dared to tell Delhi very clearly before India became independent what they believed was their right on the basis of their history and have fought so bravely to defend their stand. We should thank our Naga neighbours for the courage they have shown which has helped us also.'

He said Delhi had taken too much for granted the Nagas and the North East people and that without courage lasting solutions are not found. The solutions we need are still far away but there is much in the points made by our neighbours. So often others see us so much more clearly than we see ourselves.

It is important for Nagas to know the facts of their people's struggle for which so many have suffered and died. Should the Naga leaders in 1929 and in 1947 have suppressed their deepest conviction about themselves that, they had the right to assert, consolidate and defend their peoplehood and nationality on the basis of the right given to them by their history, and quietly accepted to continue to be a District of Assam? Nagas are likely to debate this difficult question also for a long time.

I personally believe the Naga leaders did the right thing on both occasions stating clearly what they believed to be right for themselves in the given situation of the day. They did not count the costs involved when

*A Naga Speaks*



they decided to fight to defend their position. I believe if Nagas had not taken the stand they did, the damage that would have been done to their identity and spirit as a people would in the long run have produced a far more dangerous problem than what we have today.

The observations made by the Assamese and Meitei friends help us to assess the value of the decision of our elders. The price the Naga fighters ended up paying was brutal and heavy beyond words. The villagers across the Naga homeland bore the brunt of the sacrifice. We can only be humbly grateful for the costly legacy they who suffered so greatly, have given to us and learn to selflessly build our future on the foundations they have laid.

But today some very harsh realities rebuke and challenge us. Why have the underground in the Naga struggle and the overground, the State Government, the unintended but direct outcome of the struggle and therefore virtually a part of it - both started to destroy themselves and the people for whom they were launched? After almost six decades of struggle the early vision still beckons but the ecstasy of the vision has become a virtual nightmare.

The struggle has resulted in vengeful divisions that have paralysed our whole society. At a time when we urgently need to start to develop our economy, ruthless opportunists exploit our dividedness by using violence to enrich themselves, behaving like leeches, making it impossible for our business community and entrepreneurs to create wealth.

Much cash has flowed down the pipe from Delhi to Kohima. We are told more is needed. Perhaps that is true? But the fact that in the last Nagaland Assembly election, the candidates who contested for 60 seats spent more than Rs 500 crores clearly shows that just more cash and more development alone is likely to increase the destructiveness of our overground crisis also to unbearable levels. Has not destructiveness become the 'Common Minimum Programme' of all of us, and we do not think of the long term inescapable consequences because we are now so used to it or a part of it - insatiable covetousness, irresponsibility and use of lies and violence to get what we want?

Is it not true that we see the solution to our crisis is simply more economic development, and 'giving peace a chance' so that reconciliation and unity will be achieved, and all our problems will vanish? Of course we need all these things, but will the root causes of our problems be touched at all if we do not think and go deep sufficiently? It is said, 'A nation's thinking is in ruins before the nation is in ruins.' In our case it will be, 'A society



cannot be developed if the people are irresponsible and their thinking is shallow, irresponsible and limited to instant success and gratification!’

What do we do with the struggle, the vision and the nightmare of our society? This is the most difficult question for us if we are honest. And we must answer it together with mature wisdom instead of blaming one another.

The nightmare of lawlessness, corruption, extortion and all other forms of selfishness presently paralysing our society is too familiar to need detailed discussion. Our need is to see things in the correct perspective as we consider what we are to do.

The problems we are wrestling with are the problems of a people who have just started their journey. We need to know from history that problems and challenges become the common strength and wealth of a people or nation if they are clearly identified, acknowledged and tackled adequately. This challenging responsibility is always understood and accepted by individuals at first.

In many cases this battling to solve society’s problems by individuals can go on for years, even generations, without visible results, often actively opposed by those in positions of power. But if the individuals who see the roots of the problems do not give up and fight on, wanting nothing for themselves, the soul and conscience of the public are impacted, and opinion changes. Finally the tectonic shift of society takes place.

This historic non-violent change would not have come about if individuals had not accepted the challenge to their soul and conscience many years ago and others like them kept on doing the same thing in the generations that followed. Mahatma Gandhi’s own fight and the triumph that followed is, of course, the most powerful example in modern times of how the most difficult problems always become the strongest assets of a nation if the battle is correctly understood and fought systematically and truthfully.

On the other hand problems ignored, denied or exploited selfishly multiply into tougher problems, which eventually bring total destruction. ‘Hurts not transformed are always transferred.’ History is full of such examples. So God and Satan are both intensely interested in how we respond to problems and crises!

My passion and conviction is to see that the present generation of Nagas will decide to do what needs to be done to our problems, which are

still fresh, comparatively speaking, so that what appears to be our worst weaknesses and failures will become the dependable foundation on which we will build our society. Then Nagas will become known not for greed and irresponsibility as is starting to be but for sound thinking and refusal to take short-cut methods that are wrong and do not work and are the intelligent sustainable solutions.

God and Life allow all sorts of aspirations and ideas to inspire individuals and peoples to grow to their fullest potential. But unless the methods and values adopted to achieve the goals are truthfully examined, and the needs and challenges that come with changing situations are correctly responded to, things go wrong very soon, and our efforts become worthless and unsustainable. And this has happened to the Naga struggle. Why and how?

Our vision or conviction to be a people and a nation is a normal mental, spiritual urge or compulsion that, as with others, we too have grown with from way back in our past. But if we are to grow as we should, we must know ourselves and the world we are a part of, and learn to grow intelligently by responding correctly to the opportunities and dangers that life brings to us all the time. This decides whether a people grow up or down. The quality of the response decides the quality of the outcome. If we want to succeed as a people we too cannot treat this truth lightly. And it boils down to how each one of us is thinking and living.

We too are plagued by this crisis and our society has become stagnant and explosive at the same time due to incompetence, ignorance, mismanagement and corruption preventing speedy development. These failures and shortcomings are examples of defective or wrong responses to challenges of change, the common problem of most developing societies. Our failures and blunders are not necessarily because we are worse than others but because we simply have too much to learn and to achieve in too short a time, and desire for instant enjoyment makes us too thoughtless.

If we are to take on the building of our society we need to start with a correct assessment of ourselves.

## The Candle In The Wind

### The Conscience Factor In Our Crisis

by Rev L Suohie Mhasi, Dr H V Sakhrie, Niketu Iralu

Appeared *Daily Review* 2 March 1998 and *Nagaland Post* March 7 and 9, 1998,

The present moment is full of dangerous possibilities because of conflicting party, factional, tribal and personal agendas. A fresh opportunity has appeared for us to nurture and make use of together. The massive upsurge for a settlement in peaceful conditions reflected in the election crisis clearly indicates that Nagas desperately need one another. This overriding need is a priceless asset. It has the power to bring us together. So the crisis has produced an opportunity, which calls for our united response. This opportunity flickers like 'a candle in the wind', or a feeble light in the long, very long, Naga darkness.

The opportunity is for the factions to come together and thrash out the issues of distrust and mutual animosities, and evolve what is right for all Nagas. Whatever will be produced by such a realistic process will be undefeatable. It will restore the people's confidence in their leaders as well as hope for our struggle. Let us not pretend that our struggle can continue further with our people in despair because of our distrusting and divisions.

Such a vision and longing is not expressed lightly. All Nagas know the extremely difficult issues of differences that our national leaders will have to address whenever they succeed with God's grace to sit down and face one another. They are being asked to do something that is humanly impossible. But the stakes for the Naga family are so high that irreversible tragedy is sure if what needs to be done is avoided. The time has come for acts of statesmanship which history will approve. Anything less may be politically tempting but the price our people will be required to pay will be too high.

The challenge is put to our leaders so that they may know their people will stand by them if they will do what the situation calls for. The public is ready to serve them in any way that will be helpful.

The Naga Hoho and NGOs have enabled our people's deepest feelings to be expressed non-violently at a critical juncture. For this they have gambled with their lives and reputation, and risked misunderstanding and making mistakes. They deserve our highest appreciation for showing such respect and care for our people. If they go wrong as all humans do

*A Naga Speaks*

so easily, talk to them and help them to change and be the vitally needed neutral force at the heart of our society.

Let no faction or party try to reduce them to a political football to be kicked around to score partisan goals. Their role is crucially important for restoring health and sanity to all areas of Naga society. Let us understand that they are having to operate in a very narrow 'No Man's Land', which is surrounded by political territories that are heavily mined. Give them more room and more trust, with constructive criticism whenever called for.

Give them a chance to do their proper job for our common welfare, which only they can fulfill. They belong to all factions and parties and vice versa. Needless to say the Naga Hoho and NGOs' leaders should conduct themselves in a manner that they deserve public trust and confidence in them.

The things said about the Chief Minister in the context of the present confrontation are understandable as they are linked to what he himself has said. Right now the easiest thing to do is to portray S C Jamir as the current chief sinner at the heart of the Naga problem. But we feel here is a dangerous partial truth, which must be, tackled whatever reactions may be attracted thereby. If we want to be a people, Nagas should begin to calmly look at issues at the level of conscience with sufficient tolerance and openness.

S C Jamir will no doubt be the first to know that like others he too has made mistakes that have hurt his people, which he probably regrets. But to make him or anyone the sacrificial scapegoat is too superficial, and really irresponsible about long-term consequences. The truth is more than that. For we have all contributed our share in damaging the Naga story.

Has not the present confrontation between the public and Jamir become like the eyeball-to-eyeball fight between two cocks where the immediate need to swiftly hit back leaves no room for any other thoughts? We have other such fights, which keep our society tense and embroiled endlessly. And are we not trapped in the cursed pattern of relationships that Christ talked of - the worst provoking the worst when we keep giving stone and snakes and scorpions to one another instead of bread and fish?

Jamir has a central role to play with other leaders in bringing transparency, healing and reconciliation to our society. If this is to happen, as it must urgently, the deep wounds and humiliations, physical and

emotional, that he too has sustained must be recognised by the public. Whatever the differences, Jamir too is a human being, a fellow Naga. Every Naga hurt weakens the Naga family, if ignored. In the building of the longed for home for the Naga family no Naga can be left out if the home is to last. We must put ourselves in his shoes to understand what he feels in his heart and soul. It is not suggested that Jamir is the only aggrieved Naga who should be understood.

We must understand all other leaders also. But his present position opens the way for us to begin to face our issues of distrust and hate at the required depth. Christ's piercing words, 'Let him who is blameless throw the first stone at her', has come ringing down the centuries. If we accept a lesser standard to resolve our differences, will we not pass a poisoned heritage on to the coming generations?

We deeply respect the unquestioned dedication of our national workers. At great sacrifice they have carried the crushing burdens of our people's struggle. Their costly triumphs have given us our proud story. But they too have made mistakes as human beings, which if unaddressed, will undermine the struggle for which they have given so much, and perhaps produce solutions that will create more problems. They need not doubt the response they will receive from the public as they fight to do that which will satisfy their own souls.

This will truly inspire our people also. We believe we have reached the stage when we will either have a struggle by, for, and of the people led by our reunited national workers; or a struggle by, for, and of national workers, led by highly armed national workers who will fight themselves to the finish, the people sinking with them. Such a self-destructive struggle need not be our destiny.

We therefore urge that we all agree together on the following ground rules to conduct our affairs. We believe they will also help in involving the public in the widest possible manner to achieve our goals.

1. To allow one another the freedom to make mistakes or to be wrong as weak fellow human beings. To think of helping them to do better, instead of condemning them and silencing them by threats or bullets;
2. To restrain ourselves when provoked, and ask God and our conscience what is right for all, not who is right, instead of acting in impatience, suspicion or hurt ego;
3. To decide to confront one another in person when disagreement arises;

### *A Naga Speaks*

ready to sit down together as helpless, wounded, angry, distrusting human beings, with the crucified Christ looking down on us reminding us, 'I am with you. Blessed are the poor in spirit.'

4. To decide that we will, with God's guidance, create a new kind of politics to run our affairs to meet the needs of our people (which are the domain of the State Government), and for the long-term struggle for our aspirations (the domain of the national workers). To leave behind the fruitless politics of flaying, castigating and lambasting one another; of reckless accusations, rejoinders on and on, but never talking with one another, courageously prepared to listen to the other points of view which always enrich us also.

Let us begin to think and behave as a people who claim they have progressed from darkness to light.



### ***The Trail From Makuilongdi Continuing Saga Of The Zeliangrong People***

Foreword by Niketu Iralu

*I*t is said every individual's life is a continuous response to events of existence as experienced or perceived by the individual. This definition gives meaning and dignity to the daily struggles taking place in each one of us. It helps us to struggle with deeper understanding and better perspective of the moral and ethical issues that are at the heart of all struggles including our own lowly ones.

The same thing can be said of a people's history. Their history is the outcome of their collective response to the events occurring in the larger world of mankind and of nature. The depth of mental consciousness with which we respond therefore decides the quality of our progress as a people and the level of our spiritual maturity.

From the rich oral accounts originating from our people's legends about their wanderings through formidable stretches of Asia to their present homeland, our stories are now being collected and recorded by pioneering Naga authors.

In *The Trail from Makuilongdi*, Mr Namthiubuing Pamei certainly has done a pioneering job and produced a book of great value. It will

***A Naga Speaks***

educate all Nagas, not just his people, the Zeliangrong tribes.

The author starts with 'the migration story as told by the old people to help bridge the chasm between the present generations and their great grandfathers'.

The story starts from Makhel, the historic restaging point of most of the Naga tribes after their arrival from somewhere in the past yet to be traced by us. From here the story takes us to Makuilongdi, from two Liangmai words, *Nkui* for 'round', and Longdi for 'big hill'. The Liangmais, the Zemes and the Rongmeis recognise Makuilongdi, to be the cradle of their common Zeliangrong culture and custom. How from this well-chosen settlement the Liangmais, the Zemes and the Rongmeis, the descendants of the three sons of Hoi, the legendary patriarch, came to their land of today is the fascinating and instructive first part of the book.

The first part is the search for a geographical homeland. The second part can be said to be about the response of the Zeliangrong people to the challenges to their identity as they try to consolidate themselves as a major Naga tribe and to grow in a new situation of all-round changes. An important part of the book is of course the narration of the religious and cultural ideas that have evolved over the centuries of wandering, discovering, conquering, holding, being repulsed and retreating at times as happens in all ventures, but always venturing to come to their present habitat.

Most of their traditional values and beliefs of honour, valour, reverence and fear of the Creator or Great Spirit, as the natives of America call God, they share in common with fellow Nagas down the centuries. But there clearly is something extra in refinement and grace in their cultural genius.

The geographical boundaries of Assam and Manipur delineated by the British led to serious political, economic and social disadvantages particularly for the Zeliangrongs. Their descendants, the Hoi of Makuilongdi were tragically divided and were made peripheral appendages to three political entities – Manipur, Naga Hills and North Cachar Districts of Assam. The strategic interest of the British was to consolidate their hold over the lucrative economic potential of tea plantations, fossil oil and abundant forest resources in the Brahmaputra valley. Impersonal considerations like 'administrative convenience' and strategic logistics were their priorities, not the sensitive balances and relationships the local communities had painfully built up over generations for their own security

and survival.

The Maharaja of Manipur became a skillfully controlled marionette in preserving the strategy the British had devised for the region. As long as he did no harm to the British he was allowed to exercise power at his own expense. The meaningless charade of royal pomp and ritual no doubt entertained the royal family and the subjects. But this served mainly to steadily trivialise and weaken the monarchy to its own eventual doom.

But the price many of the subjects paid to sustain the drama was high. The author says, 'When the British came, Puimei and Rongmei were clubbed together and named them as Kabui whereas Liangmai and Zeme were called Kacha Naga. They were later classified into the Naga group. They do not know why they have been named as such even today...The Zeliangrongs still live with the stigma of Kacha, Kabui and Hao.'

Noting British indifference towards the tribal villagers, and taking advantage of the existing disunity and general unpreparedness of the Zeliangrong people to cope with them, the Maharaja acted with feudal arrogance and arbitrariness. He made wholesale changes of village names to Meitei names, presumably to suit his long-term interests. Some of the changed names were downright derogatory and insulting. They all went into official British records to continue the wounding into the future. How true it is that '*Ancient wrongs shed blood today. Wrongs today shed blood tomorrow!*'

Jadonang arrived on the scene, born in 1905 into the Thiudau family of Puilon village ('Called Kambiron by the Meiteis the meaning of which is not known.') He stood out as one who thought, saw and lived differently because the spiritual dimension of life was as real to him as the earthly one. The people saw his eight day trance when he was 15 in which he conversed with the spiritual world. He shared with them with his vivid dreams in which God instructed him clearly how to conduct his life for the salvation of his people. He spoke with the confidence and authority of a man committed to a vision but with deep compassion to rouse his people to full awareness of their condition and action to meet it.

One is reminded of Joan of Arc who too obeyed the 'voices' she heard which scandalised those who were sure they knew better. Like the peasant Maid of Orleans, Jadonang too paid with his life for his loyalty to what he was sure God told him.

To ask which God he conversed with would produce a diverting



theological disputation of doubtful value. But that would be to miss out altogether the most significant point - the deep social and political ferment that has come to the Zeliangrongs because of the years of neglect and being taken for granted by the Manipur Maharaja's government and the British authorities. The attitude of the other Nagas tribes has not been less hurting.

Jadonang came out of the ferment and showed the way. His life was his message. The people responded to the vision, which he conveyed with poetic power. Songs such as this one, laden with meaning, lifted the thinking and burdens of the listeners:

*Creator God! The time is here  
Grant us the age buried under the earth, good God  
When my time comes mouth and mouth fight will be  
No more dao and spear  
Write the victorious scripts when I am put out,  
Who can defeat the God of heaven?  
In God my father I shall not fear.*

British civil servants protecting Pax Britannica at the fringes of their global empire heard the cry in the wilderness. The desperate attempt by a determined people to be true to themselves, as they perceived it, was interpreted as anti-British. Jadonang was executed with some of his closest fellow believers. He was only 26.

Learning to meet the crisis by his own genius and the exertion was so important to the community. That was what they had started to do. What Jadonang had established at such personal sacrifice was indifferently snuffed out, at least for the time being. Jadonang's followers wept alone over their devastating loss. If we can today at least feel the pinch of regret and guilt that Jadonang's people wept alone for him and for themselves, unheeded and unevaluated by us the rest of the Naga family, it will be recognition of a past failure long overdue.

This also will give us some hope that we can become a people and a nation because we value one another. But if we do not detect any regret in our hearts, then we are merely shouting high- sounding slogans that will only increase our disillusionment.

Showing admirable courage of conviction and profound understanding of the importance of her people's honour, Gaidinliu shouldered the role of leadership that fell to her. What she decided to be

and did was equally extraordinary. When she was dying she told her people her mission for her people had not been fulfilled. The personal regret is understandable. Jadonang must have felt it all the more as he walked his last steps to the gallows. But the Naga Raj movement that they launched, admittedly stirring their own immediate people only at first, is beginning to be seen in proper historical perspective by all Nagas and valued as marking the beginning of a conscious struggle decades ago to what it has become today. The basis of this conclusion will perhaps be questioned by some. I have my argument to support it but I need not go into it here.

The concluding part of the book is about the Nagas' struggle from the formation of Naga National Council (NNC) followed by the creation of the State of Nagaland to the painful ending of 1964 Ceasefire and the Rounds of Talks with Indira Gandhi. The Zeliangrong people responded fully to the call of the NNC and the Federal Government of Nagaland (FGN). They too paid a crippling price for their conviction for the larger Naga cause. The Christians 'thought it was the work for the kingdom of God in the Zeliangrong country' because 'Nagaland for Christ' was mentioned in the first meeting of the NNC at Wokha in 1946.

For the Zeliangrong people, having fought already for the Naga Raj movement, the NNC struggle was obviously a natural sequence. But their fighters who 'suffered torture, death and all kinds of deprivations for the sake of sovereignty', came to see that 'there was clanism, tribalism and betrayals and treason among the Naga fighters.' They found themselves forced to side with NNC/FGN or Naga fighters. They had to also suffer the depredations of the so-called Village Volunteer Force that Delhi and the State had created to suppress the NNC/FGN.

The Zeliangrongs felt they were suffering and dying mainly on account of the hidden agendas of the Angamis and Semas. They were and are bitter that their sacrifices of sweat, tears and blood were so taken for granted that they were unrecorded by all the sides in the conflict. Their leaders like P Meingam of the Church, and General R Thiubam needlessly lost their precious lives simply because they were caught in the crossfire of rivalries of the other tribes.

The open clash that started to take place between the followers of Gaidinliu and the FGN forces was a measure of how much the Zeliangrong people dislike the ambivalent position into which others had forced them.

I do not doubt that students of the Naga struggle will greatly value the author's lucid survey of the events that led to the tribal divisions and

their impact on the 1964 Ceasefire and the talks that came to nothing. The author has clearly reflected deeply on the crisis of the Nagas today. My fervent wish is that he will write on what exactly it will take for us Nagas to answer our inter-tribal distrust that weakens us so dangerously despite our high-sounding slogans. It is not difficult to foresee that he will have much to say to all Nagas.

One loud and clear message emerges from Mr Pamei's book. It is that for his long-suffering people, their priority is consolidation of their fragmented homeland and restoration of their common identity, mind and spirit as the descendants of the same patriarch of Makuilongdi generations ago. They long for this because they want to be able to face the coming challenges adequately. Their success will enhance, not weaken, the health and strength of the larger Naga family.

One begins to understand the depth of thought the Zeliangrong people have given to this priority when the author quotes the famous words of David Ben Gurion, Israel's founder, in articulating their struggle: 'A homeland is not given or gotten as a gift. It is not acquired by privilege or by political contact. It is not bought with gold or held by force. Nor is it made with sweat of the brow. It is the historical creation and collective enterprise of the people, the fruit of its labour – material, spiritual and moral – over the span of time.'

I now end my observations by expressing my heartfelt thanks to Mr Namthiubuing Pamei for so graciously entrusting me to write this foreword to his important book. I am greatly honoured. I must also add that, as I wrote, I remembered with fresh gratitude and pride my Zeme ancestral grandmother of several generations past. She had the great good sense to call her son Iranglung. Linguistic processing inevitably corroded it down to Iralu, sadly.

### Response To Tuisem Shishak

*Morung Express*, 14 August 2007. In response to the very candid, ripple-creating critique of the NSCN (IM) by Tuisem Shishak, a distinguished Tangkhul.

*I* read Tuisem's 'A Confession' article on the run, so to speak, as since receiving it I have been travelling.

*A Naga Speaks*

Tuisem quoted from 'An Appeal' published last February in Nagaland dailies. The appeal was to save innocent lives and promote dialogue after NSCN (K) had issued their QUIT NOTICE to Tangkhuls residing in Nagaland State and killings had started followed by threats to repeat them. As one of those who signed the Appeal it is in order for me to respond to what Tuisem, a cherished and respected friend of many years has said with such conviction.

Put together after agonising over it for days, as he indicated at the beginning, the article is a much-needed contribution of great value for our society's growth. The discussion it should kick-start should get all Nagas who care involved in unpacking and unravelling the multiple complications of our crisis which all tribes together have produced - the 'advanced' tribes contributing the major share. It shows how each one of us can first acknowledge where we and our tribe have been wrong, thus inspiring others to do likewise.

Can we deny that our loudness about the wrongs and mistakes of others and our silence about or denial of where we are wrong or failed which has hurt others has created vengeful hatred and finally resulted in 'Nagas (being) at war with Nagas?' The answer lies in those who are concerned coming out with what we truly feel and learning to listen to God and one another with respect, tolerance and even appreciation so that the truth or what is best may win. An awkward and unpopular line to take, it may often be, but there is no other way for God to help us.

Tuisem has certainly risked being wrong, misunderstood, misinterpreted and vilified because, not only he does not want his silence to be misunderstood, but he also passionately wants our multi-tribe society to communicate truthfully and develop caring for one another. This is my reading of his intention and I do salute him and express my humble solidarity with him.

His strict impartiality is clear. And making no reckless or motivated generalisations Tuisem has exercised his right and moral duty to say what he has been seeing and wrestling with. His challenge to the 'other underground factions, and other Naga tribes' is direct and justified. He asks, 'Are they not also participants in today's Naga mess?' and says, 'I am not the one to answer these questions. All I know is that somewhere we have to stop blaming each other, and start confessing our sins to each other if we ever hope to see peace in our land.'

We must correctly evaluate and appreciate Tuisem's all-out sharing

*A Naga Speaks*

of his concerns and beliefs as a Tangkhul and as a Naga at this critical juncture when we are torn between the forward pulls of the vision of peoplehood and nationhood, and the counter-pulls of the deep mental reflexes and attitudes of the past that have produced vigorous tribes down the centuries. Costly, ceaseless struggles to survive have naturally deepened our defensive fears and made us distrustful, cautious and fiercely combative.

Yet, though coming as we do from such a background, a compelling desire to become a people and a nation has taken hold of our imagination for which so many have suffered and died. However, not surprisingly, walking together is proving to be such a strange, difficult exercise and we are tempted to give up the attempt and just 'enjoy life' trying to ignore questions that refuse to go away.

By speaking up frankly Tuisem has brought right into the middle of our crisis the refreshing simplicity of what is right and wrong, straight and corrupt, what is Christian and what is not, and what is wise and what is dangerous shortsightedness and therefore will not work. If we do not provide our society with such a foundation on which to reason and search together how can we create a safe future for the coming generations?

On 28 September 2006, in Dimapur, NBCC called for the beginning of a process of 'Honest Conversations' among the Naga people for the healing of our relationships. The 'Confession' has given a powerful impetus to this fledgling conversation.

'Honest Conversation' is an idea whose time has come. President Clinton launched it in his second term to get the American people to address the inter-racial, cultural difficulties in their society at a deeper level. The experiment has proved its worth and Hillary has pledged she will continue it should she become the next President.

International diplomacy has started to give serious attention to the potential of this untravelled road for finding sustainable solutions to conflicts. His Holiness the Dalai Lama spoke for this emerging thinking when, welcoming the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the new millennium, he proposed, 'The 20<sup>th</sup> century was known for terrible conflicts and destruction. Let us make sure the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be known for dialogue, mutual respect and just progress for all mankind.'

What we Nagas are also trying to do now is in keeping with this dialogue alternative, having been hurt so badly already by the ways that

have not worked. Let us inspire one another to do that which is right and needed.

We will be surprised by the result if we want nothing for ourselves.



## The North East – I

*You serve your people best when you care  
for the welfare of other communities also*

Urgent Need: A Wider Common Stability With Our Neighbours	301
The Common Challenge Before The N E	303
Conflicts In The N E Internal And External Effects	306
General Challenges Facing NE India	313
The Unexpected Way Opens Up When.	318
God's Option For The Poor	324
Alienation And Militancy	328
Militancy In The N E	336
View From The N E – The Assam Blockade	341
Manipur: The Way Forward	345
Reasoning Together	348

## Urgent Need to Build a Wider Common Stability with our Neighbours

The current Naga Students' Federation leadership is showing far-sighted thinking in raising the question of our relationship with our neighbours. It is timely and deserves support to make it sustainable. The limited time given to me combined with my inability to put together articles speedily is partly responsible for the haphazard quality of what follows!

Frank Buchman, American thinker and initiator of Moral Re-Armament, now renamed Initiatives of Change (IofC), said, 'The best defence and security for a nation is the friendship and goodwill of its neighbours.' This thinking guided his leadership of an international effort that played a key part in the rebuilding of Western Europe after the Second World War through healing the long-standing wounds of history between France and Germany.

[The full story of post-war Franco-German reconciliation and its great consequences is analyzed in depth by Edward Luttwak in *Religion, the Missing Dimension of Statecraft* published by Centre for Strategic and International Studies, Washington DC.]

Dr J H Hutton, the English ethnologist/anthropologist who was DC of Naga Hills District of Assam (1917-1935) wrote a number of authoritative volumes on various Naga tribes. He returned to Oxford University after his civil service stint in Naga Hills. In 1965 he made this objective observation: 'Now it is possible to look back and take a wider view and see the Nagas as a people rather than an assortment of tribes or even of villages.' This is a significant assessment of the progress in our story. Something powerful has been changing us.

Hutton as DC in Kohima, a complete foreigner and scientific observer, saw the Naga tribes only as an 'assortment of tribes or even of villages', however much we may disagree with him. The limitations and simplicities of life at the time were such, and as the whole region had just started to come under pressure from impacts of external changes, the importance of the relationship among the Nagas, or their relationships with their neighbouring tribes or communities had not become a pressing issue as it has become today. We should realise from now on that the quality or health of the inter-tribes relationships among the Nagas, and with our neighbours, will be the all-important need and challenge we will have to



accept for our sheer survival.

NSF bringing the issue out for discussion indicates that the present Naga generation has understood our imperative need now is to go beyond calling quick-fix *bandhs* and blockades in addressing our problems with our neighbours. We have to be responsible and realistic for our own good and that of our neighbours also, and learn to evolve solutions together with them that will be sustainable for all.

### **A Wider Common Stability for All: the Battle for It.**

We do not know what kind of a political settlement the NSCN (IM) will eventually bring. Whatever the status of the settlement awaited for 20 years now may eventually turn out to be, the reality we cannot ignore is our need to develop healthy relationships with our immediate neighbours and with others further out that will enable us all to grow. Our chances for development are meagre. And they can be thwarted easily by the damaged relationships within the Naga family of tribes and with our neighbours. This is the bitter truth we already know from the years of conflict we have allowed by our thoughtlessness and irresponsibility for our own crisis and the imperilled world we are a part of.

Deeply felt human aspirations are energising each of the many and diverse communities of our region in the interior of Asia. Will the struggles for the sacred aspirations destroy us or take us all forward? This is the tough question we need to understand and make the right response with clarity and conviction. The heart-breaking truth is that all too often the struggles end up destroying themselves and the people for whom they got launched because of the unexamined weaknesses in us human beings. 'The high ideals, and not long after, the dark, dead-end of man-made schemes,' being the tragic story of so many struggles. But we have no choice but to learn to change wherever we need to in order to create together a *wider common stability*, which will enable us all to grow to meet the needs of our peoples.

The formidably high demand of this need is a positive challenge to all neighbours to shift from the bankrupt conflicts over 'Who is Right' to the bracing search for 'What is Right' and best for all. 'What is right for all' is a higher more effective alternative for which all will be required to change. It is an established fact that whenever people are prepared to be transparent enough to come together to search for the way that will require all to

change, the better angels in human nature come alive and take over.

Our deteriorating crisis urgently requires us to find out the right and best ways to solve our problems. NSF is the right body best placed by virtue of the history of its creation and maturation to rally our society to match the need. The generation the Federation represents and who will reap the consequences if our society will fail to change as required, will be inspired to accept the challenge. Our society will be surprised by the creative leadership from NSF.

All this can start right away through properly thought-through workshops, seminars and so on to first identify what needs to be done, followed by practical plans to implement the ideas. Perhaps NSF can approach organisations like Entrepreneurs Associates Nagaland, Youth Network Nagaland, Chizami-based North East Network, Tuensang-based Eleutheros Christian Society Nagaland, and so on, to contribute their best thinking to get going?

The talented and dynamic leaders of these youthful Naga organisations will open up ways that will surprise us all.

## The Common Challenge before the North East

*T*he simmering debate on collection of money by coercion in the name of political aspirations has reached a new level of intensity following the tragic killings Shillong has witnessed,

I hesitate to join the discussion for obvious reasons. One is, of course, my awareness of what Khasis and Jaintias must feel because of the insensitive and other wrong ways some of us Nagas have behaved in Shillong. We do not 'see ourselves as others see us'. So there is more to learn and put right than we know. With this consciousness I venture to share my thoughts.

The issues that have generated the crisis afflicting our whole region are fundamentally the same although the historical facts and political positions of the movements launched by the diverse groups in response to the crisis are different. What is the right way for us to respond to the challenge of changes coming to us from Bangladesh, Nepal and the rest of India? All of us are at a loss confronting this question. But serious weaknesses in our response to the crisis are now glaringly evident. And

*A Naga Speaks*

the weaknesses are similar. So what happens in one area affects the whole region whether one is in Meghalaya, Assam/Bodoland, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura or Arunachal.

The nature and scope of the crisis are such that we can say our North East ship is sinking into mindless chaos and self-destruction but we are preoccupied with our own cabins. Some of us are obsessed with making our cabins more comfortable and 'state-of-the-art' beautiful, or even acquiring more cabins than we need. Some are wrecking our cabins in our agitated attempts to protect them. Both responses are equally unhelpful. As for the crew who are supposed to be running the ship, like their counterparts on the *Titanic*, they too have underestimated the hazards of the voyage. Given the mindset of our peoples they have to lead and the relentless changes causing constant instability, their task is formidable. But too many of them do not come to grips with the real problems. Perhaps their priorities are not adequate.

Our position and our crisis are similar to those of the Native Americans, the Maoris of New Zealand and the Aborigines of Australia. We face the same baffling challenges to which we must adjust with farsightedness, wisdom and integrity. The famous Prayer for Serenity says, 'God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.'

I was once part of a group of about 40 young people from all parts of India who called on Morarji Desai, then Deputy Prime Minister under Mrs Indira Gandhi. Trying to explain the upheavals in Nagaland I said, we are afraid of becoming extinct as a people. Mr Desai quickly retorted, 'So what?' Before he could say more, Mrs Tara Bhattacharya, granddaughter of Mahatma Gandhi and Rajaji, and who had arranged the reception, stepped in and said with passion, 'Morarjibhai, how can you talk like that to people who harbour genuine fears for their survival?' Desai looked at her and heard me out in silence.

This brief exchange has stayed with me as a lesson in how conflicts start and continue because of clash of perceptions. I do not enjoy talking about my fear of becoming extinct as if I am an educated panda appealing for understanding. But my fear and unhappiness about the future where my people will be deprived of their say on what matters most to them as we have known and valued them is extremely real. What Desai bluntly said revealed what a considerable segment of India will naturally always feel about our aspirations for ourselves. The conflict and clashpoint is where

Desai's historical concept and perception of what India is or should be differs from my perception and concept of myself, and my people.

For several centuries, the dominant white majority in the Americas and Australasia ignored there was any conflict with the native aborigines by simply denying their identity as normal human beings. This did not of course succeed. Today the white majority is going deep into making restitution for past wrongs. And the native peoples too have started to shift from their most entrenched attitudes that have kept them bitter, isolated, pitied and defeated.

India's Constitution shows its founders' highly enlightened and humane thinking about the weaker sections of her society and the help to be given for their development. But no matter how enlightened the provisions of the Constitution may be, the steady changing and dilution of the things that give us distinctness and security cannot be stopped. Our sensitivity is sharper because we are so unused to the experience of changing that we are going through. And we have come to see that to preserve ourselves, our ways, and our natural resources we have to work much harder and be much more disciplined than we have ever been. We do not like the price tag. Is this not the reason why we are resorting to instant shortcut methods of self-protection? And is not our frustration and anger deepened because we know our shortcut methods may create headlines but they are futile?

But the worst thing we can do at a time like this is to silence those who raise uncomfortable questions. The questioning and challenging voices are like candles in the wind. Their flickering light reveals the way we can walk together safely into the future like others do in such situations. The debate that is now on must be encouraged, not threatened and throttled. The debate is in reality a joint 'spiritual breathing' by the community, which will help us to face difficult truths and facts together. The all-round growth from this will enable us to solve problems that none can tackle alone.

I fully understand why Phizo and his colleagues started the Naga struggle, which continues to this day. And I fully understand why the Garo ANVC, Khasi HNLC and all the groups in Assam, Bodoland, Manipur, Karbi Anglong and Tripura are fighting for their declared goals. I understand and respect those who take a stand to uphold their deepest beliefs for their peoples. To speak out and struggle for your beliefs is a sign of authenticity and being human.

But if we struggle for our aspirations, as we must, we soon come

*A Naga Speaks*

face to face with the *Doctrine of Ends and Means* that Mahatma Gandhi brought right into the middle of the tumultuous conflicts and struggles of the 20<sup>th</sup> century making it the higher, practical alternative to the materialist doctrines of struggle advocated by Fascism, Marxism and Anarchism.

No human struggle is ever exempted from the awesome judgment of this moral doctrine, which states that 'The end does not justify the means', or the means and methods to achieve good and noble goals must be clean and truthful or the struggle destroys itself, the goal and the people. The violent and seemingly successful rise of the USSR and its empire made the world think that it was the 'wave of the future!'



### **Conflicts in the North East: Internal and External Effects**

Workshop at India Habitat Centre, New Delhi, 26 July 2010

Organised by Centre for Security Analysis (Chennai), Delhi Policy Group,  
and Centre for North East Studies & Policy Research

The worsening of the crisis in Manipur recently which once more caused killings and so much suffering, bitterness and despair to all the communities of the State, made worse by blockade and counter-blockade of the highways, clearly showed where one of the toughest conflicts of the North East is heading. Some of us tried to help from the Kohima side of the Mao Gate through a number of joint efforts. I am sorry we could not do much at all. But we saw more clearly what more has to be done by all of us.

The confusion and bankruptcy of mind and spirit that was revealed on our side also in addressing the crisis made me to decide to accept the kind invitation from Sanjoy Hazarika to come here, knowing well I have not much to contribute but that I will meet concerned friends who are determined to care for our whole region together. I am here not as an expert, but as one who is a part of the crisis and is searching with others for solutions that will work.

The conflicts of the North East region represent the different ways in which its diverse communities and tribes have responded to the rapid changes that have come to them from the world. They have responded according to how they understood themselves and their respective histories.

*A Naga Speaks*

The response of the Nagas to the changes, which produced their struggle, I think, can be said to be the earliest indication of what the struggle for identity by the tribes in the region would turn out to be in the years to come. The various struggles for ethnic aspirations have erupted across the North East like some connected hidden volcanoes that have reached the surface at the same time after slowly gathering strength over many years. The continuing manifestations of the phenomenon coming alive wherever ethnic minorities are found in the world strongly suggest that the identity formation crisis in the region also will not subside soon.

Speaking specifically on Nagaland as I am from there, the struggle by the Nagas for their aspirations on the basis of their understanding of their history and India's response to that struggle on the basis of the map inherited from the British caused the conflict in Nagaland. I believe the Naga case stands on some historical and legal facts that cannot be brushed aside as irrelevant; and because of those facts the Naga movement or struggle cannot be treated as secessionist and therefore treasonous and illegal. But India too had no choice but to act decisively to preserve the territorial integrity of the map of the country that became the map of the new India on 15 August 1947.

I also believe my people did the right honourable thing in declaring their position unequivocally as they did before the British left and continued defending that position with courage and sacrifice after the new India came into being because they believed in what they had said about themselves. The tragedy was that a very small group of people on the eastern end of the map felt they had something to say to the new India about their position that they could not treat lightly. But those who mattered were more than 2000 kms away and they had too many things demanding their attention to the Nagas just then.

But Nagas should have found a way of going to the people of India to carefully explain the facts of their position to them. Instead they went to China, Pakistan and beyond as they did when the military and economic measures Delhi implemented to silence their voice and their struggle became too much for them to withstand. This resulted in their losing their most important audience, the Indian people. Had they gone to the different states and enabled the people to understand that a settlement with them would not affect the territorial integrity of India, the Indian people would probably have helped their Government to work out an acceptable settlement with the Nagas. Delhi would then have done the right thing for

the Nagas along the boundary line without any harm being done to the line!

The roots of conflicts with tribes and ethnic minorities are always traced to deeply-felt positions that have become the reasons for vengeful hatred because the fears behind them have been ignored, underestimated or disrespected by those advantageously placed to hold the levers of power. But, as we are learning from our own situation, unless we on the minority side accept to see the total picture of the conflicts we have helped to bring about and learn to change wherever needed we end up being the ones who lose the most. I am therefore interested in this field of search because the constructive role ethnic minorities must play in the world for their own good as well as for others is clear.

The papers that we will hear today from various participants will most likely be about the conflicts, the issues, and the leaders in the conflicts, and what lies ahead. But because of shortage of time and other reasons, at such deliberations we seldom see or know the countless people at the bottom and those a little above them who end up being the main sufferers of the consequences of conflicts. If they go out of sight and stay out of sight because of differences at the top for whatever reasons, the struggles go offtrack, become uncontrollably destructive to themselves and the people, and irredeemable and un-pursuable. This is what is happening in many of our conflicts and struggles.

I propose to describe here an account of a little happening that has helped me to keep focused on what I try to do and stay true to it.

My wife and I have just moved to Nagaland after being in Shillong, Meghalaya for 15 years. A few years ago our hostess in Shillong decided to construct an underground water tank on their estate. One morning a huge Larsen & Toubro excavator arrived. It roared into the garden pushing down fruit trees and breaking everything in its path. The stone terraces were crushed and flattened. As it started to excavate, we and our neighbours watching the awesome operation discovered that three rat mothers were trying to cope with a terrifying crisis which obviously they had not encountered at all ever before in their history.

Their nests lay scattered exposing tiny pink baby rats wriggling helplessly, totally oblivious that their survival chances were nil. Their shocked mothers frantically dashed about to protect their babies getting drenched in the rain. Then to the dismay of all of us watching the tragic drama, our two cats dashed across and ate up all the baby rats. My wife's outraged screaming to her cats did not save the little rats. The mother rats

### *A Naga Speaks*



must have realised our opportunist cats would eat them up next. They dashed off with their tails up in the air into the bushes beyond the garden area. Of course, the father rats were nowhere to be seen.

As I watched the rat mothers running away from the scene of destruction and loss in what until a few minutes back was their peaceful village, I realised what I was seeing was actually the experience of the majority of my people trying to cope with the relentless requirements of change.

Are not the majority of mothers in our villages and towns completely at a loss to know how to protect and raise their children? The crisis of many of them becomes all the more overwhelming because their husbands so often are totally unhelpful. In such a society people begin to think that to be opportunistic like the cats is normal.

Only a miniscule few in our society who have become obscenely rich through ruthless corruption may think they are managing to handle change. But in reality they are disastrous examples of unsustainable solutions. Alas, they are the high profile role models in our society, and so many come to think to be shamelessly selfish is quite normal. Is it surprising our society is what it is now?

As in all human conflicts, living, thinking, feeling and aspiring human beings are the origins and causes of the conflicts, in NE India also. I know I am stating the most obvious to a gathering of learned veterans on the subject of human conflicts. But at the beginning of this workshop, I have felt the need to say it for myself at least because we are going to be talking about some very desperate people who are compelled to respond to the immense challenges of changes coming to them from all directions for which they are hopelessly unprepared. Their conflicts are the results of their heroic but mostly pathetic attempts to respond to the challenges impacting them. And they can do very little about the internal and external effects of their conflicts. Conflicts are part of the occupational hazards of people struggling to grow.

The standards for matching challenges correctly and adequately are very high. It would be fair to say even the most advanced societies who are more prepared than others to respond to challenges, are making costly blunders although they have had centuries to learn from many trials and errors. Billions of us have to learn highly important and complicated ways of solving problems in a very short time. The result is we are creating more problems than solutions.



Milovan Djilas, the Yugoslav Marxist theoretician, said in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, 'We are living today in tomorrow's world with yesterday's ideas.' As a counsellor for drug and alcohol addicts, in my own family and at rehabilitation centres in Nagaland, I have found this explains the bewildering crisis of disconnection between parents and children, especially sons, which is the main cause of most addictions in Nagaland today. This problem also explains why a lot of our conflicts are so difficult to address and resolve.

We have all heard the teaching from ancient China that a crisis means a great danger and a great opportunity are fiercely competing to prevail and to take over. To conclude my remarks I would like to share some thoughts and convictions:

1. The conflicts of our region represent our people's natural response to the impacts the changing world is making on them. They have had no choice but to do what they have done. But the quality of our responses show we have serious inadequacies to face and rectify. We need to learn to help one another to go forward together with mutual understanding, compassion and goodwill by becoming aware that we are on the same imperilled boat and if we will not keep it afloat together, it will go down to where our differences will no longer matter, but too late.
2. The best way to help one another is to go to one another to understand. The fact that we are after all neighbours who must work out how to live together and succeed together is the most important reality, which is full of promise and adventure.
3. When we meet, we must not be driven by our own desires or ideas for solutions, and the time frame to do that, but by the need to understand together what has gone wrong to produce what we have today, so that we may start to search for what will be right and best for all.
4. I think Stevie Wonder sang, I Just Called to Say I Love You. Right now we are not likely to be able to start that high. We can start with, 'We are calling to listen to what you have to say. Sorry, we have never thought of doing this before.' The Dalai Lama often says, 'What the world needs is a warm heart.'
5. If we keep the process of the search for understanding and solutions clean and transparent, we do not need to worry about the outcome. It will surprise us all. We will learn to transform our worst weaknesses and failures into our common strength and asset. Delhi and we will

discover that there are many problems, which Delhi cannot and is not meant to solve but we alone can solve.

Our region is also known for what the Golden Triangle of Burma, Thailand and Laos has done to our youth and continues to do. This triangle is dreaded and well known. There is another triangle which is perhaps more significant. Connect Kolkata with Rangoon with a straight line. Take that to Lhasa and then back to Kolkata. We get the other triangle. The peoples within this triangle have produced seven (eight in 2019) Nobel Laureates.

I am going to talk specifically about the conflict started by the Nagas. As I am from that situation I am keenly aware that what our struggle and the conflict it has produced mean to us, is completely different from what they mean to mainland India, or those in Delhi who deal with us. For us our struggle is for aspirations and concerns that are desperately urgent and even frightening, because the challenges we have to match to survive and develop as we should are truly formidable. But to the rest of India, at any rate those who run India, they are not formidable at all.

Within a very short time we have had to learn to handle challenges to survive and develop as we should for which we are not prepared at all by situation. From where we started to respond, as we realised we had to, to the challenges of changes that started to impact us, our struggle was and is perceived by us to be 'national'. Those who fought for and won India's freedom and started to run the new nation from Delhi, could not understand how we saw what was happening to us and why we should be so agitated about concerns and fears that meant nothing to them and the rest of ancient India.

This gap between a very small group of people who have found themselves compelled to respond to the huge entity of India is where our crisis is located. From Delhi the issues bothering a few people in one of the last districts of Assam, of British India bordering Burma more than 2000 kms to the east deserved no attention when there was so much to do to get the new nation born in the unprecedented violence and bloodshed of the Partition launched. And when the troubles in the district refused to fade away, some analysts in Assam concluded the Nagas were not capable of creating so much trouble, so the foreign missionaries must have instigated them to harm India.

Of course, those who gave this theory had not gone to the people they were theorising about to understand why they were doing what they

*A Naga Speaks*

were doing. This became the thinking with which Delhi started to formulate the policies for dealing with 'the Naga problem'. From where we are taking our stand responding to the challenges coming to us, our struggle is 'national'. From Delhi, far away from our history and our aspirations and their meaning to us, our struggle is another peripheral protest, which will fade away as so many other struggles have faded down the centuries.

The struggles of the ethnic minorities of the world for identity, security and justice are going to severely test the commitment of nations to the values and ideals of democracy. The minority communities also will see that the society that will ensure their rights cannot emerge if they too will not care for the common good of all, as they demand of others.

The ethnic minorities of the world are like an unexamined, undervalued natural resource that occurs widely in strategic places across the world. Do they not represent an idea whose time has come?

Is there not a meaning in these struggles for aspirations that is important for the whole world also? If it is understood, the aspirations are more likely to become a part of mankind's search for a safer world.

I believe it is going to be counter-productive to think in terms of containing or suppressing this compelling urge for dignity and meaningful existence.

I believe exploratory workshops such as this one will develop new constitutional concepts of government and statecraft that will enable nations to regard the best from the ethnic minorities as creative, heart-powered fellow builders of a better world, not as breeders of conflict whose internal and external effects should be contained, who should be watched with suspicion, bribed or shot, divided and controlled making them more dangerous human beings who will stop at nothing to avenge their humiliation.

Russia's Chechens, China's Uighurs and Tibetans, Burma's Kachins, Chins, Nagas, Karens, Mons and others, and Bangladesh's Chakmas are some who also come to mind.

From our experience we have seen that the rulers in Delhi and their policy thinkers have all along underestimated, misjudged and even interpreted with prejudice, the compulsive energy latent in the crisis revealing a serious lagging behind in thinking. The Nagas have experienced this in the way the powers that be in Delhi took the line that foreign missionaries instigated the Nagas to launch their struggle, meaning Nagas

were not human enough to be conscious of aspirations and to be stirred by them. This insensitive attitude of superiority, which would be called racist elsewhere, has contributed much to the hardening of the determination of the Naga fighters for our people's history and identity.



## **General Challenges Facing NE India & Economic Development**

*Astha Bharti Seminar, IIC, New Delhi, 14 June 2001*

*I*t will not be possible for me to contribute any point you have not yet covered or will cover in the coming sessions. And as a layman speaking on a subject beyond his grasp, what I say may turn out to have no connection with economic development - the central theme of this seminar!

But I have come because you are concerned people of goodwill who are thinking and searching together for solutions to the toughest problems in my region. The least I can do is to be present here to understand better the wider picture of our needs and challenges which people like you see. Some of you have spent years working in our region and care deeply for us. It is certainly a privileged invitation of Professor Dr B B Kumar, a dedicated and pioneering educationist in Nagaland who gave the best years of his life teaching in Nagaland. His understanding of our difficulties and commitment to find the right solutions are known and much appreciated by many of us in Nagaland. I pay heartfelt tribute to him and his family for the graciousness and steadfast integrity with which they served our people.

The issues that have generated the crisis afflicting our whole region are fundamentally the same, although the historical facts and political positions of the movements launched by the diverse groups in response to the crisis are different. I think for most of us it boils down to this question: What is the right way for us to respond to the changes coming to us from Bangladesh, Nepal and the rest of India? All of us are at a loss confronting this question. We are beginning to see serious weaknesses and inadequacies in our response to the common crisis whether we are in Meghalaya, Assam/Bodoland, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura or Arunachal.

As you know quite a few in Assam and Manipur belong to the category of the educated and competent people of India who are capable

*A Naga Speaks*

of coping with challenges of modern economic development. But Assam specially has had to wrestle with endless problems of the hugest magnitude that keep increasing in size and complexity, starting from soon after India became independent. Little did Lokapriya Gopinath Bordoloi know, perhaps, how the Assam he saved so valiantly was to be systematically dismembered and destabilised beyond control because of its location and ethnic and cultural composition. Will Assam be able to rise phoenix-like from the worst traumas of subtraction, division, addition and multiplication that her peoples have sustained? It is clear this will be the key to solutions to many of our problems. It is not surprising Manipur does not want what Assam has experienced.

Albert Maori Kiki, the first foreign Minister of Papua New Guinea in the South Pacific, called his autobiography *Ten Thousand Years In A Lifetime*. I am mentioning his book because the title very well describes the bafflement; dilemma and panic many communities like us around the world have to handle as we too try to go forward with the rest of mankind. We too, like the people of PNG, have to achieve in a very short time what the advanced old societies have achieved over a long period spanning generations. This significant aspect of our crisis is often overlooked.

The nature and scope of our crisis are such that it can be said our North East ship is sinking into mindless chaos and self-destruction and we are all preoccupied with our own cabins. Some of us do not think beyond making our cabins more comfortable and state-of-the-art beautiful using resources that have been selfishly amassed, or acquiring more cabins than we need ignoring the needs of others.

Given the mindsets of the peoples they have to lead and the relentless changes causing constant instability, their task is formidable. But too many of them do not come to grips with the real problems. Their priorities are wrong or not thought out. They end up adding more to the problems and the confusion because what they want for themselves too easily comes before what needs to be done. They are so much like the rest of us!

In Nagaland after over 60 years of struggle for our dearest aspirations, the struggle underground has started to destroy itself and the people for whom it was launched. And after 40 years of statehood, the state has started to destroy itself and the people for whose development it was supposedly created.

What is the meaning of this common destructiveness that has

***A Naga Speaks***

come out of all of us? Ideologically both the underground struggle and the overground state have become bankrupt and barren. Organisationally and structurally both have become stagnant and inflexible and therefore unworkable and oppressive. They cannot grow or respond to changing realities. Are those running our underground and overground political efforts the only ones to blame for these shortcomings?

Have we produced such a situation because we Nagas are worse human beings than others? Or, are we caught in a paradigm shift in which our thinking and living are not matching the stiff requirements of the new situation? Many communities are facing the same crisis of living today with today's not yesterday's ideas. This describes the growth in thinking, spirit, responsibility and discipline our situation demands from all of us.

If we are casual, shortsighted and selfish today, and fail to make the right choices, our children will inherit a society that will be destructive beyond control.

Something is missing in the human element in the Naga story. That is, in all of us. Of course, specific individuals have made, and are making mistakes; some more selfish than others, which have produced the present dangerous situation. But given the same opportunity or position, most of us will make the same mistakes because our understanding of what is required to solve our own problems is way below the required level. In other words, our philosophy of life is not adequate for the challenges of the new situation.

We have only some nationalist political goals with desperate strategies and tactics to achieve them in a crisis where we cannot survive without mental and spiritual competence, which take care of the economic dimension also. Too many of us are too ignorant and inexperienced to act correctly. That is where our society is. That is where our real battle is now. Ignorance and lack of experience are not crimes. It just means we need to grow. But if they are not recognised and rectified great destructiveness becomes inevitable. The disastrous chaos in many African republics today illustrates this truth.

In the Naga struggle for freedom, our people have been told that all that is required of them is to be loyal to the cause and its fighters. They will bring the desired solution and all our problems will disappear because Nagas will then work in unity. Today the Nagas struggle is bogged down in factions eliminating one another. Why?

The overground and the underground have given our people too little to think and to do, that would enrich their own lives and bring about the all-round growth that is urgently needed. This is a good definition of ideological and spiritual bankruptcy that produces implacable divisions and unworkable politics.

Thus lulled into irresponsibility and casualness from both sides of our politics, Nagas have become a waiting, expecting, demanding, and complaining people who do not think they have to solve their own problems. So we have naturally become an unleadable and ungovernable people waiting to be served. And we have come to think that if our leaders exploit the greed and weaknesses of their people for their own cheap success and instant gratification it is 'normal' politics! The result is that our politics is devoid of the kind of bold and imaginative statesmanship needed for our very complicated crisis.

We need leaders who want nothing for themselves so that they are free to draw the true battle line between right and wrong that cuts right through our hearts and conscience instead of misleading battle lines that divide us into warring camps where we often end up eliminating one another. We must end the folly of reducing the number of those who can think and thrash out together the best way for our people to walk on into the coming years.

I want to say something about clash of perceptions or errors in our mapping of the conflicts we are trying to solve.

I once rang *Blitz* to try to protest against a story the weekly had published. I was in Bombay at the time. Under a screaming headline it said something to the effect that the CIA through foreign missionaries had instigated the Nagas to destabilise India. I did not like the brutal distortion of historical facts to create a sensational story. I was concerned about the thinking the Indian public would develop about my people and their struggle from the inaccurate, motivated story.

I also did not like the typical assumption in mainland India that we are mouthing slogans and ideas stuffed into our empty heads by some foreigners with evil intentions against India because we are devoid of feelings of our own and any capacity to analyse and interpret events to work out the path we are to take as a people. What I wanted to say was that the Nagas had taken a calculated stand on the basis of our own thinking stemming from our history and experiences, and that *Blitz* and its writer were being irresponsible at our expense. The man in the editorial office

***A Naga Speaks***



who picked the phone said what the Nagas felt was of no interest to him or the paper, and told me not to waste his time.

On another occasion I tried to see the resident editor of one of the most respected papers of India. I wanted to discuss the edit-page article on Nagaland he had written, which I felt was biased and highly misleading. The gentleman said he knew what to write about the Nagas and there was no need for a meeting. I asked to be given a chance to explain our side of the issue but I again found I was screaming to myself as this media man also did what his counterpart at Blitz had done. He too put the phone down.

I mention these exchanges because when the Indian public gets a version of our story in which the details and facts that are most important to us are missing, the consequences are bound to be highly dangerous.

Having said all this, I have to say here that for most of the past 40 years, I have lived and worked in Kerala, Delhi, Kolkata, Maharashtra, Chennai, Bangalore and Shillong, and travelled and met all sorts of people in Gujarat, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, U.P., Rajasthan and of course Assam. I have been fortunate beyond words. I can say I have had no difficult or hurting experience of any kind anywhere in India despite being called a Chinese agent at times. I cannot adequately express in words my gratitude for all the hospitality, friendship and genuine care I have received from countless friends and families across India.

I have not narrated the encounters to complain, but to illustrate the undeniable clash of perceptions that are there that must be objectively recognised in order to achieve mutual understanding. The differences are real and it will not do to underestimate them. But they are not meant to destroy us. They are meant to make us grow as we learn to rise to doing what needs to be done, instead of trying to run away from it and to our own ruin. I can humbly say I have returned from my yatra with this conviction.

Involved parties in a conflict ignore, underestimate or prejudge one another's perceptions as unimportant. I do not enjoy talking about my fear of becoming extinct because what is so real to my people in our situation is most likely to be a non-issue to you on the upper floor. It may even be silly from your wider, bigger field of vision and understanding of what is and what is not important in the modern world in which you are already at the cutting edge of progress. After all many like you here are already running Silicon Valleys in the most advanced nations of the world.

But our people see a future where they will be deprived of their



say on what matters most to them as they 'have sought, and known, and loved'. The fact is a good deal of our politics holding up the economic development we are discussing here is coming from this perception about ourselves. What Morarji Desai bluntly said about us Nagas revealed what a considerable segment of India will naturally always feel about us and the aspirations we hold on to in desperation because we are conscious of our serious inadequacies and unpreparedness to make it in a fast changing world.

The conflict and clashpoint is where Desai's concept and perception of what India is or should be as shaped by his experience of Indian history differs from our people's concept and perception of themselves as developed from their experience and knowledge of their history. You will rightly feel this is enslavement by the past. I understand your point, but the majority of my people do not because their sense of being threatened is real and strong. And I too am not saying we can continue in nostalgia, as we have been, for a past with its security that was possible in the given context of a time that is gone and cannot be preserved or brought back.

What I am trying to convey is that when we from both sides talk to one another and truly listen to one another, we start to understand our errors, and to do what we need to do, for ourselves and for the world.

Then we start to build the staircase needed by both sides to find fullest growth. The staircase gives equal importance to both sides. It helps both sides to understand each other. This may not be economic development yet, but the correct mapping of our conflict and correction of perceptions that this will achieve, will make economic development possible.

### **The Unexpected Way That Opens Up When ....**

#### **A story about Asia Plateau and North East India**

*Dr* Roddy Evans, a physician from the Republic of Ireland, was in India in the 1950s and '60s with Moral Re-Armament, now renamed Initiatives of Change. In New Delhi he got to know Mr G G Swell, the Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha, and later India's ambassador to Norway. When Dr Evans said he was interested in his own country and other nations being 'led by men and women who are governed by God', Swell said the man he

#### ***A Naga Speaks***

should meet was Stanley Nichols-Roy, the General Secretary of All Party Hill Leaders Conference (APHLC), the body spearheading their movement. He then explained the political crisis in Assam over the demand of his people to break away from Assam and create a Hill State within the Union of India.

Nichols-Roy came to Delhi on one of the talks with the Central Government on the deteriorating situation. Dr Evans met Nichols-Roy and invited him to a dinner with Rajmohan Gandhi and others associated with MRA. Nichols-Roy listened to stories of solutions coming to violent conflicts as a result of changes in people. The story of Irene Laure of France caught his attention. A respected voice of the Socialist women of France, she was a formidable member of the Resistance that fought to end German occupation of her country.

The Germans were defeated and humiliated but it did not end her hatred of them for what they had done to her, her family and France. Frank Buchman, MRA initiator, helped her to see that people like her had to shed their hatred if they cared for a new future for the coming generations. As she deeply loved her children she understood. Starting at an international conference in Switzerland she travelled through war-ravaged Germany asking for forgiveness for wanting the destruction of Germany and calling for the building of a better future through healing of the wounds from the past. Both France and Germany officially recognised her part in the Franco-German reconciliation and cooperation that took place making possible the economic recovery of Western Europe.

Nichols-Roy saw the relevance of this story in the worsening crisis between the hills people and the Assamese in North East India. He readily responded to the invitation to come to the opening of *Asia Plateau* in Panchgani on 20 January 1968. He brought 34 people to the conference.

What Nichols-Roy came to find was what God wanted him to do in the political logjam where unless a breakthrough was found, the tribes under APHLC were about to become a part of the kind of all-out violence that had engulfed neighbouring Nagaland. Like an avid student he regularly attended the early morning sessions each day devoted to how to listen to 'the still small voice' that speaks in every heart and conscience, and make a fresh start by learning to obey it.

Kim Beazley, Labour MP from Australia attending the conference, explained to him how his own attempt at listening for direction by having 'nothing to prove, nothing to justify and nothing to gain for yourself' cleaned up his life and gave him the compassion and passion he needed

as a politician to play his role adequately for society instead of abusing his position for his own advantage. In a few years Beazley was to become the path-breaking Minister for Education in Canberra.

Accommodation was a problem as the centre had completed only the first residential block. So I had the privilege of rooming with Nichols-Roy. I had met him 14 years earlier at Union Christian College, Barapani, near Shillong, because he was the driving force behind the founding of the College. He wanted to know more from me also about what Beazley had told him about listening and obeying. I shared with him how I dealt with fear and hatred, the realest problems of my life when I first tried the idea of listening. He and I knew, we Christians tend to pray so easily that we don't realise the importance of giving God His chance to speak to us.

I told him my first step of obedience was telling my father the inconvenient truth about how I was misusing the money he was sending me every month at immense sacrifice to support me at College, and then apologising at a meeting in Madras for hating India as a Naga whose family had taken a stand to defend Naga honour and history and paid a price for doing so. I told him that when my father started to treat my mother differently after I was honest with him, and my hatred was gradually replaced by a perceptible widening of my concern beyond my own people following my apology, I decided to give my whole life to live out the answer I had discovered.

On the third morning, I think, I woke up at about 5am to find the big hulk of Nichols-Roy sitting upright on his bed silhouetted against the early light of dawn coming through the corridor window. As a graduate of Science and Engineering from the University of California at Berkeley, he believed in practical experiments to understand things. This morning I saw him sitting in silence and at intervals writing in a notebook. He did not turn on the light in our room. He used a torchlight whenever he started to write. I quietly prayed for him lying comfortably on my bed! I often recalled that moment as one when I was watching a politician taking the practical steps to become a statesman.

At the plenary session a few hours later Nichols-Roy spoke. He said he had made the experiment of listening and he had seen clearly where he needed to start if he expected God's intervention in his situation. His first step was to be fully honest with his wife on his return to Shillong. 'I am not surprised her hair has gone grey so early,' he said.

The second step was to call on B P Chaliha, the Chief Minister of

*A Naga Speaks*

Assam, and so the main opponent of the APHLC on the ongoing political crisis, which, according to editorials in some leading national dailies, would widen the area of violence and lawlessness if it was not resolved soon. The morning he left he said, 'I am returning to my situation with the humble decision that I will obey whatever God will guide me to do from now on.'

On his return to Shillong he acted swiftly and exactly as he had said. After he was completely honest with his wife, she thanked him for the courage he had shown making it possible for the family to start afresh together. Speaking to people about the change in her family she said she felt so happy after he was honest with her that she found herself waving good morning even to strangers as she drove downtown for shopping the next morning.

Nichols-Roy then went to see Chaliha and told him what had happened in his family, and then said to Chaliha he was sorry he had cared only for his tribal people and not given thought to the questions that worried Chaliha concerning his people in the Brahmaputra valley, the majority community. He said he had decided to think of what would be right for the plains people also. Chaliha on a number of occasions said Nichols-Roy's honesty and obvious sincere concern for the Assamese people also completely changed his own attitude towards him.

To the surprise of close observers Nichols-Roy and Chaliha jointly invited all the MLAs on both sides of the conflict to a showing of *Freedom*, an MRA film from Nigeria. I was present on the occasion when Chaliha introduced Nichols-Roy who introduced the film. Chaliha said he had been inspired by what Nichols-Roy had brought back from Panchgani and the new element he seemed to be bringing into the crisis faced by both sides. He said no political solution would work if there was no trust, but if there was mutual trust and goodwill, he was confident a solution would be worked out.

Chaliha invited Nichols-Roy to go and meet the Assamese people with him. Nichols-Roy accepted and a tour of some villages and towns in Assam took place. The people sensed that a new, unexpected way had opened up at the height of the crisis when these joint initiatives were reported in the media.

In the following months some bold moves were jointly made to bring leaders from both sides together to evolve a solution that would be acceptable to both sides and therefore would be workable. One such bid was the meeting held in camera at Assam House in Chanakyapuri, New

Delhi, which was attended by leaders from both sides. It became obvious that real progress was taking place towards a solution. Union Home Minister Y B Chavan made a 'State-within-a State' proposal to start with. The Congress Party had to think of the risks its ruling party faced in Assam. There was strong reaction against the proposal in Shillong. But APHLC passed a resolution 'not to reject the proposal out of hand' but to give it due consideration, thus revealing a new factor at work.

The leader who could wreck the whole process at this sensitive stage was Hoover Hynniewta, the militant pioneer for the creation of a Hill State and formidable orator whose ability to move the masses was well known. His reservations about the new trend towards a solution, which he viewed to be needless concession to the majority were known. Hoover was the first Lok Sabha MP for the Hill State movement. One day his speech in the Lok Sabha annoyed Pandit Nehru so much that the Prime Minister rose from his seat and angrily rejected what Hoover had said. Hoover said he was happy he had made Delhi respond!

The informal team of people from different communities in Shillong that had started to think and work together to help the search for an honourable solution acceptable to both sides decided Hoover had to be won for the search. They urged him to go to a conference about to take place at MRA's *Asia Plateau*, Panchgani. Hoover trusted the sincerity and integrity of those who invited him. He said he was prepared to go. A few days before the date for departure he phoned one of them he would not be able to go because he needed to gather two truckloads of dry cowdung for his potato field, adding that a poor man like him could not risk a bad potato crop.

The man he talked to instantly replied the problem was not insurmountable although he himself had just arrived in Shillong and was not an authority on cow dung availability in the local market. He rang a member of his team and reported the crisis. The man said, 'I'll ring you tomorrow morning. I am in charge of the TB hospital in Shillong and know exactly where to get what he needs because we buy milk from many cow keepers.' Two truckloads of dry cowdung were delivered to Hoover's potato field the next day and Hoover went to the conference at *Asia Plateau*!

Nichols-Roy and a colleague joined him at Panchgani the next day. As they were no longer the best of friends back home because of their political positions, the tension in their conversations was palpable. Hoover enjoyed the conference but remained in the background. But after a young

Malaysian medical student spoke at one plenary session about finding the courage to speak honestly to her father to show her deep care for him, he was impelled to ask for time to speak.

He said he had decided to remain silent but the simple act of obedience by the young lady from Malaysia had helped him to see his own pride and hard-heartedness. He talked movingly about his life and all he had gone through to serve his people. Then he called out to Nichols-Roy in the hall and asked him to forgive him for the things he had said and done to hurt his father's reputation while working his own way up to become a leader himself. Nichols-Roy was too moved to speak as he came up to shake Hoover's hand in response. The senior Rev Nichols-Roy was the well-known voice of the tribal people of the North East. He was a member of the constituent assembly that hammered out the Indian Constitution.

Hoover, on his way back, stopped at Guwahati and drove to the residence of Bishnuram Medhi, the former Chief Minister of Assam. Medhi was hated by many people in the hills for his policies and actions to contain their awakened sense of themselves and their rising expectations. They resented what they perceived to be racial and caste superiority. Hoover told Medhi what had happened at *Asia Plateau* and apologised to him for stirring up communal hatred against him and his people in Assam. Medhi knew what he meant and deeply appreciated the humanity in an old foe who was prepared to go the extra mile to put his side right.

Hoover's role in removing the feared option of public opinion being rallied to block the progress to a settlement was not known to the public. But it was known to him, to God and those who knew him! The State of Meghalaya was created in 1972 without violence and bloodshed.

Opening the budget session of the last sitting of the Assembly, referring to the new State, Governor B K Nehru said, 'Seldom have such far-reaching constitutional changes been brought about with so much goodwill and understanding.' Union Home Minister Y B Chavan thanked the leaders of the new State who called on him in New Delhi for the leadership they had given in the peaceful settlement that had taken place. He expressed his happiness that *Asia Plateau* in Panchgani in Satara next to his parliamentary constituency in Karad District of Maharashtra had played a significant role.

### **‘God’s option for the Poor’**

A component of Theology of Life Programme. 17 November 1995

As stated in the invitation, here today, we are focusing specifically on ‘God’s Option for the Poor’ – from the point of view of the tribals of the North Eastern region, particularly the youth. This study of the poor comprises not only material poverty, but all who are denied the basic needs of dignity, justice, freedom and opportunities – Dalits, tribals, women, destitute, child labour, rural and urban poor.

1. Do we tribals in the North East find ourselves poor in any way?
2. Are the problems in our present society - ethnicity, drugs, AIDS, etc... – part of development, or are they rather, increasing our poverty and hindering our progress?

‘Option’, according to the dictionary, means ‘the power or right of choosing’. The right, as granted in a contract or by an initial payment, of acquiring something in the future’.

‘God’s Option for the Poor’, would therefore, I think, mean the right or power given to the poor by God to make their own choice to shape their future. The essential meaning seems to be that God expects the poor also to be responsible for their own development, growth and fulfillment.

At the risk of over-generalisation, it would perhaps be valid to make a rough assessment of the condition and degree of poverty worldwide in the following manner.

When we talk of the poor of the world, we are talking mainly of the one billion severely deprived and malnourished, shabbily housed and clothed people spread across Asia, Africa and Latin America. A closer examination would seem to warrant the making of two rough distinctions in the degree and severity of poverty and deprivation suffered by the poor and oppressed people of the world.

Although the experience of physical and mental hardship due to poverty is the same for all who are poor, it can perhaps be said that the oppressed and downtrodden poor of the Hindu and Muslim societies of South Asia, namely India, Bangladesh and Pakistan, and the Christian dominated societies of Latin America, together experience the most depressing and despairing kind of poverty. The African poor and the backward ethnic communities of Asia, the North American Natives and the Aborigines of Australia experience a slightly less depressing and hopeless

***A Naga Speaks***



kind of poverty and misery.

The extremity of the deprivation suffered by the poor who make up the first category stems from the fact that they are almost entirely landless, whether they are in urban or rural areas. They subsist entirely on what they can earn as daily wage earners in all the jobs that those who are better off consider to be too low or too unremunerative for them. As they do not have the basic renewable resources of their own, such as land, water, etc... to develop and exploit which would give them openings for growth, their lot of being at the lowest level of society is worse than any others at their socio-economic level.

It is therefore the submission of this paper that the people of the North East belong to the category of the poor Africa and the backward ethnic communities of Asia, the Americas and Australia. Those who fall into this category by and large do not suffer from the extreme disadvantage of landlessness.

Now to the first question posed for discussion: ‘Do we tribals in the NE find ourselves poor in any way?’

We are very poor in the crucially important infrastructural assets for development, e.g. systems of roads, transport, communication and distribution. The quality of our health services and the standard of our educational facilities and the content of the education being imparted are all still at the most basic and rudimentary level.

According to the economist E F Schumacher, the guru of *Small is Beautiful* and sustainable development concept of economic planning, the assets that spell success or failure for nations are – education, discipline and organisation. He cited the examples of Germany and Japan to explain his conclusion. The two nations rose from near total ruin after the 2nd World War to become the leading economic powers of the second half of the twentieth century without possessing any natural resources worth mentioning.

Their phenomenal successes are attributed to their high level of education, national discipline and organisation, which their peoples have achieved and sustained for generations. The Germans and the Japanese are therefore able to maintain their lead over other nations abundantly provided for in national resources because their organisational discipline and work culture were way above those of others.

In discussing the nature and dimension of our poverty and



backwardness, this aspect of our mental and cultural lack of experience of work and processes of production should not be left o

We have priceless natural resources like water, abundance of cultivable land with high moisture content and green forest cover that protect the all-important top soil, despite the alarming rate of denudation of this asset everywhere. In other words, we have basic assets, which can produce food and wealth to sustain us as well as fuel our socio-economic development. Our present turmoil therefore stems from our inability to develop our assets due to our lack of the three mental attributes stipulated by Schumacher.

Are the problems in our present society – ethnicity, drugs, AIDS etc... – part of development or are they rather increasing our poverty and hindering our progress?

The fact that we hail from this or that racial or linguistic group or tribe is the central reality of our existence. Ethnicity by itself as such, is neither a part of the process of development we are going through today. Nor does it play a negative or positive role in increasing our poverty or hindering our progress.

Ethnicity is a matter of the natural growth in our awareness of our identity and our aspirations as a people. It is a natural urge, which strongly manifests itself in all peoples and races and gives them a basic sense of identity and belonging to a culture, history and region. The important thing to know is that chaos and destructive divisions always result if our differences, be it ethnic, cultural, religious, linguistic or racial, become our security and our justification for smallness, selfishness and prejudice. The ethnic, cultural and other differences, which so beautifully define the individuality and uniqueness of each community, obviously indicate a divine purpose for the human family.

That the intricate mosaic-like diversity of which we are a part, requires, indeed compels us to think and care for the larger welfare of others also not just our own, would seem to be the unmistakable purpose at work to make us grow to greatness. The sheer artistry that is evident reveals the operation of a majestic imagination.

If therefore we can learn to respond to this high calling that we discern to be coming to us out of our diversities, ethnicity can fuel not hinder our development. To help our people to grasp this deeper meaning of diversity is surely one of the challenging tasks of our church leaders

and theologians. It would result in politicians who thrive not by exploiting differences and prejudices for their own success but who lead their people properly with Divine Wisdom.

As for the burgeoning problem of drugs and sero-positivity and AIDS in the North East, the menace is a part of our development, seriously hindering our progress. The problem should also be seen as part of the larger geo-political and socio-economic pattern that is emerging out of South-East Asia. The rapid economic transformation of the Pacific Rim nations, which touch us through Burma, is one of the forces that are generating the changes that are impacting us today.

Disorientated by the impacts of unprecedented changes around us, the older generations are failing to guide their children adequately and the youth in despair and blind rebellion are turning to mind-altering drugs to avoid facing the realities that we have to accept and learn to manage with. And, of course, the AIDS epidemic is never far behind, if the permissive culture of drug abuse and addiction by intravenous methods become the accepted fashion of the youth.

This highly damaging factor working against the slow efforts for development in this region will only be answered by our people recognising the real nature and gravity of the menace and deciding to meet it in a responsible manner by mustering the very best we can give and do ourselves, without waiting for someone else to do the job.

The small but steady progress that the Naga Mothers' Association (NMA) has made in this regard in Nagaland is perhaps worth mentioning. They are learning to meet the challenge by simply rising to face it. And by their efforts they have generated hope for themselves and others, thus bearing out the truth that God meets us at the points of our deepest needs, that He meets us out in the battle field.

This issue of poverty is so gigantic in scope and so sensitive and controversial as well, that ideological and doctrinaire prejudices soon take precedence in discussions searching for solutions.

In our particular situation in the North East let us be keenly aware that because of the unsettling pressures of socio-political and historical changes, we find that someone who was desperately isolated, poor and unknown yesterday may suddenly become an MLA or an MP today! Before the person and his or her family are aware of what is happening, he or she may become a Minister in a State or in the Union Cabinet! The whole

economic structure of the community involved then begins to change, often at a bewildering pace.

It is therefore vitally important to emphasise that God requires every individual to be equally responsible for His values and His justice, whether they are rich or poor, weak or powerful. For a poor person today may, in a situation like ours, suddenly find himself catapulted to a high position of power and responsibility.

If such a person will continue to regard himself as someone who does not have to be morally and ethically responsible because of his low status yesterday, then the whole society pays a heavy price for his or her corruption and selfishness. The disastrous economic failures of newly-free African countries like Rwanda, Zaire, Sierra Leone etc... have been caused by the refusal of the newly powerful and rich leaders of the nations to accept moral responsibility to meet the needs of their people.



### **Alienation and Militancy**

India International Centre, New Delhi, 20 April 1997

*L*et me say at the outset that what I am going to share today will be short on facts, and long on feelings and impressions!

I heard the story of a journalist who visited Belfast to write on the Protestant-Catholic conflict at a time when the bomb blasts were particularly bad. The journalist naturally asked his Irish host, 'What are the facts here?' The reply was, 'To hell with the facts! Don't you know in Northern Ireland feelings matter? Facts only confuse the issue.' There is something here about us also. It is clear that in situations like Northern Ireland, North East India, and quite a few other places, the facts and the feelings must be understood as equally important, if we are to make progress towards solutions.

The subject of alienation and militancy has been discussed so often and by very able minds that there is not much that a layman like me can say that will be worthwhile. What I shall try to say are aspects as seen from our side, which make sense to me on the basis of my experience and what I have concluded should be done to find solutions to our conflicts that have dragged on for years now.

*A Naga Speaks*

Alienation and militancy in the North East should be seen as a part of a wider pattern of instability that afflicts the entire eastern Himalayan region and its south eastern ranges running into Burma. The region happens to be the home of largely ethnic peoples belonging to the Tibeto-Burmese family. Isn't there something in the fact that from the Tibetan plateau down to the Gulf of Martaban, chronic and acute instability is experienced by virtually all the ethnic tribes that inhabit that stretch of territory?

The folk heroes of this region are the insurgency and liberation fighters of all hues, constantly on the run to uphold the causes of their outnumbered and desperate peoples. If our perpetual instability is part of a wider regional phenomenon it is a mistake to deal with it as only a locally instigated law and order problem.

The central fact of life for this small collection of loosely linked ethnic groups is that their homeland is precariously situated along the cultural fault line between the two massive and ancient civilisations of India and China. As the dynamic processes of nation-formation and consolidation of boundaries start in India and China, the dormant instability of the group of tribes and nations between them is being revealed.

In Southeast Asia also, communities like the Dayaks, Ibans, Kayahs, etc... in Malaysia, the Igorots and the Moros in the Philippines, the Melanesians of Timor Islands and West Papua in eastern Indonesia, all are responding to the mounting threats to their existence and their old familiar ways in despair and bewilderment.

Their unpreparedness and inadequacy to cope with the challenges posed by the consolidation of the Malays is a major reason for their insecurity. Is it not possible that there may be reasons for the militancy in the North East that are not encompassed by the operational paradigm that Delhi uses in dealing with the region?

At the heart of this paradigm is the concept of a mainstream people and culture. This is of course a fully justifiable concept in so far as it refers to the ancient Indian entity, which defines what India is to herself and to the world. But there is a vast difference between this entity and the India the British left behind in 1947.

Substantial parts of today's North East India were not a part of pre-British traditional India. What we might call the Home Ministry paradigm

assumed that we who were never part of the mainstream should have no feelings of any kind about ourselves and the mainstream. This is taking us for granted, expecting us to respond as required by someone else who has no feeling for or would care to understand the tough questions of honour, adjustment, growth and survival that we face at this critical juncture of our history.

In the case of the Nagas, their natural, honest reaction against the presumptuous and insensitive disregard of the unambiguous stand they had taken before 14 August 1947, has been labeled 'hostile', 'misguided', 'anti-national', 'instigated by foreigners', etc... all in terms of the concept of the paradigm because those guided by it are interested only in the territorial integrity of India.

When Morarji Desai threatened to 'exterminate' the Nagas because they have held their own views about territorial integrity on the basis of their history, Nagas felt he had reconfirmed for them the correctness of their stand to defend their honour and history. Militancy will be the recurring response from the Nagas as long as the legitimacy and validity of their conviction and fight is not respected.

The labels mentioned do not make sense to the people concerned. They feel that instead of being 'misguided' they are being rightly guided by an instinctive wisdom for their own survival; and that they are being 'pro' their own threatened identity rather than being 'anti' a nation they have been made a part of against their clearest protest. This understanding insight is conveyed by Sanjoy Hazarika in his book, *Strangers of the Mist* in moving words as perceived by him as one from the same region himself.

The wider instability mentioned is rooted in a disturbing awareness in our communities that the entire ecology of our habitat or sanctuary itself is now threatened. I believe our militancy against India is a part of our desperate response to this environmental crisis. There is undoubtedly despair and fanaticism in our militancy.

Dr Fritjof Capra, interpreting R D Laing's ideas, said people often invent 'special strategies in order to survive in unliveable situations', and what is regarded as madness or misguided is really their 'sane response to an insane social environment' as sensed by them 'in existential terms'. I believe this says something about our situation also.

This is one view of the pervasive insecurity, which, in my view, should be recognised in the thinking being developed through such

exchanges to tackle the crisis.

To go from this general observation to the prevailing situation in the NE is to come face to face with a multiplicity of ever-fragmenting tribal ethnic groups pursuing their respective struggles to protect their separate identities, emphasising distinctions that were not issues for agitations a few decades ago. I shall hazard two explanations for this phenomenon, which is becoming increasingly bewildering:

It is simply a sign of people becoming conscious of themselves, or it is a measure of the role-model disaster that has rendered India ungovernable.

The resounding message that has gone out from Delhi for some years now to every nook and corner of India is that it is all right to sacrifice the nation, bend and twist its vitally important institutions to serve your selfish interests, although there was a time when the reverse was the accepted way. It has been so costly that instead of Delhi being able to morally challenge greed, smallness and venality, the national elite has been the trendsetters for so much that is destructive, giving their worst, instead of their best, violating the truth that much is expected from those who have received much.

Christ somewhere said those who do not bother about the damaging consequences of their behaviour should have stones tied around their necks and thrown into the sea - so that there will be no chance of their resurfacing to repeat their misdeeds! He must have considered role-modelling for nation-building to be a serious responsibility!

Between present-day Assam with all the plains tribal peoples, Tripura and Manipur, and the rest of India, there existed a cultural relationship, going back centuries. I should think to some extent this is true with Meghalaya also. So alienation in the sense of a weakening or snapping of a relationship that existed is true with these peoples of the NE. But this cannot be said of the Nagas, the Mizos and the Kukis.

The Congress Party has for decades cynically exploited the issue of illegal migration of people especially from Bangladesh and reaped electoral benefits for itself. Whatever the historical differences in the background, the whole NE has shared a common resentment against Delhi over this explosive issue. The influx from East Bengal, later Bangladesh, was for years a protected asset for the party. Today it has become a common nightmare that has become completely unmanageable.

Indira Gandhi's vindictive response to the stirring and successful agitation by the AASU over this emotional issue by forcing the infamous Assembly election of 1983 on the majority of the people of Assam was not too different from what Pakistan did to its eastern wing after the massive mandate Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had received from the general election. The Assamese were outraged.

Certainly in Nagaland the response was 'Just as we have always feared'. It was shockingly ugly. The Assamese winced at the insult. Becoming calm and collected on recognising the nature of Delhi's attitude towards them, which had been partially revealed when Pandit Nehru gave his infamous 'farewell' message to Assam in 1962 during the Chinese aggression into NEFA (North East Frontier Agency), the youth took stock to react. ULFA was born.

How the Bodo movement became radicalised because of the treatment the AASU leadership managed to mete out to their Bodo colleagues, directly encouraged by Central agencies also as usual, is another story of alienation and militancy. Of course, as in Punjab, Delhi is having to spend enormous amounts to contain 'anti-national activities' in Bodoland after having helped to spawn them in the first place!

Frequently needless damage and alienation are caused by our failure to see beyond our set points of view. Mistakes are often naturally committed because of ignorance and unfamiliarity. One evening during rush hour way back in the 1960s, I was selling *Himmat Weekly* at a point on Connaught Circus. A young man stopped and asked, 'Why should Chinese be selling their magazines here?' I replied, 'Excuse me, are you from Pakistan?' He thumped his chest and said, 'I am a red-blooded Indian!' I said, 'I am sorry, you look just like a Pakistani I met some days ago.'

Extending my hand, I said, 'I am from Nagaland. I am glad to meet you'. He hastily replied, 'I am very sorry'. We shook hands. He bought a copy of 'Himmat'. The small crowd that had started to form on hearing about China, Pakistan, Nagaland, followed his example. I made a good sale of the issue. If you do look like a Tibetan, a Chinese, or a Vietnamese, and people call you so, the only worthwhile thing to do is to rejoice in the opportunities the situation offers.

I understand in modern medicine, greater attention is now given to 'disease origins' so that the patient may not be damaged by incorrect treatment of the symptoms of the 'disease process' only, as happens especially in the treatment of mental health problems.

***A Naga Speaks***



As far as Nagaland is concerned, for the past 50 years, it can be said that Delhi has dealt with the 'disease process' only, guided by a prejudiced reading of its causes. The possibility that we who are directly involved may have our own reading of the factors causing the problem has not been considered. Distrust, resentment and violent confrontation have resulted from this dismissive attitude that is contemptuous of our deeply concluded beliefs about ourselves.

The carrot and stick policy to wean the people away from the Naga political struggle by making money abundantly available for them while using military force to isolate and destroy the activists and fighters has not produced the desired outcome. It has resulted in a messy chaos in which Nagas have become addicted to the carrot without acquiring any respect for the stick. Have not the laws of addiction inevitably taken over and the holder of the carrot and stick has become a co-addict or co-dependent who plays a key part in enabling the addiction to continue?

The 'extremists' who once operated from the jungles have shifted to the towns today. There are frequent allegations of well-established links between them and the overground leaders. If the rumours are true, then Nagaland has a government that is of, for and by the overground and underground, financed by the taxpayers of India.

The precise facts about the alliances and working arrangements and whether all the factions are taking part in the hidden game, will be known only to those involved in Nagaland and Delhi. We lay people can only go by wild guesses, certain only of the reality that the pursuit of power and control, not alienation, has become the reason behind our militancy.

Such a conclusion may be objected to on various grounds. But if the basic motivating passions are not to be addressed and sought to be accommodated, we might as well not talk about workable solutions. An idealistic, naive plea for politics in a vacuum, devoid of power and ambition pressures, is not what is meant here. What is suggested is that if Delhi and Naga leaders, underground and overground, will not heed the damaging consequences of the thinking and methods they have so far followed, the land of the Nagas will become a permanent wound weakening not only Nagas but India's North East also.

Certain conditions of history and geography seem to combine to produce situations like Northern Ireland, the ever-exploding Basque conflict and Afghanistan, to mention only a few. If we are in a region where the same conditions are inherent, our leaders owe it to their people to help

*A Naga Speaks*



them to understand the special threats and opportunities of their situation and to learn to turn them into positive assets for their development.

In giving such leadership our leaders will ensure their own effectiveness and success. If we are to fail to respond correctly to this challenging reality, in a matter of decades we will find we have inherited a legacy of despair and unsolved problems that will be too unmanageable for us.

After 50 years of continuous conflict and confrontation we Nagas need to draw up a balance sheet and examine ourselves realistically in order to know the right way to struggle into the future. I am glad we have believed strongly enough in some conclusions about ourselves and we have fought for them. It will be a serious mistake for us to think that a people can come to a point when they can settle down and stop struggling and straining for some demanding goals.

If the sacrifices and the mistakes made thus far are to be redeemed we need to identify what has been sound in our struggle and build on them and resolutely discard what has been inadequate and destructive in our thinking.

One urgent lesson for us is to recognise the limitations of the ideas of shouting and shooting for our aspirations to take us further into the future. We need to ask what has gone wrong that our struggle has turned on itself so to speak and started to swallow its own children. Can we find the wisdom and vision to remedy the error?

This long overdue critical assessment of ourselves and the needed change from it, can be undertaken by us alone. No one can do it for us. The question is will we think only in terms of our own success and instant gratification instead of bringing about in ourselves and in all our people growth in mind, spirit, character and wealth so that freedom will become a reality today while the political question of 'sovereignty' is resolved through sufficient discussions between the Nagas and the people of India? The two can and must be undertaken together. Rwanda, Zaire, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Uganda are grim lessons of what happens when priorities are not clear.

There is now the possibility of unconditional talks between Delhi and the Nagas. So I would like to make one observation. The next time an Indian Prime Minister talk to our leaders, can he or she simply say, 'I understand your history as you see it. Personally I can agree with you as I

respect those who fight for their convictions and beliefs. But I cannot sign any accord or agreement that will precisely conform with your demands. I ask you to understand my helplessness because no government in Delhi can survive such a step. Help me, and my government to work out a solution that will be honourable and workable for both sides.'

This simple transparency will do no harm to anyone. It can only help by surprising the Nagas and perhaps enable them to respond in some new unexpected ways. After all, sovereignty or freedom is not something in the pocket of an Indian Prime Minister and it is up to him or her to give or not to give it?

The situation in Nagaland today, as in Manipur and some other parts of the North East, is one of controlled disorder. The control is exercised by aimed elements of the various Naga factions, freelancing gunmen available for lining, or running their own private enterprises for wealth gathering, often claiming to be acting for one of the factions, and the military and paramilitary forces of India who are the most visible of all the operating forces. The hapless citizens are caught in between and their paralysis is near total. What should be understood is that the brutalisation of all involved in the tragedy will produce serious longterm consequences that will damage everyone.

The jawans and officers from all parts of India risk their lives to suppress the so-called 'anti-national' political stand of the people of the area. They must often be thinking of the massive scandals of kickbacks, embezzlements and misuse of power by the elite in far away Delhi and asking why they should be defending the policies of leaders who have rendered their nation ungovernable by their blatant lawlessness and corruption and yet, are above the law because they are famous and powerful.

On our side most Nagas are helpless spectators of acts of terror and violence seeing people maimed or killed almost daily in inter-factional assassinations or in search-and-destroy raids by the security forces.

I should conclude by narrating an incident that took place just a month back. A patrolling party from the 29<sup>th</sup> Assam Rifles surrounded an area of a village near Dimapur on March 19th. They opened fire on some armed militants of one of the Naga factions who emerged from one of the houses situated near a primary school. Four Nagas were killed.

Medovi Kire, a retired teacher of the school, rushed from his house

on hearing the explosions. When he was telling the children to lie flat on the ground instead of watching the scene of mayhem he was dragged out by the jawans and beaten with gun- butts and kicked to the ground. Thrice he tried to get up and pleaded with praying hands, namaste style, not to beat him as he was only trying to save the children. After the third time he could not rise again. He was thrown into the waiting truck along with the dead bodies.

His brother who tried to help him also received the same beating. He, other teachers and the children saw his brother knocked unconscious and taken away. Hours later his dead body was returned to his family with a neat bullet hole right in the middle of his forehead. As the bullet was lodged inside his head the family concluded that he was shot at close range with an officer's handgun after he was taken away. No explanation was given. No explanation was asked, as it is too tedious for ordinary villagers to go through the complicated rigmarole of filing complaints and petitions in courts.

His five sons have decided to restrain themselves as avenging their grief and family's honour will not make any difference to the Naga crisis. But his seven year old grandson has told the family he will one day avenge his two grandfathers both of whom had been killed by Indian soldiers. Whether he will actually go that far may be a question but that he has been horribly brutalised like countless others in Nagaland, including the jawans and officers, is beyond dispute. The time has come to go beyond the politics of alienation and militancy to the truths and realities we all must face to work out a workable solution together.

### **Militancy in North East India**

XI Biennial Conference of SCMI, Shillong. 29 May 2002

*I* am not qualified to give an adequate history of militancy in North East India. So I shall only make a quick summary of what I know and add my thoughts on the subject.

Militancy in the North East, as understood today, started with Nagas declaring their independence on 14 August 1947. Earlier in 1929 they had stated in writing to the visiting British Simon Commission that they retained their right to decide their own future – that they were to be

*A Naga Speaks*

'left alone' as they were before the British came and made them part of British India.

Nagas thought it was a fairly straightforward statement of facts of history and geography, as they understood from their side. They did what was natural to them. They were certainly not trying to create trouble for India. What the Nagas were saying to India by their August 14 declaration was, 'The British after defeating you and many others much larger, stronger than us, came and defeated us also. We resisted them for over 50 years because they marched across our ancestral land as if it was empty land and we did not exist, as they had done in Australia, New Zealand, North America and elsewhere. They made you and us part of their empire. Now that they are going back home, we have decided to become a people and nation.

As your neighbour, we are so insignificant in size and number, compared to you. We cannot harm you. You can harm us without even trying to. But our history is most important to us because it represents what we have thought and fought for. Our assertion of our identity on the basis of our history does not, should not, be interpreted as anti-India, or anti-national. And we are not secessionists because we are not trying to secede from a union we agreed to be a part of.'

As happens with all Governments, it happened with the Government of India also. What was most deeply and desperately felt by the Nagas, was considered by Delhi as a minor bureaucratic problem caused by a few agitated Nagas, to be dealt with by sub-inspectors of police and their constables carrying out the orders of the Deputy Commissioner or Collector of the district. When the punitive measures by the police failed and the well-written memorandums of assertion, protest and defiance continued, the then Chief Minister of Assam, Bishnuram Medhi, came visiting Nagas distributing sweets and trinkets and telling villagers not to be misguided by trouble makers.

When the advice given with unconcealed contempt and annoyance was not heeded, the State Government started to give the line to Delhi and the country that foreign Christian missionaries had instigated the Nagas against India. Pandit Nehru told a Naga delegation the memorandum they had presented to him must have been written by foreign missionaries as the political aspirations articulated in it could not have been thought out by the Nagas on their own. Phizo told Nehru he was 'insulting Asian intelligence'.

### *A Naga Speaks*

There is a difference between Gandhi's response to the Nagas and Nehru's response. It decides whether people are won by a higher thought or they are lost because they feel threatened. The difference becomes very important for building peace and stability in the long run. One is listening to people because you know you will entertain the same hopes and fears if you were in their place and you believe ultimately the best answer for the problems they face will have to come out of their lives.

The other is to regard them as problems and you have no moral and spiritual vision or meaning for them. So they have to be manipulated, bribed, bullied or eliminated for the success of your plan or idea.

I have often tried to imagine what could have happened if Nehru had said to the Nagas, 'I have understood your position and I respect your courage to be yourself. But what you are asking is too much for any Prime Minister of India to even discuss. A nation like India will not be strong enough to entertain a case like yours for a very long time to come. I need your wisdom to solve the question between us. Please advice me.'

In trying to give the background, if I have dwelt too long on the Naga story, please forgive me.

The next outbreak of militancy was in Mizoram in 1966 led by Laldenga, founder of the Mizo National Front. The ferocious fight by the Mizos ended with the Accord Laldenga signed with Rajiv Gandhi whereby Mizoram became a full-fledged State of the Indian Union. The capacity of the Mizos for pragmatism and realism was demonstrated. Their leaders saw that given their acceptance of being a part of India when India became independent, to agree to be a full-fledged State was the wisest choice. Today Mizoram is the one state in the North East free from insurgency.

In due course the current of insurgency and militancy started to erupt right across the North East – the Tripuris of Tripura, the Meiteis and Kukis of Manipur, the Bodos, Assamese and Karbis of Assam, and the Khasis and Garos of Meghalaya. The Naga movement has entered the two Naga-majority districts at the Southeastern end of Arunachal Pradesh from Nagaland and Burma.

The consolidation of the Gurkhas starting from Subhash Ghishing's base in Darjeeling, North Bengal, is not strictly a part of the North East scene. But it should be given adequate attention before the situation deteriorates further. The insecurity and rage that has produced Ghishing and his movement cannot be seen in isolation from the fierce Maoist

uprising in Nepal. I am not saying what is happening in Nepal and the Darjeeling hills are the same thing. But what is undeniable is the eruption of a long suppressed ferment and anger against centuries of injustice and deprivation shaking Nepali society to its foundations.

Judging by the mutual ruthlessness with which the Maoists and the Security Forces of Nepal seem to be trying to destroy one another, all that has been Nepali and Gurkha will never be the same again. Will the powerful upheaval taking place in Nepal trigger off parallel passions among suppressed groups inside UP, Bihar, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh? I am told this question is causing serious concern in Delhi.

Coming back to the North East, one important development in the next decades may well be the determined bid the Zomis are reportedly planning to make to consolidate themselves as a people. All the sub-tribes of the Mizos, Kukis and Chins in Mizoram, Assam, Tripura and Burma are combining to emerge as one unified Zomi people.

Victor Hugo said, 'Nothing is more powerful than an idea whose time has come'. Ethnic consciousness and consolidation in the marginal lands where the ancient civilisations of India, China and Southeast Asia meet is certainly an idea whose time has come. It is a historical development that is catching up with our people whose self-awareness has prepared them for it. It will prove to be too destructive to suppress this process.

It is a huge crisis for us who are caught up in this historic development. We cannot escape it. All growth takes place in painful crisis. The challenge for the peoples of our region is not to retreat in fear but to realise the dangers shown in our weaknesses and to decide to accept the changes required of us to match them. Then we will make use of the opportunities in our crisis and become stronger to go forward in the world with others.

After being away in different parts of India for the past three and half decades I went back to Nagaland to help my family because an alarming number of my nephews and two nieces became drug and alcohol addicts. Before long I started to work with Naga Mothers' Association helping to start their Mount Gilead Home, the first professionally-run counselling and rehab centre for drug and alcohol addicts in the North East region in collaboration with Kripa Foundation of Mumbai. This work led to involvement in attempts by our society to tackle the larger issues confronting us today.

*A Naga Speaks*

In addition to working with Nagaland Baptist Church Council, I am at present the Convener of Naga Hoho Coordination Committee for healing and reconciliation in our violently fragmented society. These past few years I have often asked myself why I am working with the Church and Naga Hoho in their combined bid to end inter-factional killings, achieve unification of the factions through reconciliation, and thus help prepare the ground for a settlement between Nagas and Delhi after more than half a century of armed conflict.

A discussion of militancy, insurgency, and social, political unrest immediately raises the question: Why do people struggle? I believe this is the key question. To answer this question fully we have to go to the very beginning of the human story. And if we do, we conclude that we human beings struggle because of the divine impulse God put into us when He breathed into what He had made in His image and we became living souls.

What seems clear is that we are created and programmed to grow, to struggle towards higher and ever higher meanings and aspirations that are implanted in our minds, spirit and soul by our maker. What is equally clear is that our Creator requires us to strictly adhere to His majestic moral and ethical Doctrine of Ends and Means as we struggle.

Who among us has not said the same thing in frustration and anger when we are tempted to succeed, or struggle for our sheer survival and growth by making selfish compromises that we know are morally wrong?

I have made this point about human struggle originating from God himself because that requires us to respect all struggles of peoples for aspirations. For the same reason a people engaged in struggle are required by God to be worthy of their struggle as the impulse comes from Him and He wants it to be conducted His way for our own ultimate common good.

God and Satan are both equally interested in the choices we make in our hearts as we struggle. No wonder all who struggle for high aspirations find God and Satan are the toughest problems they have to face in deciding who they will be loyal to.

I have shared these thoughts about struggle that I am trying to sort out in my own mind because our region is going to be known for difficult struggles for a long time to come. And I am deeply concerned that it is most easy for a people compelled to struggle to grow to ignore the moral and spiritual issues of struggle. This always results in uncontrollable destructiveness both to those who struggle and others affected by the



struggle.

Alas, no scheduled tribes' concessions are given to any one on moral and ethical questions! Unless we know the correct meaning of struggle and accept the inescapable moral and ethical ground rules of struggle that apply to all equally, we will be destroyed by our errors and our ignorance.

I think the main point I am trying to make here is that if the struggle of any community for their deeply felt aspirations originates from their spiritual hunger for growth implanted by God in their soul, then, all struggles are meant by God to be for the building of His kingdom on earth.

Where else but here on earth can God expect us to build His kingdom? If there is this deeper truth about our human struggles, then politics is perhaps the most important battleground where God wants us to fight with Him. Religion in its highest deepest sense becomes exciting and urgent.



### **View from the North East: The Assam Blockade**

*Since the economic blockage by the youth wing of the West Bengal Congress (I), stopping movement of goods to Assam, much has been heard about the grievances of Bengalis against the students leading the 'foreign nationals' movement in Assam. The Assamese have conducted an agitation, with wide support in the state, against the steady build-up of people, mainly from Bangladesh, who have settled in Assam over the years and who have managed to register as voters. What are the fears and apprehensions of people in India's North East? How do they react when a move like this blockade is launched by an all-India political party? (Himmat 4 April 1980)*

The crisis in Assam and the blockade in North Bengal have recalled for me the time a Meghalayan friend and I were invited to a meeting of some Assamese intellectuals in Guwahati in 1971. The convenor of the gathering, a distinguished doctor, said, 'We need to get to know you better. Our future is linked with you, our tribal brothers from the hills. The time is coming when we will look to you for greater safety and security for our link with the rest of India is weakening and we cannot depend on it for our survival as a people. Our future opening to the outside world is going to be through the hills into Burma.'

On another occasion the late Mr B P Chaliha was heard to refer

***A Naga Speaks***



to Pandit Nehru's famous speech on All India Radio when the advancing Chinese column threatened to cut through to Tezpur in 1962. Nehru had said, 'Our heart goes out to the people of Assam at this time.' Mr Chaliha was analysing the background to the chronic instability of Assam.

People in Assam constantly link 'Nehru's farewell speech' to Delhi's failure up to this day to extend the broad-gauge railway line into Guwahati and the establishment of the refinery in Barauni, Bihar, (to refine Assam crude) and say in Delhi's calculations, Assam is not worth an expensive fight and therefore not secure enough for costly installations for long-term economic development.

It is against this background that the real implications of the recent blockade of Assam, launched by the Congress (I) youth wing in West Bengal, should be assessed.

Mr Subrato Mukherjee, one of the main organisers of the blockade and General Secretary of West Bengal, Congress (I) has said that Bengalis in West Bengal should not tolerate any movement that would affect the integrity of the country and the lives of five crore Bengalis in other parts of the country.

The deep anxiety felt by people in West Bengal for the possible fate of their brethren in the North East is quite legitimate and possibly justified. But the reckless way leaders of the various Congress (I) organisations in West Bengal have reacted suggest strongly that a terrible human dilemma is being exploited ruthlessly for some immediate partisan objectives - the main one being the toppling of the CPI (M) Government in Calcutta. The leaders of the blockade show unmistakable signs of being political henchmen acting under clear instructions from above, knowing that they will be fully protected, as West Bengal Chief Minister, Jyoti Basu has charged.

During the Emergency it was the 'over-zealous officials' who committed the excesses. Is another story, this time of 'over-zealous party workers', about to be sold to the country? Mrs Gandhi has partly denied any prior knowledge of the blockade and has pleaded helplessness in controlling her young people.

After denying any role in the blockade, Mrs Gandhi has explained that at any rate it was only a 'temporary thing' and it had not caused any harm. What had caused lasting harm was the agitation in Assam, she declared in a stormy session of Lok Sabha last week. She went on to

reiterate what is proclaimed as the policy of the Government that Congress (I) would do nothing to aggravate the situation in the North East, whatever is meant to be understood by the statement.

The Government has in the past week accused the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and the American Central Intelligence Agency of instigating the agitation in Assam (Home Minister Zail Singh took extra care to clarify that the Soviet Union was not one of the powers behind the unrest). Delhi has always taken this insensitive and even arrogant line about any agitation in the North East.

Years ago, when Mr A Z Phizo and a Naga delegation submitted a rather competently written memorandum to Pandit Nehru, the Prime Minister, and the Home Minister of the day reportedly took the line that it must have been written by some Baptist Missionaries. Mr Phizo's reply was 'It is an insult to Asian intelligence and courage to suggest that we cannot on our own articulate what we believe to be right for ourselves without the help of some missionaries.'

Today the Assamese are being told the same thing or that they cannot possibly have spoken up for themselves without outside help. To blame the CIA or the RSS is convenient but to do so is to ignore the roots of the fears that are the real reason for the upheaval.

### **Blockade 'Temporary'**

The impression gaining ground in the North East is that the Assam students and the other organisations are in for some punishment because they have angered Mrs Gandhi by their intransigence. They have probably put themselves in the same category with the railway workers whose strike in 1974 was put down with a very firm hand. Indications are that the West Bengal Congress (I) have not been too strongly restrained by Mrs Gandhi in their patriotic mission of 'restoring good sense to the agitators in Assam' – the declared aim of the '*Assam Chalo*' march into Assam on April 6.

Even if actual involvement of the CIA or the RSS were to be proved it cannot be as damaging, politically and psychologically, as the blockade with the apparent connivance of Delhi.

To state that the blockade is a 'temporary thing' and that it has not caused any harm, as Mrs Gandhi has done, is to fail to discern the profound emotional and psychological shock the blockade has given to the Assamese in particular. Years of the military stick and Home Ministry tactics being

used by Delhi to suppress their political movements have taught many of the tribal people on the border not to be too surprised by anything Delhi may do.

But the Assamese in the Brahmaputra Valley are not used to being treated as a community who would be taught a lesson by being blockaded. It is quite possible that numerically stronger Bengal will succeed in forcing the much weaker Assam to yield in the present confrontation. But blockades evoke so much of the strangulation method that any chances of a stable, secure future being evolved between the two neighbours may be permanently damaged.

It is obvious Assam is going to be required to make some painful but unavoidable concessions in the national interest. If this is to happen, genuine understanding and appreciation shown by the rest of the country for the changes the Assamese have accepted at the behest of Delhi without a murmur will be a considerable help. A Kuki from Manipur recently asked this writer, 'The Assamese have allowed the fragmentation of erstwhile Assam into new states like Nagaland, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Arunachal without any protest. Which community in India would have showed so much grace and spirit of accommodation in the interest of the country?'

### **Not yet too late**

There is clearly some truth in the surmise that the massive agitation comprises secessionist elements. Official circles in the North East have confirmed reports that already about 1000 Assamese are operating on the ground and some 200 youth from Assam and Meghalaya have crossed over to China for training. But to brand the agitation as secessionist, as officials and others in Calcutta and Delhi have done, is resulting in policies and attitudes of dealing with enemies and 'hostiles'. This could lead to disaster.

It may not be too late even now for Mrs Gandhi to go to Guwahati and talk to the Assamese people with an open mind. Fears, if not judged but understood and appreciated, could lead to compassion and a common resolve for a workable solution together.

## Manipur – the Way Forward

Process for peace: Where do we go?

*I* am highly honoured to be invited to participate in this seminar organised by the Government of Manipur. I want to thank you for the trust and privilege extended to me. In the present situation, which we have all contributed to create, and which we naturally see from our different positions, what can a Naga from Kohima, of all places, say, in Imphal at this stage that will be of any help? I will not be surprised if this question is going through your mind in the audience also. I say I fully agree with you.

Given the situation in Manipur and Nagaland, I am keenly conscious that what I might manage to say can be misunderstood, misinterpreted, or thought to be irrelevant. Some family members and friends I talked to felt the same apprehension. But they understood my conviction that I should accept the invitation.

We are so used to imagining and even saying all sorts of things about one another from afar. I decided the chance you have given to come as your guest, to see you in your situation at close range, to hear what you have to say, and to begin to converse with you, if possible, is too good to be missed. So I have come with a group whom I took the liberty to invite to be part of this experience of getting to know Manipur which some of us need to do.

I am reminded of a story I heard once from Scottish friend. The jokes about the Scots are mainly about their frugality and alertness not to spend money.

There was a potluck dinner in London to which everyone was told to bring a dish of food for the party. The Englishman, the Irishman, the Welshman and the others each brought a favourite traditional food item. They waited for the Scotsman to arrive. He arrived bringing his brother to the dinner! I have brought six dear brothers from Kohima who with me will benefit from this initiative the organisers have taken to organise.

The belief in people meeting and listening in the processes for peace launched in all the conflict situations in the North East region, it is natural we ask, 'Where do we go?', or 'Where will the initiatives take us?' However, it seems unless we are first clear on 'Where do we start?' the initiatives will stay stuck on a host of unexamined, ignored, underestimated realities.

*A Naga Speaks*

From the concept note we learn that this seminar on 'Manipur: The Way Forward' is following the earlier one, 'Peace Dividend', held in April this year. I believe these seminars on peacebuilding indicate a new thinking that is obviously developing within the State Governments in our region. And that is going beyond dealing with the conflicts that have raged on for decades, merely as law and order problems created by a few agitators bent on creating disorder just for their private satisfaction. In examining the deeper existential reasons causing the conflicts. I believe what you have started is full of promise if the process of the search is kept clean and responsive to reality.

I may mention here that Neiphiu Rio's Government in Kohima too, has taken some bold initiatives that I believe are pathbreaking to find solutions to the conflicts that have affected not just the State but the wider region. I am referring to the Naga Consultative Meet (NCM) and the Parliamentary Consultative Meet which brought together all the elected members of the State Legislature and Representatives of all public organisations and individuals from our society to share their frankest, deepest conclusions on our protracted crisis.

All the members of the Legislature jointly passed a resolution acknowledging and appreciating the sacrifices made by the fighters of the Naga political struggle over the past 60 years for their beliefs and convictions for our people's history, identity and honour and calling upon them to now consolidate what they have achieved and reach a settlement with Delhi that will be acceptable and workable.

This step is significant and timely, and because it indicates taking ownership of the crisis in its totality and showing readiness to play their rightful part as today's MLAs, the imaginative initiative seems to be starting to open unexpected doors long shut.

When we talk of processes for peace and reconciliation we run immediately into all the conflicts that have now paralysed our region. And when we examine the conflicts we are looking at the strongest generator of conflicts and that is the responses human beings are compelled to make to the challenges that changes in the world bring to them. All our communities have had no choice but to respond to the unprecedented changes that have impacted them during the past 50-60 years, no matter how unprepared they may have been.

They have responded from their understanding of themselves and their history. And as we all know responding to changes is the toughest,

***A Naga Speaks***

most comprehensive challenge for human beings. Not surprisingly, we have made all sorts of mistakes in our attempt to respond. And yet only through the lessons we learn from the mistakes we grow as individuals, peoples and nations. If we can have this understanding of the mistakes we all make in our attempt to grow by responding to the challenges of change, we will develop the compassionate thinking and attitude we need to help one another to do better.

The Dalai Lama calls this 'Warm-heartedness towards one another'. He frequently says we need 'a warm heart' to do the right thing for ourselves our people and others. It sounds simple, but it is demanding. Only by helping one another with mutual goodwill and respect are we going to grow properly. If we can look at our conflicts, ourselves and one another this way, I believe, our processes for peace will produce the fruits we need.

Our deeply felt convictions and the struggles for them have produced the heart-breaking conflicts we have lived through and are still living through. But we should be grateful and justly proud that we have fought for the things we have no doubt to be right and important for our security and the survival of our identity.

However, we have to now squarely face the tough reality that our struggles for our aspirations and growth, underground and the State Government overground are now destroying themselves and the people for whom they were all supposedly launched. I am saying this from the reality we have in Nagaland.

I believe after many years of political posturing, mutual recriminations and attempts to destroy one another, the overground and the underground with the passage of time and getting to know the truths about ourselves and the realities of the changing world, the two entities who play our politics have started to recognise that they need one another to meet the needs of their peoples.

The time has now come when answering the common destructiveness of greed, irresponsibility and impunity that have been produced by our struggles overground and underground will become the new common struggle of our peoples.

The whole North East is on the same boat. Unless a new sense of responsibility is initiated and accepted by us - whatever tribe, community, political party or faction fighting for the freedom and rights of our people,

we may belong to - if the boat sinks because we will not think and sacrifice our selfishness and pride to save it together, our different plans and schemes will mean the same thing at the bottom of the sea.

Could some of our far-sighted politicians or some of our creative adventurous thinkers in the bureaucracy work out a coming together of minds to which the overground and underground will be invited to meet to tackle the common destructiveness mentioned - which has become unmanageable - and fight it on a 'war footing', as we often say? Is it too naïve to suggest such a thing. It is, but anything less will not adequately match the threats facing us and unexpected changes will start if we can find even one or two individuals who will understand the crisis and decide to change it. They will become the politician-statesman we need at this time



### **Reasoning Together**

Presented at 19<sup>th</sup> Naga Students' Federation Conference, Haflong. 9 April 2001

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When we talk of reasoning together anywhere in North East region, we immediately find ourselves facing issues and choices whose scopes are much wider than we prefer. So we can either shut out the very complicated realities we do not like and dogmatically stick to our tribal, factional, party and personal agendas only and produce plans for solutions that are too inadequate. Or we do the unavoidable, which is to face our situation squarely and decide to do what needs to be done by accepting to match our thinking and living with the demand of the situation. This is the only sensible thing to do. But it is most difficult thing to be said to people and communities who are being gradually but surely swamped and overwhelmed.

There are no easy and simple solutions to these problems in the sense that what is right requires us all to change deeply in our attitudes, ambitions, prejudices and fears. What needs to be done to achieve what is right for all sounds that simple. But it is the toughest thing to do because what we want for ourselves is its most deeply concealed enemy. Some of the things we want for ourselves are plainly selfish and destructive and they must be sacrificed. But some of the things we deeply long for are very precious and vitally important for our dignity, honour and self-respect.

***A Naga Speaks***



A major part of our struggle boils down to rejecting the selfish things we want, and preserving and making the precious things the foundation of our identity.

The issues that have generated the crisis afflicting our whole region are fundamentally the same, although the historical facts and political positions of the movements launched by the different tribes or groups in response to the crisis are different. I think for most of us it boils down to this question – what is the right way for us to response to the changes coming to us from Bangladesh, Nepal, the rest of India and the world? All of us are at a loss confronting this question. We are beginning to see the serious weaknesses and inadequacies in our response to the common crisis whether we are in Meghalaya, Assam/Bodoland, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura or Arunachal. As we know, quite a few in Assam and some Meiteis in Manipur belong to the category of the educated and competent Indians who are capable of coping with the challenges of modernity.

Assam especially has had to wrestle with endless problems of the hugest magnitude that keep increasing in size and complexity, starting from soon after India became Independent. Little did Lokapriya Gopinath Bordoloi know, perhaps, how the Assam he saved so valiantly was to be systematically dismembered and destabilised beyond control because of its location and ethnic composition.

Will Assam be able to rise Phoenix-like from the worst traumas of subtraction, division, addition and multiplication that her people have sustained? The Meiteis of Manipur are acutely aware of the parallels between them and the Assamese because of history and unequal development in the past. Is it not possible to put ourselves in the shoes of the Assamese and the Meiteis while holding firm to our legitimate position!

The nature and scope of our crisis are such that it can be said our North East ship is sinking into mindless chaos and self- destruction and we are all preoccupied with our own ship cabins. We cannot survive in the fast changing world which will not give concession for narrow, tribal prejudices and obsessions, however important that they may be to us.

Given the mindset of the peoples they have to lead and the relentless changes causing constant instability, their task is formidable. But too many of them do not come to grips with the real problems. Their priorities are wrong or not thought out. They end up adding more to the problem and the confusion because what they want for themselves too

*A Naga Speaks*



easily comes before what we need to be done. They are so much like the rest of us!

In Nagaland after over sixty years of struggle for our dearest aspiration, the struggle underground has started to destroy itself and the people for whom it was launched. And after forty years of statehood, the state has started to destroy itself and the people for whose development it was supposedly created. What is the meaning of this common destructiveness that has come out of all of us? Ideologically both the underground struggle and the overground state have become barren and bankrupt. Organisationally and structurally both have become stagnant and inflexible and therefore unworkable and oppressive. They cannot grow or respond to the changing realities.

Are those who are running our underground and overground political efforts the only ones to blame for these shortcomings? Have we produced such a situation because we Nagas are worse human beings than others? Or are we caught in the paradigm shift in which our thinking and living are not matching the stiff requirement of the new situations? Many communities are facing the same crisis aptly described by Yugoslav thinker Milovan Djilas, 'We live today in tomorrow's world with yesterday's ideas.' These few words describe the growth in thinking, spirit, responsibility and discipline our situation demand from all of us.

Something is missing in the human element of the Naga struggle. That is, all of us. Of course specific individual have made and are making mistakes, some more selfish than others, which has produce the present dangerous situation. But given the same opportunity of position most of us will make the same mistakes because our understanding of what is required to solve our own problem is way below the required level. In other words our philosophy of life is not adequate for the challenges of the new situation.

We have only some nationalist political goals with desperate strategies and tactic to achieve them in a crisis where we cannot survive without mental and spiritual competence, which alone secures economic growth also. Too many of us are so ignorant and inexperienced to act correctly. That is where our society is. That is where our real battle is now. Ignorance and lack of experience are not crimes. It just shows we need to grow. But if they are not recognised and rectified, great destructiveness become inevitable.

The disastrous chaos in the many African republics today illustrates

*A Naga Speaks*

this truth. Today the Naga struggle is bogged down in factions eliminating one another. Why?

The overground and underground have given our people too little to think and to do that would enrich their own lives and bring about the all-round growth that is urgently needed. This is a good definition of ideological and spiritual bankruptcy that produces murderous divisions and unworkable politics. Thus lulled from both sides of our politics into irresponsibility and casualness, Nagas have become a waiting, expecting, demanding and complaining people who do not think they have to solve their own problems.

So we have naturally become an unleadable and ungovernable people waiting to be served. And we have come to think that if our leaders exploit the greed and weakness of the people for their own cheap success and instant gratification it is 'normal' politics! The result is that our politics is devoid of the kind of bold and imaginative statesmanship needed for our very complicated crisis.

We need leaders who want nothing for themselves so that they are free to draw the true, eternal battle line between right and wrong that cuts right through our hearts and conscience, instead of misleading battle-lines that divide us into warring camps whose priorities are to eliminate one another. We must end the folly of reducing the number of those who can think and thrash out together the best way for our people to walk on into the coming years.

Having said all this, I have to say here that for most of the past 40 years, I have lived and worked in Kerala, Delhi, Kolkata, Maharashtra, Chennai, Bangalore and Shillong, and travelled and met all sort of people in Gujarat, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, UP, Rajasthan and of course Assam. I have been fortunate beyond words. I can say that I have had no difficult or hurting experience of any kind anywhere in India despite being called a Chinese agent at times. We don't need to get worked up if people think we look Chinese because we do, just as we don't need to object to being called a dog-eating race because that is what some of us do with passion.

I cannot adequately express in words my gratitude for all the hospitality, friendship and genuine care I have received from countless friends and families across India. I have not narrated the encounters to complain, but to illustrate the undeniable clash of perceptions that are there that must be objectively recognised in order to achieve mutual understanding and respect. The differences are real. They should neither



be underestimated nor overestimated. But they are not meant to destroy us. They are meant to make us grow as we learn to rise to doing what needs to be done, instead of trying to run away from it and to our own ruin. I can humbly say I have returned with this conviction from my work and pilgrimage across India.

Rabindranath Tagore compared Indian society to a two-storeyed building where the staircase between the two floors is missing. On the ground floor are the poor, ever-failing people. On the upper floor are the successful, brilliant, powerful people who can do and achieve anything like the best anywhere in the world. The brief exchange with Mr Desai in particular has stayed with me as a lesson in how conflicts start and continue because parties in a conflict ignore, underestimate or prejudge one another's perceptions as unimportant.

I do not enjoy talking about my fears about becoming extinct because what is so real to my people in our situation is most likely to be a non-issue to those on the upper floor. After all many on the Indian upper floor are already running Silicon Valleys in the most advance nations of the world.

From the wider field of vision and understanding of what is and what is not important in the modern world where they are already at the cutting edge of progress, my fears are likely to be silly. But our people see a future where they will be deprived of their say on what matters most to them, as they have known. The fact is that a good deal of our politics holding up economic development is coming from this perception about ourselves. What Mr Desai bluntly said revealed what a considerable segment of India will naturally always feel about us in the aspiration we hold on to in desperation because we are conscious of our serious inadequateness and unpreparedness to make it in a fast changing world.

The conflict and clashpoint is where Desai's concept and perception of what India is or should be as shaped by his experience of Indian history differs from our people's concept and perceptions of themselves as developed from their experience and knowledge of their history. This will be regarded as enslavement by the past. I understand the point, but to us our sense of being threatened is real and strong. I am not saying we can continue in nostalgia, as we have been, for a past with its security that was possible in the given context of a time that is gone and cannot be preserved or brought back.

What I am trying to convey is that when we from both sides talk

***A Naga Speaks***



to one another and truly listen to one another, we start to understand our errors, and to do what we need to do, for ourselves and for the world. Then we start to build the staircase needed by both sides to find fullest growth. The staircase gives equal importance to both sides. It helps both sides to understand each other. This may not solve our problems immediately, as we want. But the right understanding and relationship thus established will open the way for the solutions we need to achieve.

From what I have said so far, I think we need to find satisfactory clarity on the following urgent issues. I would even call it philosophical clarity because our clarity on them has to be adequate enough to enable us to deal with our multi-dimensional crisis. They are:

1. Aspirations, identity and growth.
2. Struggle for aspirations, identity and growth. Is struggle dispensable?
3. Motivation and method of struggle, or the doctrine of Ends and Means

The upheavals shaking our whole region are directly linked to these fundamental existential issues of life. Aspirations, identity and growth are insuppressible manifestations of life in us human beings that reveal the nature and meaning of life. The struggles in the North East for these deep urges at the individual as well as group or community levels, have caused widespread and intense pain, insecurity and weariness.

Our people are in despair because they find that they cannot but struggle, and obey what is most real within them. Yet, they find the odds against them to be too great and they dread the ignominy and disgrace of defeat and going down in history as fighters for lost causes of vanishing peoples. The more we fight, the more we weaken ourselves because of our serious disadvantages. The dilemma we face is acute and seems to be mercilessly cruel and unfair.

We need to get our people to learn to reason together as we are doing here, to identify the error in our thinking or philosophy of life, which has rendered our precious struggles so destructive to ourselves. To do this kind of bold mental and spiritual churning, we have to shed our laziness and our casual easy-going ways. Is not our main error in ignoring the fact that aspirations and instincts for identity and growth are profoundly spiritual, but we concentrate only on the political and economic/material dimensions of these human urges? I believe we commit this blunder because our values and purpose of life are too self-centered or too undeveloped, so that we are driven by personal ambitions for instant

success and gratification.

This results in the cruel paradox of great fighters for their people's aspirations, identity and growth ending up giving their worst to their people who mean the most to them. Let us be bold enough to find out and be honest if this is the truth about us also? History is certainly full of such tragic examples.

So what we find from our reasoning together is that struggling for your deepest beliefs is right because the urge is spiritually rooted. Struggling is a central function of life. That therefore no people must be made to feel guilty for fighting for what they deeply feel about themselves. They themselves must not withdraw. But what is so challenging is that we must be worthy of our struggles and our aspirations.

When a struggle ignores the spiritual dimension of life and resorts to using ethically wrong or expedient methods to achieve its goals that are usually noble, the struggle inevitably becomes destructive. I am referring to the majestic doctrine of ends and means that Gandhiji adhered to uncompromisingly and changed the world.

Can we bring all these points of our analysis down to how you and I actually live out our lives at home, in our hostels, in the classroom, in the running of our student unions and organisations etc...? The point where you and I are unhappy or disturbed calls for our truthful response rather than evasion or postponement.

Are you prepared to be radical in a truly revolutionary manner for the sake of our deteriorating crisis? Suppose you were to make an honest list of all the things you need to put right? For instance, returning what you have borrowed permanently or stolen, like books from the library or from friends, cash, clothes, anything else; or, relationships that have gone wrong because of dishonesty, jealousy and ambition? The list can go on but what is undoubted is that if you are prepared to make such an experiment with truthfulness, transparency, compassion and justice, you will experience personal liberation and we will begin to see demonstration of solutions to our accumulated problems.

I know some will say this is dangerous naivety because the injustice and wrongs are structural and systemic. There is much truth in that. But let us not fool ourselves. For the fact is, the untackled accumulated injustice and wrongs committed by us individually produce the structural and systemic wrongs to a very large extent. Ultimately it is change in values

and lifestyle and in individuals that make change of structures possible.

In ending I suggest we try to understand the following lines from Christopher Fry's play, *The Sleep of Prisoners*, 'Thank God our time is now when wrong comes up to face us everywhere, never to leave us till we take the longest stride of soul men ever took. Affairs are now soul size. The enterprise is exploration into God.'

We will not go wrong if our reasoning together includes a truthful exploration into what God possibly wants from us individually that is not corrupted by what we want for ourselves. Then we will wage the right struggle as a people. The standards for building the future for our people are extremely high. And the standard is set in the hearts and souls of individuals first. This is the reason why Satan fights so hard to make sure individuals keep God at a safe distance lest He asks them the question that was put to Cain, 'Why are you unhappy?'



## Understanding The Naga Struggle – II

*Have we achieved anything worthwhile through our struggle so far?*

Sovereignty and Human Rights	357
The Uniqueness Of Nagas In The Present Times	369
The Naga Political Movement: Nagas Today	373
Historical Rights Nagas/Quest For Integration	382

## Sovereignty and Human Rights

Kohima on 2 October 1995

The situation in which we are going to discuss the given theme reminds one of a story from Northern Ireland. A journalist arrived in Belfast during a time of frequent bombings and killings by Protestant and Catholic extremists. He asked a prominent citizen, 'What are the facts of your situation here?' The Irishman exploded, 'To hell with the facts! Don't you know in Northern Ireland it's the feelings that matter!'

There are explosive facts and feelings in our story also. And if we underestimate any of them we shall not get far in our search for a solution that will work in Nagaland. High and noble aspirations for dignity and identity are not the only feelings that drive people in a struggle like ours. Our movement is also deeply controlled by cynical distrust and vengeful hatred for wrongs others have done to us as well as by fears, guilt and terrible regrets for wrongs we ourselves have committed or for unwise decisions made.

If we were to stop hiding and justifying these ugly, hidden emotions running us, God will have a chance to heal and redirect them. And what has become poisonous for us and society will then become a renewing and hope-giving force. Our failure to do this will keep us so self-centered and blind, we will not see the larger realities shaping our future.

Please allow me to say something personal at the outset.

I am not anything at any level of Naga politics, overground or underground. So I am keenly conscious of my lack of credentials to speak at this seminar. I am speaking mainly as an ordinary citizen. I believe one of the greatest needs for Nagas is to understand India. As a part of my calling, I have had the rare privilege of spending over 30 years in different parts of India - 25 years in Maharashtra.

Despite obvious weaknesses, India is a great nation. An ancient land, that has given some of the deepest, widest and clearest philosophical and spiritual thoughts to mankind. We can therefore expect to find some space for understanding and justice in the soul and conscience of the Indian people.

So it is clear we are starting something today, which we must keep up. I believe that in trying to speak to the Indian people we will learn to show understanding and concern for others also. After all, our aim should

*A Naga Speaks*



be to achieve with the Indian people what will be good for both sides.

Today we have distinguished friends from different parts of India with us. We are doing today what we have needed to do for a very long time – sit down and have an unconditional dialogue on ‘Sovereignty and Human Rights’, the issue at the heart of the difficult relationship between the Nagas and India.

The seeds of the present Naga struggle were sown during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the Naga encounters with the British began. The encounters were mostly violent and, though sporadic and uncoordinated, they started the process of developing awareness and sensitivity in the Nagas as a people. The conflicts with the British occurred because the latter tried to create a link with the kingdom of Manipur by transgressing through the hilly terrain of the Nagas to consolidate their hold over Assam, in order to exploit the vast economic potential of the Brahmaputra valley. Nagas, whose lands lay in the path of the British, stoutly opposed the intrusion. After almost 50 years of intermittent resistance against the British, the Nagas were defeated. Thus they became a part of the eastern periphery of British India - their first experience of being ruled by an outside power.

From the experience of subjugation, Nagas began to understand the vulnerability of their traditional ways, their land and its resources in which are rooted their historical memories and their sense of identity and security as a people. Their consciousness of their imperilled future was further sharpened when the invading forces of Japan tried to march through their land to invade India. It brought home to them the historic changes taking place on the continent of Asia. It was, as someone put it, history exploding in their villages.

Delhi cannot be blamed for not immediately comprehending the significance of the Naga Independence declaration. India was on the one hand about to celebrate her historic achievement of freedom, and on the other hand profoundly agitated over the Partition and the massive bloodletting that followed. Not surprisingly, what the Nagas declared did not impinge on anyone in Delhi.

Nagas too cannot be blamed for maintaining that they made their position abundantly clear before August 15, unlike all the other ‘liberation movements’ that started after that date. Their decisive declaration was a measure of how much they had reflected on what was coming. It is of no small importance to them that theirs cannot be characterised as a

*A Naga Speaks*

secessionist movement that is violative of some solemn pledge already made.

They had already made known their choice not to be a part of the new India before she became independent. Their decision was consistent with their honour as a people who had fought to preserve their identity. They are therefore not hampered by any sense of being treasonous or hostile to India in their fight to uphold what they have perceived to be their right. This can be called the heart and soul of the Naga issue. To talk to Nagas without grasping or ignoring this fact is to show ignorance of their story or insensitivity to what they regard to be most important for them.

How was Delhi or anyone to know that the Naga declaration marked the beginning of a new kind of political movement in South Asia, namely, the fight by smaller groups that found themselves unfairly lumped together with more powerful groups in the new nations that were soon to become free from British rule? The new Asian rulers found themselves having to suppress liberation struggles by marginalised groups within their borders just as the British had tried to suppress them.

The Burma Communist Party started their guerilla war against Rangoon the next year in 1948, followed in due course by the Karens, the Kachins, the Shans, the Chins, the Mons, the Arakanese, all of them in Burma. Then came the uprisings of the Mizos, the Meiteis, the Sikhs, the Assamese, the Bodos and the Kashmiris. In a strange way the Hindutva Parivar shows every sign of becoming the biggest liberation front of all, in so far as it shares the same attitudes and grievances.

The size of the fight and tenacity in the Nagas for almost half a century now show how much they have felt about their right and honour.

Sovereignty as a goal for the Nagas is the story of a costly thought. Their aspiration for it is a natural outcome of their history and geographical location. They perceive it to be the central issue that will decide their fate. With heroism, honour and consistency they have defended it.

Within two to three years after August 1947, the Government of Assam, of which Naga Hills District was a part, and Delhi, started to pay some attention to the declarations and memorandums from the NNC. From the outset the Union Home Ministry took the view that the foreign missionaries in Nagaland were the puppeteers pulling the strings from behind the scene.

The Assam Government ordered the Deputy Commissioner

in Kohima to raid and search the residence of the American Baptist missionary and the home where A Z Phizo, the newly elected President of the NNC, was residing with his family. The police found from the garage of the missionary a length of copper wire, a few empty machine gun bullet shells and one or two fuse-less hand grenades. *The Assam Tribune* of Guwahati referred to what the police had found and suggested that America was supplying arms to the Nagas! The paper's report was quoted by Kailash Nath Katju, the then Home Minister, in answering questions in the Lok Sabha. None seemed to remember that the famous Battle of Kohima had ended only three years back and the District capital was littered with piles of guns and ammunition. Thus started a view that Delhi wanted to believe about the Nagas, and the general public of India too understandably came to believe it.

I have given this lengthy narration because the incorrect assumption due to prejudice or deliberate disinformation about the alleged role of the missionaries with the Nagas has done immense harm to all concerned.

When Nehru and his Home Ministry advisers expressed suspicion that some missionaries must have written the Naga memorandums, Phizo was reported to have replied that the 'insult to Asian intelligence' would one day be regretted. Delhi's attitude that Nagas could not think for themselves resulted in policies that regarded the problem as a law and order one to be contained and smashed by a crude formula of using inducements to divide and overwhelm, or bullets and torture to intimidate.

This insensitive attitude of preoccupied politicians and impersonal bureaucrats, who reacted only with their heads and a good deal of prejudice, has been too costly. The result has been the disastrous and mutually damaging, not to mention, wasteful, confrontation between Nagas and Delhi for the last five decades.

India has understandably used her military power to suppress the Nagas on grounds of defending the integrity of the territory she inherited from the British. But to the Nagas their case rests on the unambiguous position they had taken before 15 August 1947. Naturally therefore Nagas view the creation of the State of Nagaland as a unilateral decision by India implemented with the use of superior military might. This view is now obviously being officially recognised. From Kohima and Delhi it has been repeatedly stated that the Naga problem is yet to be solved politically. This recognition reveals Delhi's evaluation of:

### *A Naga Speaks*

1. The creation of the State - that it was essentially an interim provisional device to administer an area legally claimed by India, but equally legally disputed by the people in it, and
2. The Shillong Accord and the other so-called agreements signed under circumstances that India cannot really be proud of, and therefore ultimately worthless.

Is democratic India beginning to show openness and understanding? If she is, do we have what it will take in discipline, integrity and breadth of thought and vision to match the challenging opportunity? The following two questions and the simple answers to them indicate exactly where the Indo-Naga question stands.

Can Nagas be expected to give up their fight and forget all that they have sacrificed? The answer is no.

Can India be expected to recognise Naga sovereignty and leave Nagaland? The answer is no.

The review given above reveals nothing new. What it does establish, I think, is the fact that because of its unique legal and historical antecedents the Naga case is beyond anyone's power to betray or to distort for too long and it can stand scrutiny. But will their case become irrelevant and meaningless because the Nagas failed to rise above their greed, which has killed their ability to think creatively, and above the mutual distrusts that have fatally fragmented them?

The story of the Naga struggle for sovereignty is incomplete without a full treatment of the Shillong Accord tragedy and the resultant traumatic clash of factional and personal compulsions that has produced today's Naga politics. But as it cannot be dealt with without a proper factual examination of all relevant angles, the needed space is not available here. What the Accord has revealed about the Naga movement should be thoroughly and objectively analysed as a topic on its own. Suffice it to say here that despite the prolonged failure of the signatories to cut themselves free from it for diverse reasons, the Government of India has virtually rejected it as mentioned earlier.

Where do we go from here?

Is there a basic error in our thinking about sovereignty and our pursuit of it? In my humble view, like many others, we too seem to think of independence mainly as a matter of having a flag that is recognised by other nations, having a seat in the UN, and having ambassadors and

plenipotentiaries in foreign capitals. These are certainly status symbols of sovereign nations. But status symbols are not everything in life. The concept is too limited and misleading.

These symbols form only about 2 to 3%, so to speak, of the total struggle for sovereignty or nationhood. They come at the very end. They are important but they take years to achieve. Meanwhile we postpone consideration of the main 97% of the struggle comprising the discipline, hard work and responsibility, which we must develop in ourselves to build our society. If we are solving problems by our own thinking, sweat and toil, we are achieving and experiencing sovereignty already!

The common element in the stories of a few hope-giving countries is their people finding hope and responding to the examples of integrity, discipline and accountability shown by their new leaders, resulting in a dramatic fall in institutionalised corruption and an equally dramatic rise in all-round development and trade with a steady inflow of vital foreign capital.

Three great tasks now confront us after our experiences of the past 50 years. Will we pay sufficient attention to them and conduct our struggle accordingly so that we may not end in disaster but proceed on sound foundations? They may be called:

1. *Operation Truth and Healing*;
2. *Operation Excellence*; and
3. *Operation Reach-Out*.

***Operation Truth and Healing:*** The USSR had become an unmanageable conglomerate of sick Soviet republics. Each one of them was so wounded and discontented that the old Union lay stricken like a dying horse no longer able to respond to the whiplashes of command from Moscow. Correctly sensing the scale of the crisis, Michael Gorbachev declared his unprecedented two-pronged policy of 'Openness' (*Glasnost*) in the running of the Union in order to 'Restructure' (*Perestroika*) the stagnant, atrophied empire by first allowing the free restoration of the natural balances of social, political, economic, ethnic and cultural forces. It was a gigantic gamble of statesmanship.

It ousted Gorbachev from his seat of power and dismantled the Soviet Union overnight. In personal terms a leader who seemed highly secure lost everything. But he anticipated what history's unerring verdict

on the mortally sick Soviet Union would be. His bold step restored trust and enabled vast unsuppressable changes to take place without bloodshed. The world was stunned. Gorbachev's decision to risk losing everything by rejecting a course that was easier for him but which would have ended in disaster for mankind also, will surely be recorded as one of the highpoints of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A politician became a statesman.

No responsible Naga should now hold a rigid doctrinaire attitude for or against the State of Nagaland. The State should be analysed and understood for what it is and what it has done to Naga society because of the manner in which it was created. After three decades of its existence, history's verdict seems to have become discernible. I believe the verdict is:

1. The offer of Statehood was Delhi's hasty response to the Naga crisis calculated to break the back of the Naga movement. But it was ill-conceived.
2. The offer however could have been responded to as a positive opportunity.
3. The opportunity was abused because of greed, ambition and lack of thought and vision, and
4. The implementation of the scheme caused a massive wounding of our society.

It may be pertinent to ask if we will do to Nagaland University, our new major project, what we have done to the State? But that is another subject.

As Delhi's intention clearly stemmed from pique and annoyance, the long-term costs of the quick solution were ignored, namely, the deep division of the Nagas. Mr A. Kevichüsa, the senior-most retired Naga IAS officer, foresaw the grave dangers involved and firmly maintained that it would be 'highly improper' for the overground public leaders, many of whom were government servants of Naga Hills District of Assam, to take the place of the underground leaders in the ensuing talks with the Government of India. He saw that those who had not borne the brunt of the struggle in the jungles but who had administrative links with Shillong and Delhi could play a crucial role as facilitators between the Nagas and Delhi.

He and his colleagues were meant to be ushers for the talks, as he put it. Wanting nothing for himself, he was able to see the opportunity and the dangers. However, as it turned out, diverse individual compulsions won the day. Kevichüsa and others who held the same view did not go to

Delhi. Those who did, accepted the State from Pandit Nehru. The Nagas, whose heroic fight in the jungles had forced Delhi to make the offer, were outraged by the double-cross. They instantly rejected the State. It was not what they had fought for. The massive presence of the Indian army enabled the fledgling State to survive. But it survived at the cost of causing deep wounds of bitterness, which continue to fester.

That Nagaland has held repeated elections and that 1/10<sup>th</sup> of the population are employed in the bureaucracy does not alter the fact that deep cynicism, distrust and resentment have poisoned attitudes and relationships among Nagas by the less than honourable manner in which the State was manoeuvred into place. The humiliating disadvantage of the many and the sudden excessive material benefit of the few that resulted was not as serious as the killing of the sense of right and wrong and of shame in our thinking. Naga obsession with easy money was inaugurated.

Blatant examples of swift progress from poverty to opulence achieved by the grossest abuse of power and position sent a strong message to the whole society. The uninhibited looting of public resources for private enrichment became acceptable. Our society was soon ripe for today's free-ranging extortioners. They are practising the same philosophy of doing the minimum or nothing to get the maximum for oneself!

Given the circumstances of its birth, the State has always carried the stigma of illegitimacy. The time has now come when Nagas must agree on a consensus view as to what the State is, and what it is not. Why should Nagas then waste their time and create needless confusion for themselves by condemning the State as if it is the final solution when Delhi says it is not?

The State is not the last word on the Naga question. Therefore, the blaming of those who caused bitterness by hastily accepting the State their own way should now be discarded. It has become pointless and counter-productive. The matter should be left to the individuals concerned to resolve the question as their conscience and inner wisdom prompts them.

After all, mistakes are not the monopoly of a particular party or group. Self-righteous judgement by anyone is neither right nor warranted. We each have our share of stoutly-defended mistakes and errors that in reality we deeply regret in our hearts. Any leader who will be wise enough to make truthful amends now by anticipating history's eventual verdict on his own failures will build trust and confidence in our people.



Let us remember that a vast number of Indians kept the Provincial Governments of British India going while the Indian National Congress under Gandhi fought for the freedom of the country. Let those who run the politics and administration of Nagaland State do their job properly knowing that they too are playing a similar role. If they will run the state with responsible self-restraint and transparent integrity knowing that they are the guardians of a sacred, blood-bought trusteeship for all Nagas, they will be surprised by the response they will instantly receive from the people of Nagaland and even Delhi.

**Operation Excellence:** Swifter than we think possible, our problems will visibly decrease if we will simply decide to refuse to tolerate all that is second, third, fourth rate in the way we do things. A fight for excellence and an all-out war against our casual attitudes towards life will awaken hope and self-confidence. It will also greatly weaken the stranglehold of corruption on our society.

It may be a fair assessment to state that our government servants and leaders in politics do or give only about 25 to 30% of what they are capable of or are paid for. Pursuit of excellence and perfection is the exact opposite of the present attitude of most of us. What interests us is the salary at the end of the month, not how we perform our tasks during the month to serve our people and to develop Nagaland. Is it surprising that boredom, callous indifference and abysmal inefficiency are the pictures that come to mind when we think of the State Government?

It is officially estimated that of the roughly Rs. 500 crores that come yearly from Delhi to Kohima, only 10% is used to run and develop Nagaland. A whopping 90% is misappropriated by Naga and non-Naga politicians, high officials, contractors, suppliers and hangers-on in Nagaland and various cities of India. We can forget the money, which comes and goes. But do we stop to think of the cruel murdering of the hopes and expectations of our people that this sort of injustice and wild greed cause year after year? We are our own worst enemies. At our present level of entrenched selfishness and collective irresponsibility, our self-destruction is assured, whether we are a State inside India or a Republic outside!

The point to consider urgently is this. Why not start to give ourselves decent roads, an adequate water supply for all towns and villages, an efficient public transport, an inspiring primary and high school education system and a medical service that shows minimum level of



caring? Why do we think that we will do for a republic tomorrow what we don't do for the state today?

Sovereignty tomorrow or statehood today will not work without enough of us accepting what Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn calls 'self-limitation'. Speaking of today's Russia, he called for persons who limited themselves, and not allowed the size of their property and thrust of their avarice to become a social evil which provoked so much justifiable anger, and not tried to purchase power and subjugate the press. It was as a reply to the shamelessness of unlimited money-grabbing that socialism in all its forms developed.

He quoted two great Russian reformers who said, 'A people subjects itself to great suffering by its immoral acquisitiveness. That which is obtained by revolt and sequestration can have no true value. These are rather the fruits of overweening behaviour of a corrupt conscience: the true and lasting good is that which is attained by far-sighted self-limitation.' He calls this, 'Restriction for the self for the sake of others! – the true Christian definition of freedom.' ('Repentance and Self-Limitation', by A. Solzhenitsyn in *From Under the Rubble*).

**Operation Reach-Out:** We have not done enough to reach the Indian people although we have surely done more than enough now to approach their Government. It is not fair to expect their politicians to say anything more to us than what they have said thus far within the limited mandate given to them by their people. If people in other nations wish to extend their friendship and help to us, we should be grateful.

But let us not delude ourselves into believing that without ultimately winning the understanding of the Indian people our issue will be settled. Nagas therefore must go out to have unconditional dialogues with the Indian people. We should go to explain ourselves and also to listen to those who will receive us. It is by such a bold approach to the thinking of the Indian public that we will consolidate our weakened position and prepare ourselves for any solution we may achieve. Such a course will be more demanding of our character than all the other courses we have tried. Without first laying such a sound foundation we will not be able to build a viable nation. We should not forget the tough implications of our geography.

To come back to the idea of making the State work fully, suppose our politicians and officials seriously studied the special provisions

of Article 371A of the Indian Constitution and really tested them and confirmed their power to protect our interests as regards land, resources and other matters? Of course at the moment this is easier suggested than pursued. The things we want from our politicians and officials leave them with very little leisure time to think creatively for nation building. This no-win situation will have to be transformed by some of us deciding to make a beginning and persisting in the fight till change becomes a reality. If we are truly committed, others will be won to take on the task with us.

**Conclusion:** A discussion by Nagas on sovereignty, independence and human rights can easily end in jingoistic and idealistic statements which excite our collective ego and fantasy, but which bring us no nearer to workable solutions. This is often because something is wrong with us and our thinking, not with the subject.

Our aspirations for freedom and dignity are right. They are vitally essential for our total development as human beings. They cannot be suppressed because they are a part of the spiritual meaning and purpose of life which originates from God and which is the driving force in the process of human growth. Our error is in concentrating only on the political part of the total process, to the exclusion of all else. When we ignore the rest of the organic whole, we are usually being driven by inner demands to achieve something, which will instantly satisfy our ambitions. But do these raw demands come from neglected longings of our spirit that are taking over our lives?

The truth is that even if what we demand is achieved we are still unsatisfied as ever because such unhealed demands are of neurotic origins. The tragedy is that society, and our families, also pay a heavy price because of our failure to let God heal and redirect our neurosis. To be neurotic is human and normal. Even Christ was when He tried to avoid the cup at Gethsemane. But he broke through and inaugurated the Christian message when He said, 'But Your will be done, not mine!' When competing personal agendas become more important than what is right and best for all, society suffers under 'dirty politics'. It may be overground or underground!

We must not give up our fight for freedom but let us be clear about the real nature of the struggle. Let us be happy that our right to sovereignty is not negotiable because legally and historically our case is beyond dispute, as clarified earlier. However, could it be true that we are simply not yet ready for it, in the sense that a boy or a girl, whose right for marriage is

not negotiable, can be too young and inexperienced to get married?

Should we not then for the moment keep the issue of sovereignty safely in the future and concentrate on getting ourselves fully developed in every way? We must not underestimate what will be required of us to talk to India and Burma to establish our entity as their neighbours. We are not an island in the Pacific Ocean with no difficult neighbours pressing in on us on all sides. We must never forget we are situated in one of the toughest geopolitical spots on earth. We cannot complain. The question is will we rise to the greatness that our history and geography demand of us? To overlook these challenging dimensions of our existence will result in our future being sabotaged by our wilful self-centeredness and shortsightedness because we will have destroyed ourselves in our own thoughtless chaos.

If we think only of the political aspect of the struggle, we end up having a few 'national workers' whose job is to sacrifice everything to bring us our freedom and sovereignty as a finished product, with flag and all, which the rest of us can enjoy without any hardship as we do at a picnic. The pleasure-centredness of such 'freedom lovers' always delivers nations to dictators and tyrants.

Let us then develop together the correct thinking with which to continue our struggle. The freedom and identity of our people cannot be left to a few people to develop. These qualities have to grow out of the conscious efforts of all of us in order to withstand the tough stresses and strains of the modern world. Why shouldn't every Naga regard himself or herself as a national worker building the nation we long for?

Freedom, like human rights, peace etc... never comes as a finished product. It is in our sacrifices to build it that we 'enjoy' its fulfilment, and its meaning gives us dignity. Freedom then is a continuous process, which involves us deeply. Not all can be at the stage where the process produces 'sovereignty' by a formal diplomatic agreement or treaty. But the fascinating truth is that all parts of the process are of equal value and importance.

This is so because freedom is fundamentally a spiritual and moral process, as indeed politics itself is, as Mahatma Gandhi demonstrated. So if we accept the struggle in its totality and play our individual parts according to the highest standards of conduct, freedom is already a reality for us. If we thus keep the process clean and true, we do not need to worry about its outcome.

***A Naga Speaks***

## The Uniqueness of the Nagas in the Context of Present Times

Naga Elders Forum, Shillong. 16 June 2012

The dictionary says *Unique* means being ‘the only one of its kind, having no like, equal or parallel’. And even using *unique* to mean ‘remarkable’ is considered incorrect by some people. Synonyms of the word are, distinctive, incomparable, lone, one-off, peerless, second to none, single, singular, unequalled, unparalleled, unrepeatable, and unrivaled.

Each individual human being is incredibly unique. But judging by what the dictionary says, we are being careless if we have started to think we are unique as a people. Why provoke derision from others needlessly?

We can say some facts in our history in the context of our relationship with India are unique. And I think the subject given to me is about those facts.

I believe the declaration by Nagas to the Simon Commission in 1929 was a remarkable action that Nagas of that day managed to take. It may well turn out that Nagas did something unique on that issue, meaning they alone did such a thing at that time, because I think no other group in India the Commission met ‘to ascertain their wishes for reform measures’ went to the extent of claiming their right to decide their own future and to leave them alone. The most important point about this assertion made to the Simon Commission is that it revealed the amount of thought the Nagas had given to the facts of their history and to the question of their identity.

The quality of a human action is measured according to the quality and amount of thought that prompted it. If the thought is pure and honest and the action taken is bold, the action and the person who take it are honourable and worthy of respect.

Blaise Pascal said, ‘Man is only a reed, the weakest in nature, but he is a thinking reed. There is no need for the whole universe to take up arms to crush him... even if the universe were to crush him, man would still be nobler than his slayer, because he knows that he is dying and the advantage the universe has over him... Thus all our dignity consists in thought. It is on thought that we must depend for our recovery... Let us then strive to think well; that is the basic principle of morality.’ I do believe the starting of the Naga struggle has something of the beauty of Pascal’s thought on action coming from thinking well.

The Naga pioneers in the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century started to

*A Naga Speaks*

think about the identity of their people in response to the impact on them from the world. Though desperately weak, they sensed the importance of the thoughts about themselves that came to them on the basis of their understanding of their history up to that time. Without counting the cost they fought the British then as they have fought India today to be true to the beliefs and convictions that had formed from their thinking. They fought not because they were anti-India, but because they were for the identity their history entitled them to claim. This is the important point about the Naga crisis worthy of our gratitude.

Then the amazing rallying together at the beginning by almost all Nagas to defend their position, fighting physically as they did, paying a very heavy price showed how deeply they believed their stand was right, honourable and fully justifiable.

The Kingdom of Hyderabad too declared its independence before India did. But it was the discredited Nizam and his feudal courtiers who did that, not by his subjects, the Telugus, who were solidly for the freedom struggle led by Gandhi, Nehru, Patel and Maulana Azad. The position the Nizam took lacked political validity or legitimacy. Within a few days his resistance was crushed.

We can say the position the Nagas took and their fight for it as narrated are unique and not paralleled by the action of any others in South Asia because their declaration was made before the rule of the British over them had ended. They had declared their independence from the British Empire, not from India. India was another territory of the British Empire as the land of the Nagas was. Nagas did what they did fully awake and not counting the cost that the position they had taken would entail. They knew the huge advantage India had over them, and that India would most likely crush them. But it was most important to them to be true to the deepest thoughts and convictions they had reached about themselves up to that time. So the Nagas did what they did.

Therefore, unlike the other struggles in India that started long after India became independent, such as the Mizo National Front, Khalistan, ULFA, etc... the Naga struggle cannot be treated by Delhi as an anti-India, secessionist movement. So it is a careless, thoughtless blunder to talk in terms of Nagas demanding independence or sovereignty from India, presenting a 'Charter of Demands' etc... This nullifies what is unique in our history. Nagas are not guilty of secessionism, and we are not anti-India. We are India's very fragile, but thoughtful, honourable little neighbour making

a lot of mistakes trying to say who we are and why!

We have come to the stage when we need to make an objective, bold examination of our long-lasting struggle and our society to take stock, learn from our mistakes and make our struggle correct and relevant in today's changed times. It will then become worthy of struggling again. We have to admit it has become unworthy of our respect and impossible to pursue.

'We have created Italy. Now all we need is to create Italians!' An Italian nationalist thus expressed the crisis that confronted his people after they created modern Italy in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. We can certainly understand this crisis!

The Naga struggle and its inevitable crisis have produced a condition of paralysis and confusion because of mental, moral, spiritual and political bankruptcy. I am not making this assertion with any self-righteous blaming of anyone, any tribe, any faction or party. Having contributed my own share to it I am a helpless part of this paralysis and bankruptcy.

We need to break out of this corner we have brought ourselves into. It is not surprising we have come to such a dead-end. It happens to all people who travel out to obey the call of ideas and convictions. I believe two things need to happen at this stage.

An honest, comprehensive assessment of the Naga struggle is needed to answer two fundamental questions deeply bothering us now, especially the younger generation. The two questions, I think, are:

- a. Did our pioneers over half a century ago do the right thing in launching the Naga struggle to assert their sovereignty, and to fight so sacrificially to get India and the world to recognise it?
- b. Have we achieved anything worthwhile after all the years of struggle and so much sacrifice?

I believe the assessment will show that Nagas did the right thing in choosing to be true to themselves by deciding to respect the facts of their history. They too, like others, have made many mistakes in pursuing something they believed to be right for them. If they had treated the facts of their history lightly and kept quiet due to fear or for short-term advantages, they would have passed on a legacy and heritage that would be much more problematic and harmful to the generations coming after them.

This comprehensive assessment will also show that Naga nationality has become a fact no one can deny. We have not become a member of the UN having our ambassadors in capitals of the world.

***A Naga Speaks***

We don't need to spend our time regretting this. Just as much as the distinctive nationality of Tibet is a fact the world has acknowledged, and the nationality of the Kurds in Iraq, Iran, Syria, etc... is equally recognised, Naga nationality too has become a fact. I wish the different groups of the Naga struggle will declare such an assessment to our people and say, 'Let us appreciate one another and the sacrifices each tribe has made, and celebrate this common achievement together!'

We are destroying ourselves blaming one another for the portion of the Naga glass that is not yet full and failed to thank God and one another for the portion that is already full. Such a factual, positive assessment at this time will be a political vitamin for our people that will enable the younger generation to understand and appreciate what they have, and discover how they are to build their future on that foundation.

There is no denying that the baffling, destructive crisis Nagas have today is the result of the roles the tribes called the 'advanced tribes', have played in giving leadership in the Naga story so far – Angamis, Aos, Sumis and Tangkhuls. There are indications that if other tribes were in the places of these advanced tribes, they too most likely would have made the same mistakes or shown the same weaknesses. So don't be too harsh in your judgment of the four tribes.

But it is clear we cannot go on much longer in our paralysis and bankruptcy with the four advanced tribes staying at the barren and conscience-destroying level of 'crusading against the Devil in others', failing to crusade for God in themselves. Nagas have been seriously damaged by this failure to accept responsibility.

Crusading for God in ourselves will mean truthfully acknowledging the places or points where we regret or are unhappy our tribe/we went wrong, failed to do what we should have done, or have done what we shouldn't have. It will mean to stop completely our obsession with blaming or accusing others where they went wrong, leaving that to them and to God to deal with, and being transparent about our long-defended failures our conscience is showing us. That is crusading for God in myself or ourselves, and that is what will end our costly spiritual and political bankruptcy and barrenness. Easier said than done.

But our crisis calls for this revolutionary act of faith and wisdom by some of our leaders. The truth is that crusading against the Devil in others is leading us nowhere except to his hell. The people's response to such statesmanship will be surprising. The factions will find that the level

***A Naga Speaks***



of mutual trust that will be created by such a process of transparency will enable them to thrash out a common position for a negotiated settlement of the Indo-Naga crisis that will be honourable and acceptable to all Nagas.

NBCC Peace Committee has suggested that informal, voluntary groups be formed in each tribe by concerned individuals to honestly identify the points, where one's own tribe went wrong or is wrong. If we will go as far as asking others to tell us what they have to say about our tribe because we do not see ourselves as others see us, we will indeed be making unexpected progress!

The voluntary groups may not publish what they found as we are just starting our journey into the future as a people. But the internal honest conclusions thus reached and acknowledged by the groups within the different tribes will start to transform relationships inside Naga society. The high temperature created by distrust and blaming one another will start to come down. Then our relationships will start to come alive and communication lines within the family will be restored which will strengthen us in ways we have not known.

The advanced tribes starting such a truth-oriented process will make a contribution that the rest of the Naga family will appreciate immensely. We will begin to discover what building the kingdom of God on earth as it must be in heaven means!

'Hurts and hates not transformed are always transferred,' it is said. We have accumulated too many hurts and hatred of one another, and we are going away from one another dangerously. The hurts not transformed have been transferred and this highly dangerous process is becoming accepted thinking. It is not God's plan for us.



### **The Naga Political Movement vis-à-vis Nagas Today**

for Naga Hoho Seminar, Mokokchung. 26 February 1997

*F*orgive me for starting with some clarifications that are of a personal nature. But they may help answer some questions, and also prevent misunderstanding and misinterpretation.

I am a worker in Moral Re-Armament (MRA). It is a global effort to create a just and caring world. I started to work full-time in it from 1958,

*A Naga Speaks*



straight from Madras University. I was studying to become a schoolteacher. I shall continue in it as long as I am physically fit and mentally alert, because the work I am engaged in simply means to live out fully what God shows day by day.

I am not representing any political party or faction, overground, or underground. I am just an ordinary citizen committed to help build a world where tribes, nations and races are governed by men and women, governed by God, through a radical change in their own lives and aims, starting with a change in myself first. Therefore, I believe in living and working to develop 'a society where everyone will have enough because everyone learns to care enough'. The need for this gigantic task is indisputable. Its possibility rests on the intriguing reality that 'There is enough in the world for everyone's needs, but not for everyone's greed'. The needs of all and the limited, but sufficient, resources provided by God require us all to care and share enough.

I believe we have to decide whether we are going to commit inevitable suicide as a people by choosing to stay in our present self-imposed slavery to our restricted concepts, our mistakes and failures, our fears and pride, or by deciding to break through together to a renewed struggle for our aspirations with greater confidence and clarity because we have learnt from our mistakes. Let us be clear, no party or faction, no tribe, no leader, in fact not a single Naga, can be so dishonest and irresponsible as to claim not to have made any mistakes! To do so would be anti-Christian because one of the foundational truths of our faith is, 'All have sinned and come short of the glory of God'.

I suggest that the main obstacles in our path are concepts and ideas, mistakes, errors, failures and weaknesses of all kinds, committed and perpetuated by all of us. We have not examined them adequately because we are either too lazy or shallow, or too fearful to examine them due to diverse personal reasons.

We are today at the half-century mark of our struggle. We are also about to enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century with the rest of mankind. It is time to stop and reflect, to assess ourselves adequately. We need to go deep enough, wide enough, and high enough in our examination of our struggle and ourselves. If we do, we will begin to go right. If we do not, we cannot go right and our condition will deteriorate. At this time we should also appreciate and celebrate afresh the value of each Naga and each tribe so that our efforts may have the strength of the widest involvement of our

people.

Every nation needs a challenging aim to struggle for, or the people perish. Aspirations, and struggling for them, are both vitally important for the full growth of any people. We Nagas have valiantly struggled for our aims and beliefs, and we have achieved much. It is a profoundly moving experience to see all that is happening here today. What we see represents our deeply felt and desperate attempt to be a people and to match a claim our elders and leaders have made for their people. We are here to open our hearts to one another so that together we may succeed.

It can be said that the Naga struggle as a conscious and coherent expression of a people's thinking is roughly 70 years old starting from the Naga declaration to the British Simon Commission. After many ups and downs, our attachment to our aspiration to become a people and a nation has become a powerful reality, whatever the party and factional differences may be for the moment. Our struggle has developed out of the sacrifices of all tribes.

Naga nationalism is one of the toughest political problems India faces, surpassing the Punjab, Kashmir and other issues. Nagas have fought consistently to defend their claims.

Objective Indian observers have come to the conclusion that the Naga case is not weaker than that of Tibet, if Nagas choose to insist on the legal, historical and political validity of their stand. Because of the clear stand taken before India became independent, the Naga case has become untwistable, and even unbetrayable, by anyone except for short durations. Delhi's recognition of this fact is indicated by the offer for unconditional talks to find a final solution. Delhi obviously regards the 16-Point Agreement, which created the State of Nagaland, and the highly controversial Shillong Accord, as too vulnerable to survive the test of Naga perception of their right and the scrutiny of history, because of the controlled circumstances in which they were signed.

We must understand that the challenge of our nationalism to ourselves is tougher than what it is to India. Not long ago, a Bengali editor said to me, 'I am for whatever will satisfy the Nagas. But, don't misunderstand me, as a well wisher I ask questions about the quality of the human element'. He hinted at our lack of stewardship of resources and assets, our disunity, and our casualness to solve our problems by our own exertions. He said other parts of India suffer from all these weaknesses but India is vast and can cope with them better than a small area like Nagaland.

*A Naga Speaks*

I believe his diagnosis should receive our priority attention.

The truth about the budgeted funds cannot be found because everyone has had a part, some major, others small, in the stealing and mismanagement.

The suggestion that our train has gone out of control must not be misinterpreted to mean that it is a politically motivated attack on the engine crew. But our leaders owe it to themselves and their people to reassure them by resolving their differences at this juncture. This too must not be interpreted as a sinister suggestion against our struggle or that the differences are superficial. On the contrary it is a cry from the heart to rise above differences, however tough, and show high statesmanship and restore to our people a struggle they can participate in with fullest confidence and hope so that we may win.

The restoration of our struggle will be possible only if we all agree to go beyond the present fruitless debate on 'Who is right?' and accept a bold, joint search for 'What is right?'. The exercise should be safe as it will require everyone to change equally and rise to something higher and better to achieve a common good! The sensitive victor-victim, winner-loser, issue also becomes redundant. If what is right is our aim and achievement, everyone wins because it is God's victory.

Can a people's struggle rely on a lesser standard? Is this simple-minded utopianism? But try to establish it in society and you will discover it is the quietest, most comprehensive, revolution there is. For no area of your life can be left out of reckoning, private or public, if what is right is your aim and commitment. This is so because God draws the battle line, not the soldiers.

After more than a half century of unyielding struggle, intense differences, solid achievements and painful failures, our most urgent need now is to take stock to get a correct assessment of ourselves. We may complain about things we do not yet have or what we are not. But we need to know that we are not less than what we are! Then faithfully build on it with joy and wholeheartedness. What we are is significant, and we can and should be grateful for it.

Looking at our situation today, overground and underground, one is driven to conclude that probably 80% of what we call 'Naga politics' is really intertribal, interpersonal rivalry, shameless pursuit of easy money and mutual disgust and insecurity, all covered up with loud statements

which convince no one, least of all ourselves; and only 20% is genuine struggle for political principles and aspirations. The temperature and delirium of our politics has become abnormal because truth is the missing factor.

The suppressed truths of our mistakes have weakened all of us. Our politics has now been reduced to a fierce confrontation of hidden agendas. We use lies, violence and money to resolutely hide our own agendas and attack others for hiding theirs. We seem to think that if the hidden skeletons of our opponents get exposed to the public, the Naga problems will be solved! The trouble is our opponents take the same view about the skeletons we are hiding! The result is the pollution of the fountain spring of trust. The contaminated water of distrust from the spring has produced an epidemic of hate and ruthless selfishness. Look at how we treat one another in every area of our society now?

Can we Nagas show sanity and true greatness at this critical stage and agree together that mistakes and failures are no longer a personal matter and our survival demands that we address them objectively, fairly and radically, before it is too late? The exercise is hazardous as deep personal, family and tribal emotions can come into play and deepen the prevailing misunderstandings and bitterness. But we can no longer discuss our crisis at the surface level only and hope that the vengeful hate and the killings due to mutual distrust will stop.

The process of mutual elimination has acquired its own momentum and logic. Only a miracle of heavenly grace from the blood of Christ crucified can slow down the process and forestall total tragedy. Will the leaders of the warring groups show us the way? This is their historic opportunity.

Our leaders' challenging task is to give us a struggle that will work. At this stage we need to find agreement that both, our aims, and our methods to achieve them, will stand the test of our conscience and win the respect of our own people, as well as the people of India. Without such an adequate philosophy as our basis, our struggle cannot survive the pressures it will have to confront.

Guns and money can take a people up to a certain point. Beyond that the fundamental issues of national success or failure are decided in the hearts and minds of the people. Can we not help one another to accept this central lesson of this century by deciding that we ourselves will not accept anything less than that which will work?

***A Naga Speaks***

It is said, 'Statesmanship is oftentimes the moral courage to do today what events will force you to do tomorrow'.

The imagery of the speeding train is used to convey the helplessness of the public and the centrality of the role of the leaders in our present situation. This is undeniable. But today's crisis is only a part of the larger story of the Naga struggle. Our struggle has definitely become unmanageably destructive. And we tend to carelessly think that the blame for this rests mainly with the NSCN factions.

This is perhaps natural and inevitable in view of the open claims that the factions have frequently made for their actions, some of which have been too arbitrary and excessive for anyone's good. But let us be clear that today's storm and chaos have not suddenly arrived. They started from yesterday's mistakes and wrongs, of the underground and overground. Who then can say that he or she is excluded from the burden of responsibility?

Abe Lincoln said, 'God must love the common people, He made so many of them'. We need to develop a similar attitude towards our mistakes! Not that God made them, but that there must be something good in the mistakes we have made in such abundance! As a people we seem to be guided by an immature and unexamined fear of our mistakes. If we can be less defensive about them, God can show us how to use them for His work of healing.

It seems our mistakes and problems are often given harmless-sounding, socio-cultural, economic-political names. But at the bottom, at the individual and family level, their actual names are ego, pride, greed, indifference, jealousy, cruelty and perversion, all growing in a rich manure of lies, blame and fear. Reality is at the concealed lower level.

Our mistakes are costly to ourselves and to others. We cannot treat them lightly. What we need to realise is that there is God's right way and our human wrong way of dealing with them. Dealing with them God's way, we help to build His kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. But doing it our way we instantly create hell on earth as it must be in hell.

To truly examine our mistakes is to go through a frightening tunnel. But if our hand is in His hand, He takes us to the unexpected light and liberation at the other end. Let us understand how our mistakes can become our assets!

1. The big mistakes are made by those who attempt to do big things.

Those of us who think we make no mistakes, and so can easily talk about others' mistakes as I am doing, perhaps do not dare to do anything!

2. If our mistakes are known and we cannot hide them, we try to show how harmless and small they are. But others are more interested in why we defend our mistakes, not in their sizes. Often the biggest mistakes are forgiven if there is total transparency.
3. Our stoutly defended or hidden mistakes are the logjam blocking the free flow of the river of understanding, trust, compassion and forgiveness. The damned-up river soon bursts what is blocking the flow.
4. God and others, starting with our spouses and children are more interested in our simple honesty about our mistakes and failures than in our imagined virtues! If we are sincere and open about our mistakes they become our bridges to God and our fellow human beings who also make mistakes just like us!
5. Mistakes, if defended or hidden, produce evil children and vicious grandchildren!
6. Acknowledgement of mistakes does not cancel those achievements that are genuine and great. On the contrary the genuine ones shine out more brightly.

Acceptance of our mistakes enables God to 'recycle them into something precious and highly productive of good'. King David's example of finally dealing with his mistake or sin of getting Uria killed and taking the general's beautiful wife, climaxing in the majestic verses of Psalm 51, is one of the treasures of mankind. In our day, the victorious ending of the gruesome story of the Katyn Forest massacre shines like a candle against the darkness of our century of unsurpassed cruelties and lies.

Nagas in the depths of their hearts long for nothing more strongly than transparency and truthfulness in our dealings with one another. If we can achieve this unitedly, all else will be added to our struggle. Why not start by declaring a moratorium on hate and evasion of truth; and a decision by all Nagas to forgive all our leaders for their most protected or suspected mistakes, starting from Phizo, and all the way down to the present day, including our overground leaders?

They will find that at the level of their mistakes, sacrifices and sufferings, they share a common meeting ground where they need one

another and will want to show compassion and understanding to one another. There is no suggestion that the risks and costs of transparency are not high. But against the renewal and strength it will produce for our people, the price to be paid is worthwhile. The costs of continuing in the old way are too high. As for us who criticise the errors of our leaders, our part is to recognise that our thoughtless demands and irresponsible ways have caused a major portion of their mistakes.

This heart-felt appeal to turn our most difficult problems into our common strength is made because they now threaten our survival.

Haven't we thought of ideas like freedom, independence, peace, unity, economic development, and so on, mainly in terms of what will suit us, what we want, and what others should do or give for us? If human aspirations are pursued with such self-centered thinking, the struggle and what it achieves always turns sour, bitter and destructive. The problems of corruption, distrust and divisive hates created by us cannot be solved by anyone else. And without solving them no growth is possible. This is the message that is screaming out of African countries, and Cambodia and Burma in Asia.

To bring the issue down to you and me, let us look at this. We each have to perform properly and perfectly two journeys in life. One is the internal journey of the soul towards our Creator. The other is the career or course each one of us pursues. Our society and its politics and economics are good or bad, just or unjust, according to how each one of us performs these two simultaneous and inseparable journeys in our lives.

No human venture, not excluding national struggles, is exempted from the moral and spiritual principles that govern life and the Universe. Our greatest responsibility is to be absolutely sure always that our aims as well as the methods and means we adopt to achieve them are clean and can stand the test of history. This is the majestic *Doctrine of Ends and Means* that Gandhiji adopted for India's freedom struggle based on the strict price he paid in his own life.

These thoughts have been expressed with the deepest consciousness of the cruel and tormenting dilemmas that have 'tried the souls' of our leaders in leading us thus far. May they be considered in the spirit in which they have been shared for the ultimate good of all our people.

I believe a discussion of the points made in this paper will require

***A Naga Speaks***



objective, dispassionate analysis of the following issues:

1. What are the lessons we should learn from the past 50 years? Have we gone wrong in any way? Where are we inadequate?
2. Understanding the true meaning of our aspirations and how we are to struggle for them. Can our aspirations be achieved by a few 'national workers' sacrificing everything and the rest of us living as we like, waiting for freedom to be brought to us like a picnic, which we will enjoy? Has this not been the weakness or limitation of our understanding of the meaning of our aspirations so that our struggle has lost its appeal? Why shouldn't our concept of freedom and sovereignty be so comprehensive that anyone in Nagaland, including non-Nagas, who performs his/her task faithfully, justly, selflessly, contributes towards our achievement of our goal, and all such persons are 'national workers'?
3. Betrayal: This issue needs to be analysed correctly. The state of Nagaland is not the final word on the Naga issue. Delhi has confirmed this by calling for unconditional talks. An agreement or an accord will become the final settlement of the Naga question only after all Nagas will have fully deliberated together and reached a consensus acceptable to all of them. The Naga case is therefore unbetrayable. It can be hijacked, so to speak, to serve short-term interests of unscrupulous groups, but for short durations only.

This analysis is no doubt controversial. But a bold examination of it may produce an acceptable consensus, which will render fratricide on charges of betrayal redundant. It can open the way to Nagas making the state to work to meet the needs of the Nagas. This does not weaken or betray the Naga case at all as the state is a provisional, interim administrative scheme for running Nagaland pending a final solution. Therefore, isn't the money from Delhi clean and legitimate finance? We only need to use it properly and honestly. If we can learn to run the State efficiently today we will know how to run a republic tomorrow! Why wait for tomorrow?

4. Spiral of Violence: We need to go to the roots in the past hurts and hates we have caused to one another in order to tackle this insatiable monster. Has the spiral of violence been caused by only a few Nagas? Does violence solve any problems at all?
5. Can we break the barren pattern of 'in-group love that requires out-



group hatred’?

6. What kind of a person am I? Is any tribal, racial or national label more important ultimately than this question?
7. How do we prepare ourselves to start to talk to the most important audience as far as we are concerned – the people of India? There is a difference between the people of India and the Government of India. We have talked to the Government enough, but we have failed to go to the people of India. This serious error must now be rectified without delay.



### **Historical Rights of the Nagas and Their Quest for Integration**

For a seminar organised by Tangkhul Elders Forum, Shillong. 12 June 2010

*I* do want to thank the Tangkhul Elders Forum, Shillong, for the special honour of being invited to be one of the speakers on this occasion today.

We should know the quality of the response to any society’s challenges explains our own struggle also and the dangerous society we have produced. The quality of the response decides the quality of what comes out of it.

How Nagas came to have historical and political rights also tells the story of a people responding to the challenges of a changing world impacting them and compelling them to grow. The response, representing their thinking, grew in intensity in proportion to the increase of the relentless impacts. The thought, a combination of fear, insecurity, aspirations, hope and defiance developed over the years into the fierce Naga struggle for peoplehood and consolidated sovereign nationhood as we know it today. Nagas have all along maintained their struggle was to defend their sovereignty on the basis of their history. It was not a case of Nagas asking for it from anyone.

The 1947 Akbar Hydari - Naga Pact, proposed by the then Government of India, showed that the statement by the Nagas to the 1929 Simon Commission had been taken note of.

The fight to uphold the Naga position has continued up to this day, notwithstanding the tragic fragmentation of the struggle into the various

*A Naga Speaks*

factions, the biggest one of which is the State of Nagaland as it is today.

We cannot really blame the Government of India for the stand it has taken all along with regard to the issue of Naga sovereignty. India has simply defended the integrity of the map she inherited from the British. Any other government in its place would have done the same thing. But Nagas too cannot be blamed for insisting that they had made their position categorically clear before the British left their empire in South Asia. The British invaded their land; the Nagas fought against the invasion, and were defeated. So when the British were leaving, Nagas declared their right to decide their own future, and they fought heroically to uphold that right.

It should be stated that India has started to understand.

Right from the beginning of the Naga struggle it was always clear that it was for the entire homeland of the Nagas. In fact, this is Article No. 1 of the *Yezabo* (Constitution). No Naga was thought or said to be excluded from the purview of the Article. Then when Nagaland State was created, the State Assembly passed three unanimous resolutions reaffirming what had been stated in the 16-point Agreement on the coming together of all Nagas under one administrative roof.

I should digress here a bit to point out that perhaps a priceless opportunity to settle the question of integration was missed when Nagaland State was being created. It has become almost as tough as sovereignty today, as far as Delhi is concerned. Those who went to Delhi and accepted statehood should have told Nehru that they had risked their reputation in the minds of their people and their lives to come to Delhi to study his proposal, and so they could not, would not, go back without integration being agreed to by Delhi, which they could tell their people and those sacrificing their lives for Naga rights.

If they had taken this firm stand, integration of all the Naga inhabited areas would most likely have been part of the settlement. The creation of the state was so important strategically for Delhi to suppress the Naga freedom fighters, Pandit Nehru would have phoned the Assam Cabinet of the day and the authorities in Shillong controlling Manipur and NEFA (North East Frontier Agency) on behalf of Delhi, and his command would have prevailed.

Nehru was so powerful at that time it was inconceivable his instruction would have been disobeyed. And by so acting as instructed those obeying him in Shillong and Imphal wouldn't have been doing

anything unjust to anyone because any area not part of the ancestral homeland of the Nagas did not need to be part of the proposed Nagaland.

The creators of the State rushed back home to start the formation of the State, and no doubt to swiftly fill up the chairs of power that became available. The rush was unseemly and what they failed to solve then because of the rush has turned out to be extremely costly. We too would most probably have done just as they did if we were in their places. Don't most of us think as the Scots do that, 'A temptation resisted is a temptation wasted!'

To come back to my subject, it has become clear that NSCN (IM) has run into what the NNC and its FGN ran into earlier during the negotiations with Delhi following the first ceasefire of 1964. Namely, that Delhi is in no position at all to talk on sovereignty, not because the Naga case is wrong or legally and politically invalid, but because India is too young a democracy still in a chaotic state of formation to handle the issue. And Nagas have done virtually nothing to speak to the minds and hearts of the Indian people whose understanding alone can solve the problem.

We have talked only to a succession of politicians in Delhi whose minds are too distracted to listen sufficiently to us to understand the facts of our historical and legal position. The politicians have left our memorandums to junior bureaucrats to keep in their neat files to be referred to only when necessary occasionally. We must know that the junior bureaucrats who have kept our files are seldom above the rank of Deputy Secretary in the obscure North East section of the Union Home Ministry in Delhi.

The Indians who have implemented Delhi's position are the various branches of the security forces of India and the Ministers and bureaucrats in the Planning Commission. We cannot be proud of what the Planning Commission has to say about Nagas. The Indian people do not know the facts of our history.

Nagas should have long ago gone to the Indian people, to get them to understand why we maintain our position as unique and why we are not secessionists. This would have kept us united, kept our struggle alive, focused and healthy because we would be getting the most important audience for us in the world to understand us. By going outside India we got the uninformed Indian public to needlessly suspect us and react against us, reducing ourselves to being treated by Delhi with its hated carrot and stick policy only. Alas, we have learnt to tolerate the stick but become

*A Naga Speaks*

pathetically addicted to the carrot! We should learn from this costly mistake.

How much I had wished Phizo had left London and come to India soon after he found the British were in no position to help us, no matter their emotional feelings for us (coming from the support Nagas gave them during the second World War II), because they couldn't afford to lose the huge Indian economic market. If he had landed in Delhi and declared he had come to discuss with the great people of India and with his own people in Nagaland, he would most probably have been taken straight to Tihar Jail.

Perhaps not. But the Naga struggle would then have been transformed, made clean, dynamic and relevant again. The battlefield would then have shifted from the jungles and villages of Nagaland to the teeming cities and towns of the whole of India, even if first through Tihar Jail? There were indications that he started to think that way, but before he could work out the formidable logistics, he passed away, isolated, misinformed, therefore distrustful of others more than was wise, and heart-broken.

Adinno has continued to stay on in London needlessly isolated, seriously misinformed and saying things some of which, according to me, are unwarranted, too personal and too divisive. I understand her compulsions and her sacrifice, (which I believe with all respect, qualifies her to be a healer in our history) but her contribution can and should be much more than it has been.

The time has come when Nagas must reach a settlement with India, which will consolidate what we have achieved so far and enable our people to grow together on the consolidated foundation. It is clear Nagaland will not be a member of the UN as a sovereign republic following the envisaged settlement. But the settlement will be right, honourable and acceptable to Nagas if Delhi will sign it by acknowledging the Naga struggle is not a secessionist struggle because, unlike some of their neighbours who also started their 'liberation' struggles and fronts, Nagas had made their position abundantly clear long before the British left.

If Nagas are prepared to negotiate for something other than sovereignty despite the full legal legitimacy of their claim for it, because they understood India's difficulty on the issue, it should not be too difficult for Delhi to accept what Nagas mean by 'honourable, acceptable settlement'. It will be right and just for both sides. If needed, Nagas should go to the people of India to ask them to understand the facts behind

*A Naga Speaks*

our stand and create the needed public opinion that will enable their government in Delhi to act.

I believe, what is required is all the rival factions sitting down together to work out the precise terms for a negotiated settlement with Delhi that will be honourable. Let it be not sovereignty, but an interim settlement, leaving it to the future generations to decide what will be best for them according to their best judgment in their time.

As for integration, we need not really worry too much that Delhi will keep on saying it is not possible. What else can Delhi say or do, as no party ruling in Delhi can ignore what elections can do to it? (It is too risky for any party ruling in Delhi to disturb the status quo now in Assam, Imphal or Arunachal) Our mistake has been overestimating ourselves and underestimating our neighbours, and the complicated implications of the integration issue.

We have too arrogantly shown our position to be that once we reach a settlement with Delhi, Delhi will do as we insist and will force Manipur, Assam and Arunachal governments to accept integration of Naga areas. This has been a serious error, showing we have not realised the crucial reality that our neighbours too have now woken up, and on many issues they are far more awake and proactive than us.

We should tell Delhi we fully appreciate and understand Delhi's difficulties on integration also, and that the question should be left to the neighbours involved to work out a solution that would be fair and acceptable to all sides. The idea will work if neighbours will go to one another, as neighbours should. There are signs that the neighbours are now ready to do this for the sake of achieving a common stability for the good of all.

We must go to the people of Assam, Manipur and Arunachal to start serious, honest conversations with them. Let them know we are more interested in first listening to them to understand their difficulties, fears and paramount needs than in finding solutions right away. This will create the atmosphere of trust that will enable listening to one another possible to evolve the solution all can accept as fair and honourable.

A needless blunder has been describing the issue of integration as one of creating a Greater Nagaland. Nagaland is Nagaland, nothing more and nothing less. Our careless talking of a Greater Nagaland has raised doubts and fears in the minds of our neighbours that we are thinking of

claiming lands not part of the ancestral homeland of the Nagas to be part of the envisaged settlement.

The doctrine for living life on this planet of ours we have not examined sufficiently. It is one of our fundamental failures that has rendered our struggle un-pursuable and too destructive. I'll try to explain what I mean.

Henry Ford pioneered the modern mass production process that profoundly accelerated the pace of industrial productivity and economic development in general. The hundreds and thousands of cars that rolled out of the Ford Motor Company in Detroit, Michigan, were painted black. Ford's standing instruction was that the cars could be painted in any colour 'provided it is black!'

I think we can say God is also somewhat eccentric and arbitrary like Ford, when it comes to how life on earth is to be lived including how we pursue our struggles to grow.

God seems to allow every thing, even the most horrible things. He doesn't solve problems on His own although it is true He acts to solve them the moment we cooperate with Him. He seems to be happy with all our professions, our political, economic, religious, cultural and other pursuits. He seems to say, 'Do all you are inspired to do, provided what you do will help the building of my kingdom on earth as it is in heaven'.

We can say he allows us to fight and struggle for our political aspirations and dreams as peoples and nations. He even seems to allow the coming into being of all our political factions! He certainly hasn't stopped them. But can we deny He is saying to us that our struggle should contribute towards the building of His kingdom on earth, the creation of the just society in Nagaland where we care for one another, enable one another to do their best and be the great people He means each community, each individual to be? We know the hell we have created by struggling our own ways to achieve our aspirations, saying politics should be done that way.

I believe when the struggle was started, as in the struggles of almost all peoples, our leaders had not thought enough to know that even if the goal may be right and noble, if the method adopted to achieve it is not clean or morally and ethically right, the method destroys the struggle and the people eventually. This *Doctrine of Ends and Means* made famous by Mahatma Gandhi was the opposite of the doctrine of the left and the right

that said, 'If the goal is good do anything even if wrong to achieve the goal.' We need not go into what adopting wrong methods to achieve what is good and noble has done to the world.

The pioneers in Phizo's time who battled together did a monumental job in defining the identity of their people. Although the issues they confronted had not become as complicated as they have become today, the price paid by them and the people of the day was also extremely high. They were taking the first steps of their people's journey into the unknown. It was a single-focus struggle to establish the political position of the Nagas. They did it and gave their people a priceless heritage.

But as the struggle progressed it ran into the inescapable moral and ethical issues that are at the heart of all human struggles. When disagreements arose due to genuine doubts and apprehensions that always occur in all great ventures, the dissenting voices were condemned as threats to the cause, which led to the first killings of Nagas by Nagas. By and large the reactions to these initial killings were contained because the movement had not fragmented yet, and Nagas were confronting something they had not thought much about. But the mental, spiritual traumas and the physical pains caused by the wounds were real.

The questions raised by them marked the beginning of the real crisis of the Naga struggle because the NNC leaders could not ignore what had been revealed, namely, that there was more to non-violence than they had thought and declared to be their policy. This is not easily said and not with any self-righteous condemnation of our pioneer nation builders. For, if I were courageous and capable enough to be in their places, I too would most likely have supported, condoned or rationalised the killings 'under the political circumstances'. To raise the *Doctrine of Ends and Means* at this perilous time of our crisis is hazardous because it is likely to be misunderstood. But to ignore it is to deprive ourselves of the only chance of working our way forward together in a new way that will work.

The truth is that during the earlier stages, the crisis over the killings did not make news mainly because of the reasons mentioned earlier, but the rebuke of conscience to respect life was still whispering loudly from inside. Gradually the heavy-pressure compulsions of personal and 'national' interests 'to achieve the goal' that always drive a political struggle took over. The unorganised killings that began as a matter of course during the early stage of the struggle were quietly rationalised and justified to be inevitable in politics. In more recent years, insensitive, blasphemous



justifications started to accompany killings.

The killings of the latter period thus became more known and more condemned. In addition, use of violence and threats to collect money, remove obstacles out of the way, mislead people etc... 'for the national cause and principle', came to be loudly justified over the last decades. Those who use less or covert violence may argue that their sins are less serious because it was true the scale of Nagas killing one another was much less during the early stages. But God does not see it that way.

A few close friends said I was unwise when I apologised publicly at the Bangkok Consultation for comparing and becoming deeply jealous of the super efficiency of the NSCN (IM). In their view 'You have damaged your image in the eyes of the public.' I have reflected much on what I said on the occasion. I continue to wonder if I was unwise. But the thought has grown in me that saying what I said that morning was my small and humble contribution to the Naga search for healing and reconciliation.

It may well be that it will make no visible impact on the situation. But if what I could do to help detoxify the poison of mutual resentments against one another is to be simply transparent about my negative contribution to the problem, I should do my tiny bit without demanding that my role should be more prominent to be noticeable by others.

So it must be that God has given us a very tough assignment and that is to learn to live together by giving our best to one another, not our worst, preferring one another 'to make the other person great'. He wants us to give this secret to countless peoples in our neighbourhood and beyond who confront the same problems and needs. Our struggle is God's plan for our growth wherein we change wherever needed.





## Reconciliation - II

*Back to integrity for progress*

Reconciliation And Its Objectives	391
Naga Attempt At Reconciliation	402
Rapprochement To Achieve Naga Aspirations	405
Strengthening Peace Initiatives/Network	413
Naga Reconciliation: Reconciling Beliefs...	420

## Reconciliation and Its Objectives

At the Naga Hoho 7<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, Senapati. 21 May 2002

*Love does not keep a record of wrongs that others do. It rejoices in the truth, but not in evil. - 1 Cor 13:6.*

*If* we do not need to think of the coming generations, and if we do not need to think of the feelings and needs of other tribes, then we can do without reconciliation, healing of hurts and wounds, and other such 'non-political' issues of life. But we are a multi-tribe people claiming we are a nation and trying to be one. Right now all who are realistic will say reconciliation is real Christianity and good politics.

Reconciliation sounds simple. And we seem to be agreed that without it we will end up in a self-destroying spiral. We perhaps think that it will happen easily just because we need it badly. We think the same way about peace. But anyone who tries to work for it soon finds that without acknowledgement of mistakes and wrongs of the past, reconciliation cannot be real. Yet, to attempt to get the various mutually hostile groups to admit their shares of the wrongs to open the door to reconciliation is to create serious misunderstanding and resentment.

But if at the beginning of our journey to the future we allow personal and tribe pride and interests to be more important than the survival and growth of our people, do we have any chance of succeeding? This question makes clear why the moral and spiritual issues involved in reconciliation cannot be treated lightly. They are not matters of personal likes or dislikes. It will be right to say we have reached the stage where reconciliation has become the most important part of our struggle.

The Naga story grew out of our people's honest, natural response to events that threatened their honour and dignity. It gradually became their struggle to be a people and nation. Their geography and history played a key part in their bold decision to proclaim their identity and to defend it regardless of the cost. Their struggle to be true to their deepest beliefs about themselves has been the engine and the measure of their growth. We should fearlessly ask if our pioneers should have played safe and not fought for what they felt to be right and natural for them.

Nagas should be clear on this question because our struggle has brought chaos not just to us but also to our neighbours. I believe the problems arising from not following our deepest convictions would be

*A Naga Speaks*

far worse in the long run than the problems that have resulted from our decision to fight as we believed. What we need to realise is that a people must certainly struggle for their beliefs, but their struggle destroys them if their thinking is not adequate.

As happens in all human struggles such as ours, we too have inflicted deep wounds on one another. In addition, our other accumulated problems threaten to overwhelm us because we do not have the experience and thinking needed to solve them. And changes are coming to us more rapidly than we can cope with. Nagas have come to realise that without mutual forgiveness through healing of their wounds, their dreams will become nightmares as has happened elsewhere in the world.

The ongoing talks between NSCN (IM) and Delhi have focused our urgent need for reconciliation. The reason for the urgency does not need elaboration here. Intense discussions on the subject have started among Nagas.

The IM group's resolute fight and able leadership resulted in the decision by Delhi to agree to a second ceasefire with Nagas to renew talks for a settlement of the protracted Indo-Naga conflict. Nagas want a settlement. But Nagas are clear from past bitter experiences that settlements that ignore the issues of distrust and vengeful rivalries within Naga society cannot work. The thoughts expressed below come from a conviction that the opportunity in front of us will not be wasted because our leaders will learn from past errors and will not repeat them.

The first task entrusted to the Naga Hoho Coordination Committee was to launch the Naga Reconciliation Process. It took place in Kohima on 20 December 2001.

The moving response seen at the launching ceremony, and the intense discussion among our people since then, have clearly shown Nagas are agreed that reconciliation is our urgent need. It would not be wrong to say that, whatever our differences,

1. We want to survive together as a people whatever the obstacles.
2. We acknowledge we have committed mistakes and deliberate wrongs. Unless we put them right with God's help and find His healing together, our wrongs and divisions will make us too weak to survive.
3. We are beginning to see we are all responsible in our different ways for what has gone wrong in our struggle and society, and each one is needed to change it.

4. We do believe our aspirations and our struggle for them, underground and overground, are right. But we now realise the Naga struggle for sovereignty and the overground state government have both started to destroy themselves and the people for whom they were launched, revealing the growth urgently needed in our thinking and purpose of life if we are to be worthy of our aspirations and struggle. We do not believe our individual, tribe, factional or party selfishness and pride should be allowed to destroy all that have been achieved at immense cost.

So we can say for Nagas, reconciliation 'is an idea whose time has come'.

This conclusion seems to be correct judging by the opinions coming from all sections of our society. After more than half a century of continuous conflict, our need for peace and stability to be able to develop ourselves and grow with the rest of the world has become overwhelming. But the search for reconciliation raises highly complicated political issues especially for our leaders of all the factions who have contributed their share at different times to give us the struggle that has reached its present position.

Politics without transparency, and without moral and ethical values, is what we tend to understand politics to be. But that kind of politics, after achieving short-term solutions, makes society unbearably evil and destructive. This is undeniably happening to us also. Our leaders therefore face the extraordinary challenge to create the kind of politics that will heal and consolidate our people and enable them to meet the challenges of today to continue their journey. Is this beyond God?

Our leaders must not underestimate our people's hunger for reconciliation and manipulate it to serve their factional, party and tribe interests. But the public too must understand the tough political risks our leaders see in reconciliation, which they cannot treat lightly. This must be fully recognised and appreciated. Most of the underground groups and the State have expressed their support to the joint initiative for reconciliation launched by the Churches and the Naga Hoho. But reconciliation has to be on God's terms and His way, not on our terms and our way. Therefore, to call upon our divided society to attempt to walk the narrow path to reconciliation is a hazardous, easily misunderstood task.

Jesus said, 'Render unto Caesar the things that are of Caesar, and to God the things that are of God.' If he had said there is no connection

between these two areas of life our task would be so simple. He did not. Jesus expected us to know we are the vital connection between the spiritual and temporal realms, both of which are important to him. Because God created us in His image we are expected to know that the kingdom of God starts when the correct balance between the two is achieved.

### **Widest Meaning of Reconciliation**

Our hunger for reconciliation therefore is God at work within us. We should respond to it with awe and gratitude. Should any group, tribe or individual try to reduce reconciliation to a political tactic to defeat their opponents, they will bring curse on themselves and on all Nagas. Reconciliation is at the heart of God's bigger battle for creating His just society on earth. We dare not corrupt it.

Reconciliation is one of the fruits of transparency and truthfulness, which come from a deep love of God and His plan for human life. It is a good beginning even if our sense of need for reconciliation is not coming exactly from a deep love of God and His ways, but from our fear of the consequences of the dangerous society we have created together. Our sense of need is God's opportunity, and God will use our turning to Him to take us forward. If we pursue reconciliation God's way, wanting nothing for ourselves, we will find that it is application of the fullest Christian message of love and truthfulness in politics and society. It produces the politics that makes society work.

Landrum Bolling, dedicated worker for healing and reconciliation in the Middle East, said. 'The real issue, significant for every one, is whether the sterile negative of today's life in the Middle East, by which all men are imperilled, can be converted to a pattern of human co-operation not yet known or seen among men.' He goes on to declare that this wide vision for reconciliation is not 'sentimental nonsense if men can believe that there are not hopeless situations, but only hopeless men.' If our concept is less than this totality, we will be disappointed.

The political part of a people's struggle is the most visible and exciting part. It can be said to be the most urgent and important part because that is where the external symbols of identity, which mean so much to human beings, are decided. So in most peoples' struggles in the world, the political part of the struggle receives the main or only attention. The other equally important parts of the struggle are ignored, namely, mental and spiritual growth, character and integrity growth, and economic growth. It is so difficult and unpopular to think beyond the immediate

*A Naga Speaks*

action.

What seems less immediate, but equally important, is ignored or postponed due to our short-sighted, self-defeating ambitions. Catastrophic consequences follow, because without growth in mind, spirit, character and integrity, economic growth does not happen. If it does happen it is at the expense of the vast majority and for the benefit of a tiny few.

History shows that the people are the most important raw material in the building of a society and nation. The growth of their thinking, spirit, character, integrity and economy always decides whether they succeed or fail. This truth has been powerfully and frighteningly demonstrated in the national struggles for freedom in Africa and Asia in the second half of the last century.

(Consider the performance of the Korean football stars during this year's 2002 World Cup matches. The commentators kept paying tribute to the never-give-up spirit and character of the Koreans that the whole world saw. Today's Koreans represent relentless, unyielding battles fought and won down the centuries for discipline and responsible citizenship.)

### **Cost Of Selfishness - Putting What We Want First**

The leaders of the struggles for nationhood in some African and Asian countries thought – 'Let us first win the political battle, become sovereign republics and members of the UN. Then the rest will automatically follow – national discipline and responsible citizenship, unity, stability and economic growth.' But this did not happen.

No. What happened was total socio-political collapse and absolute economic misery, uncontrollable corruption of the leaders and the educated elite, extortion by those deprived of their share, and State terrorism. The new rulers found that after their limited political goal of driving the colonial rulers out was achieved, they ran out of ideas. They had not developed ideas for nation building for themselves and their people.

So, once sovereignty was achieved it became an unprecedented opportunity for the freedom fighters to enrich themselves, but terrible deprivation for the rest. So when their turn came to be the rulers they often resorted to exploiting tribal, caste and other prejudices and agendas for quick personal gains. In most cases, they turned out to be greedier and more heartless than the previous foreign rulers. This produced bitterness and killings that went out of control in nations after nation.

I emphasise here that it is right and essential to struggle for

*A Naga Speaks*

political goals and beliefs. But when eternal moral and ethical principles are ignored, or sacrificed to achieve the objectives, the soul and spirit of the people are violated. The struggle inescapably becomes self-destructive.

### **Enough For Need, Not For Greed**

Frightening chaos and destruction took over in these nations because selfishness in all its forms was regarded as a personal matter and tolerated. The shallow, popular idea that politics and spiritual issues do not go together was exploited to justify misdeeds of all kinds in the name of politics.

The new rulers whose unrestrained greed became limitless devoured the limited resources of their new nations. To the educated elite, sovereignty meant irresponsible instant enjoyment of life to be paid for by their governments and rich nations abroad. Too many 'patriots' were in too great a hurry to enjoy the fruits of struggle.

Without a radical change in their thinking and behaviour their new nations could not be developed. But after freedom was achieved too few were prepared to be accountable, efficient, honest, caring and selfless, for their society to succeed in a fast changing, highly competitive world. It is said, 'The thinking of a people is first in ruins before their villages and towns and cities collapse into ruins.'

### **Nagas Choosing a Common Highway**

With these lessons and examples in mind, we have to appreciate the significance and objectives of the Naga Reconciliation Process. The hard work and efficiency of the Secretariat of the inauguration programme, with the NPMHR, the NSF and Naga women's organisations, ensured the success of the launching. God clearly blessed the effort and the news went out far and wide.

The Naga initiative seems to have caught the imagination of not only our people but of our neighbours and beyond as well, because our people have risen up together to heal their own wounded society. Some of the impacts are:

1. There was unanimous support from all the different tribes of our people, reflected through the representation of over 35 tribes and sub-tribes at the inaugural function.
2. All the groups in the conflict – underground and overground, political parties cutting across State boundaries, Nagaland Government, and Government of India – welcomed the initiative.

### ***A Naga Speaks***

3. Messages of goodwill and support came from our neighbours, people across India and from abroad. One such message came from the Baptist World Alliance.

Another came from Mr William Porter, Founder President of International Communications Forum (ICF) who wrote, 'As I watched the Naga Reconciliation video on my TV set, I was moved to tears and marvelled at the devotion and inspiration which made it possible. Congratulations ... I am now praying that the continuation of reconciliation in the coming days and months will fulfil the promise of a noble day.'

Rajmohan Gandhi, reputed author and lecturer, and who was a member of the Indian delegation to the UN Human Rights Commission during his tenure as a Rajya Sabha M.P. congratulated Nagas for their boldness and faith. He mentioned the Pledge to a group of Afghans who had come to see him earlier this year. He urged them to reflect on the Naga Pledge for the healing and rebuilding of their shattered nation.

- a) Assam's leading research institute has already sponsored a study on the Naga Reconciliation initiative although we have still a long way to go.
- b) Invitations continue to come in from our own people as well as from various parts of India. To respond adequately to these invitations is an urgent need.
- c) In our own society, it would be fair to say the reconciliation initiative has helped to bring our tribes closer to one another at least at the level of the Hohos. The 20 December 2001, function was one of the biggest ever, public meetings (in terms of representation by tribes) the Nagas have ever held and in which a collective decision was taken unanimously.

It would be correct to say that the Naga reconciliation initiative is being watched by others with considerable curiosity and interest. Disbelief may be nearer the truth.

The reconciliation launching ceremony climaxed with a Declaration and Pledge read out by the Presidents of the tribes present from all Naga inhabited areas.

What we did on December 20 was just the beginning. We are discovering that the Reconciliation Process is like a common highway that we Nagas decided to open up for ourselves to continue our journey into the future. We are finding that to walk on it, we all need to accept deep changes



in ourselves, in our families, villages and tribes. Reconciliation is not the exclusive responsibility of the different groups of the Naga struggle. If our society is to work all of us have to tackle our share in what has gone wrong. We human beings, not some mysterious beings from outer space, have caused what has gone wrong.

### **Our Way or God's Way?**

Yes, like Peace, Unity, Freedom and Development, Reconciliation is a noble human aspiration, and God requires us to struggle for it. But giving God the right place in human affairs is the central issue in reconciliation. Yet don't we insist on doing it our way, not God's way? Our way suits our pride and our selfishness. It clashes with the ways of others. But God's way requires all to change in order that what is best may be achieved. Fighting for who is right only creates division and hate. What is right requires all to rise to a higher alternative that is honourable, where none is victim or victor, because God wins. In wrestling for what is right we all change and grow.

Naturally we are all hesitant to step out to walk on God's majestic, challenging highway because we fear others will take advantage of us, and our side will be the stupid losers. But to stay at the level of who is right is a waste of time, and sooner or later what means the most to us is reduced to ashes.

### **What Is So Amazing About Our Regrets?**

My failures, mistakes and even evil misdeeds are precious to God because they are the points of connection between me and Him and those harmed by me. If Christ died for my misdeeds, not my virtues, why am I so defensive and secretive of them? They are God's keys for my healing and reconciliation. He has made us 'so wonderfully and fearfully' that our sensitive conscience and soul never fail to register regret for our failures, mistakes and misdeeds.

We are of course often too proud to admit our regret, or too selfish and scared to do so because we do not want to pay the price of restitution, or putting things right. God wants us to be simply transparent and find liberation. 'Call a spade a spade and shame the Devil,' is sound teaching. God does the rest. Regret is God working inside us! It is His first chance with me. If I am too controlled by pride and hate to be simply transparent, my regret embitters and isolates me and makes me ineffective. It is not God's way.

### **Provocation: How God And Others See It?**

We are provoked or hurt when others are not truthful. In the same way we provoke and wound others when we choose to deny, justify or treat lightly our failures, mistakes, meanness and misdeeds. Our regrets and guilt reveal our frailty and humanity as well as our divine potential. We should know both of them are precious in the sight of God because they are the signs of God working in us for our repentance, liberation and growth.

It would be correct to say our bitterest and most destructive divisions that have weakened Nagas so seriously can be traced to our failure to be simply honest about the regrets and guilt He has caused in us. Blessed are you if God is asking you why you are angry, bitter, vengeful or sad. God can handle them all because nothing is beyond Him.

King David repented by accepting his guilt and regret and then by obeying God. This resulted in the joy of the Lord becoming his strength (Nehemiah 8:10), so movingly described in Psalms 51: 'Cast me not away from your presence; and take not your holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of your salvation; and uphold me with your free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors your ways; and sinners shall be converted unto you.'

It is one of the most powerful examples of God's unfailing faithfulness with us if we are not too proud or afraid to cooperate with Him. Our problem is we often go as far as our regret and guilt, but instead of obeying Him we try to force Him to cooperate with us in hiding the truth. The result is we neither find the joy and strength of the Lord nor the trust of others who know we are not going far enough! Trust and healing come when 'We walk in the light as He is in the light.'

Imagine what would happen if our leaders, underground and overground, who are blaming one another like the rest of us, were simply transparent about the deepest regrets known only to them and God? Their truthfulness will inspire and challenge the people to do what needs to be done at this time. It will show the kind of statesmanship that can save us before it becomes too late. The truth is, gratitude and admiration, rather than condemnation or surprise, will greet the acknowledgement of regrets. The so-called ordinary people know the regrets that must be rankling in the souls of their leaders! It is never too late to do things God's way. Why not surprise them, win them, and lead them?

### **Reconciliation Cannot Be Postponed**

Japanese theologian, Kosuke Koyama, called one of his books *No*

*Handle On The Cross.* He said the Cross is not like a smart briefcase with a smooth handle. So it is very awkward and difficult to carry it. Christ found it so difficult and hurting to carry it on the road to Calvary with many in the crowd jeering him also.

Reconciliation too because it comes via the Cross has no handle on it. It is a most awkward thing to handle. The risk of being taken advantage of by others is always there if there is anything we want for ourselves that is more important than what God wants.

We are attempting reconciliation in a crisis situation created mostly by our political struggle. So our attempt to begin to heal our wounds may seem to us to be too simplistic, too religious, too out of place in politics, or irrelevant in *realpolitik*, even dangerous for our cause. These apprehensions are real. But we should not forget that if no attempt is made now when the hurts and wounds are still fresh, and when those of us who have hurt others and those hurt are still alive, then the crucial facts and truths will become unverifiable. The coming generations will become helpless victims of unhealable, untouchable wounds due to the absence of facts.

The time is not far off when every fact or truth of an event or incident will have as many versions as the number of people involved in a dispute over an issue. What can be done now may seem to be too insignificant to us. But let God, who knows best, decide the value and fruit of our response. Let us obey His guidance and leave the outcome to Him. 'Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labour in vain.' An ancient Sanskrit verse says, '*Karmanyē vadhikaraste ma faleshu kadachana.*' Do what you know to be your duty and leave the results to God. It also means 'Keep the process clean; the outcome will be right for all concerned.'

### **Beginnings**

In the 'sterile negative of today's life' in our land, let us recognise and appreciate the stirrings in human hearts that are responding to God. Let us decide to strengthen these tentative steps taken in faith. Some of them are:

1. Isak Swu, Chairman of NSCN (IM) apologised for excesses committed by the cadres of the group.
2. Chief Minister S C Jamir stated in the Assembly he was prepared to be corrected if he had made any mistake. He has repeatedly said, as a victim of the Naga struggle, he has forgiven those who attempted to liquidate him several times; and urged others to do likewise.

3. Paul Muinao, President of Tangkhul Naga Long, said at a Naga Hoho session in Kohima, 'We Tangkhuls have made many mistakes that have hurt other Nagas also. I apologise on behalf of my people. Please tell us what to do.'
4. Principal Wati Aier of Oriental Theological Seminary, responding to Muinao, said, 'We must acknowledge and appreciate what we have heard from a tribe President. I want to say thank you to Muinao. Which tribe can say its members are blameless? Can my tribe say so?'
5. Chairman S S Khaplang in a recent speech apologised for mistakes by his group that have hurt Nagas.
6. General Secretary Kitovi Zhimomi told a Naga Hoho delegation in June 'I too have thought 'chalo maro' is the way to struggle for our people. But we all know what this has produced. Now I ask what will happen to our children. I see deep insecurity and disrespect for right and wrong in their eyes. By hunting one another as we hunt animals, can we build a safe future for our children? Is anything more important than unity through healing of our wounds at this time?'
7. Th Muivah, repeatedly said at the Bangkok consultations, 'We have to admit our mistakes. Some of the wrongs we in the NSCN (IM) have committed may bring God's curse upon Nagas and our people's struggle. If this should happen we are very, very sorry.'
8. M Vero, Naga Hoho President, who was Rajya Sabha M.P. and also MLA and Minister in the State Cabinet, told a gathering of politicians, 'Some of us did all we could to weaken and defeat our underground fighters. We believed that was the right thing to do for our politics. I have realised I was short-sighted. Weakened Naga national workers will not be able to achieve an honourable settlement that will be acceptable to the Nagas. I was wrong. I am sorry for the harm done.'

### **1 Corinthians 13:6 and Our Crisis**

It will not be difficult to belittle and kill with our cynicism these initial steps towards transparency because we have made up our minds about all these leaders and their groups. It is quite possible that some of the leaders are not as sincere as they should be for the cause of reconciliation. But suppose God is stirring them to take the first steps? And could it be that our unwillingness to help strengthen these first sparks from the heart reveals more about us than about the people we are so cynical of? There are always plenty of reasons to be cynical and distrustful. Christ certainly

talked of the need to be wise like a serpent. But we are also told to risk being a dove and a child sometimes to enable God to work in human affairs.

In the passage mentioned above St. Paul said, 'Love rejoices not in iniquity but rejoices in the truth.' Very rightly we condemn the wrongs committed by others because the wrongs are real. But if we are honest we begin to realise that some of our deeds or failures, which we regret deep down, but have stoutly defended or justified due to pride and selfishness, have provoked others to do the wrong deeds we condemn. God begins to tell us that our honesty about our failures will help them also to become honest about their wrong deeds and thus create trust. But we find we are not keen for them to do the right thing because we do not want to lose our reason for hating and condemning.

We rejoice in iniquity, not in the victory of the truth. How many of our fierce divisions have been caused by this ugly meanness and vengeful bitterness? Do we realise our pride and ambition can make us so blind that we may even sacrifice our people and their struggle to prove we are right even if we know deep down, like others, we too are wrong on some points? Do we dare to say such truths of our religion must not be allowed to disturb our politics and the other fields of our life on earth?

The cost of our refusal to allow God to enter so deep into our affairs will unavoidably be godless tyranny and chaos because we will give our worst to one another instead of our best. Snake and stone instead of fish and bread.

### **Naga Attempt at Reconciliation**

*E*arly on 20 December 2001, just as the first lights of dawn started to appear, an elderly man walked with a child into the Kohima playground. They came to the rostrum that had been built for the launching of the Naga Reconciliation Process. The man knelt down. That he prayed and wept was clear. He wiped his tears. After sometime he got up and walked out of the stadium with the child. Those who had slept on the platform as watchmen, saw it all and were moved. They experienced what was clearly the unofficial but real inauguration of the reconciliation process for which the stadium had been set up.

During the launching ceremony later in the morning, some

#### ***A Naga Speaks***

children came on to the platform and stood with the students of Oriental Theological Seminary who sang 'Healing in Our Nation'. Many in the audience wept as Wati Aier lifted one of the children in his arms and explained that their fathers had been killed by fellow Nagas in the Naga struggle. Uncounted Nagas have been killed by Indian Security Forces during the past decades of Naga defence of their historic position as a people. Alas, an increasing number of Nagas have also been killed by fellow Nagas in the tragic contest for control of the Naga struggle. The Principal of OTS asked what would be our answer to the questions the orphans and their widowed mothers must be asking.

Co-Chairperson Khyomo Lotha called for a moment of listening and reflection for God to reveal where reconciliation should start. After a few minutes of pin-drop silence that seemed to have hushed Kohima to listen, people walked up to the bonfire in front of the rostrum and burnt what they had written down on pieces of paper – stating their decisions perhaps to reject revenge, to forgive, or ask for forgiveness, or other similar personal intentions. State Cabinet Ministers and citizens of all ages and walks of life participated in the symbolic demonstration of moral ownership of the reconciliation process by the people. Some of the fatherless children also burned their pieces of paper. It did not go unnoticed.

A joint declaration stating the reasons and objectives of the reconciliation process was read out. All leaders of Naga Hoho, the Churches, the Co-ordination Committee, NGOs and the 35 tribes represented signed it. Then the tribes' Presidents and representatives read out a pledge together saying, 'We will work towards the Nagas growing as a people....'

Naga Hoho President M Vero, saying 'We have all sinned', quoted Bishop Tutu of South Africa and Jesus, 'There is no future without forgiveness... Let him who is without sin cast the first stone.'

These beginnings are so small measured against our short but furious history of wounds, accumulated hates, mindless greed, fears and strong inter-tribe/faction rivalries and prejudices that have paralysed our society. We must not overestimate what the reconciliation launching ceremony briefly showed. But it would be a costly error if we should underestimate these seemingly fragile gifts from God and fail to build on them. After all, wounds and revenge for hurts make up so much of what is called politics. How do we build on the gifts?

What started to happen indicated the toughest realities and most

### *A Naga Speaks*

exciting possibilities Nagas face as we contemplate the future afresh. The tears show we do acknowledge that we have all contributed in our different ways to produce the destructiveness of our society and our struggle. The burning of the pieces of paper in the common bonfire indicated our deep longing to put right what has gone wrong, fully conscious of our inadequacy to do a proper job of it.

Nagas decided to open a common highway to the future by launching the Reconciliation Process just before Christmas. The theme was 'To Heal and Rebuild the Naga Family with the Prince of Peace.' The response witnessed at the launching perhaps marked our arrival at the beginning of the highway. However, the price to be paid to walk the highway together is high. Not surprisingly, we are all watching who will step out and start the journey! But only the most blind or selfish will deny it is our only hope.

The NSCN (IM), the Congress (I) in Nagaland, the opposition Naga People's Council, the Nationalist Congress Party and the United Forum of Naga Political Parties in Manipur, all declared their support of the reconciliation process. Representatives of the Khaplang and the Naga National Council were present to first assess the united initiative by Naga civil society before coming out publicly.

Within days of the launching ceremony 44 Nagas from all Naga areas went to Bangkok for a 6-day Consultation invited by the NSCN (IM). The Bangkok Statement that followed strongly reaffirmed the common political stand Nagas have taken starting with their position stated to the Simon Commission in 1929 up to today, clarifying 'the uniqueness of our Naga struggle as not one of secession or of separation from a union we had agreed to be a part of because of the 'historical facts' of Naga declaration of independence before the British handed power to India on 15 August 1947, the Plebiscite of 1951, and Nagas' rejection of the Constitution of India ... demonstrated through the boycotts of the first two Indian General Elections in 1952 and 1957.'

The statement supported the present ceasefire and the talks between Delhi and the NSCN (IM), reiterating the stand Nagas declared in Kohima on December 20<sup>th</sup> 'to bring about healing to the wounds and hurts Nagas have sustained at all levels so that, without being undermined by internal contradictions, a negotiated settlement of the Indo-Naga conflict may be achieved that will be honourable and acceptable to both sides.' The NSCN (IM) leadership fully pledged, 'No agreement would be entered into



without the fullest understanding of the Naga people.'

Positive responses are needed from the other Naga groups underground and overground if the promising start made thus far is to progress towards a solution.

There are signs that Nagas are beginning to make space for one another in the search for a solution that will work. Chief Minister S C Jamir's declared readiness to withdraw the pending cases by the State against the IM leadership has been widely welcomed. The Khaplang and the NNC groups have supported the Reconciliation Process. They are now evolving their responses to the steps implied by it. Naga Hoho and all the public bodies that have taken on to carry the process forward starting from the level of the villages fully understand the need felt by the various groups for circumspection before coming out to the common highway.

The Bangkok Statement included a significant observation about 'the need for Nagas to be accommodative in our thinking towards our neighbours, not ignoring their legitimate interests and apprehensions.' It expresses a thought that Nagas have aired with equal apprehension on their part. They are conscious of their unpreparedness for what it implies for them, yet knowing it is an idea they have to rise up to.

Morris West said, 'We are more readily betrayed by our certainties than by our doubts and curiosities.' This probably refers to some of the ideas that are beginning to find expression. We are curious. Doubts assail us. But they are definitely tantalising.

### **Rapprochement to Achieve Naga Aspirations with Renewed Strategy for our Struggle**

50th Anniversary NSF Seminar, Wokha. 28 August 1997

*I* begin with the suggestion that the time has come when the political process represented by the overground State Government of Nagaland should also be considered as a part of the Naga story. Understandably some will strongly disagree with this perception. But clearly, this recognition has now become essential for an objective examination of our people's journey. This does not betray the Naga case.

Those who collaborated with Delhi to create the State will surely

*A Naga Speaks*



be the first ones to agree now that they regret some of the stratagems they adopted to achieve their objective. It is undeniable that fellow Nagas who had borne the brunt of sacrifice and suffering in the villages and jungles felt they had been double-crossed and their struggle hijacked. The distrust and resentment that resulted has poisoned Naga society ever since.

Honest admission of the error will inspire and teach all Nagas and help heal wounds that have done much harm. Whether or not wisdom and decency will win on this issue, it will be historically incorrect to disregard the State as a part of the Naga struggle and story now. By offering to start unconditional talks with Nagas, three Indian Prime Ministers have confirmed that the State was only an interim, provisional scheme, pending a final settlement of the Naga issue yet to come. Now, to the subject before us:

As rapprochement means re-establishment of harmonious relations, obviously what the organisers of this seminar have in mind is restoration of the damaged relations within the Naga family that will enable us to struggle more effectively. You have chosen rapprochement instead of reunification, and wisely so. Healing of the wounds and resentments in the hearts of our people to restore relationships between individuals, tribes, factions and parties is the first step towards reunification. Without healing and restoration of our bonds, to talk of unification is a futile exercise.

Full unification of all Nagas is a vitally important goal for us. But the conflicting issues arising from the prevailing realities of politics, geography, and history are complicated. We should address and remove the obstacles of distrust step by step. If the process is open and clean, the outcome will be satisfactory. Now I shall try to outline what I think is 'renewed strategy' in our present situation.

We have just commemorated the fiftieth August 14. The past 50 years have seen the launching of the Naga struggle - its fiery rise like a rocket into the skies and after some time its failure to maintain its flight level. These days we see on global TV the dramatic battle to keep Mir, the Russian space station, in orbit. Space engineers are repairing the damaged parts. Failure will mean losing the space station worth billions of precious dollars, which Russia cannot afford. Has not a similar crisis befallen the Naga rocket? If we do not pay immediate attention to it and remedy the defect, the machine will go out of control and crash.

At the beginning of our struggle the sense of advancing somewhere was such that many of our people believed freedom was just around the

*A Naga Speaks*

corner! But before too long the rocket began to lose thrust and momentum. I humbly submit that the reasons for the crisis have not been sufficiently examined and the cost of the problem-ridden flight has become unbearable today. The half-century mark is the appropriate time to get down to what has gone wrong and start the restoration.

As has happened with others also, our concept of freedom and our struggle for it left out vital issues of life. After the initial excitement, something was found to be missing. Division in the struggle became unmanageably destructive. The slogans and manifestos became unconvincing because diverse problems cropped up which the philosophy of the goal could not answer. Therefore, if we are to have a renewed strategy for struggle, we have to go back to the philosophy of the goal itself and start from there.

The disastrous failures of many African nations today have shown that if a people concentrate only on their political goal, the incomplete struggle produces terrible consequences. Caring for the moral health of your people and of the world is like caring for your environment locally and globally. If the environment is destroyed, life is eventually destroyed. History's verdict on Nkrumah is that he was an important leader, but he failed to see beyond his own place in the goal of his people.

We have to admit that starting from Phizo down to the present day leaders, including those of the overground, all of them have in effect told the Nagas what Nkrumah told his people. In the case of the overground leaders the slogan has been 'Vote for us and all else shall be added unto you!' Not just us, but all man-centered struggles have followed the same slogans.

Only after the unbelievable collapse of the Soviet Union and the failures of newly-freed nations, realisation has come that political freedom alone can end in chaotic nightmares if the people do not accept to be responsible and care for one another to enable their free nations to develop and grow. Remember, the slogan of the Marxists was, 'Liquidate all enemies of the working class, and all else shall be added unto you!' It was an intoxicating lie that sounded so right.

The birth of the Soviet Union made many in the world think Marxism was 'the wave of the future'. How invincible and threatening the USSR looked, armed with the most feared weapons of war! But suddenly it collapsed like a house of cards. It could not survive the consequences of the errors in its philosophy.

*A Naga Speaks*

What was the weakness of the USSR? The goal of creating a classless society of justice and equality was right. But rejection of God's control of the means and methods to achieve the goal was wrong. Man automatically became the center of the goal also. The revolution was heroic, gigantic and enthralling for a few decades. But it was tragically incomplete. It inevitably proved to be too costly for mankind.

This harsh truth is now coming out in the books on the Communist heroes like Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, Mao and others. Some of them were brilliant human beings. But they did not go beyond what they wanted for themselves. The moral and spiritual measurement of right and wrong clashed with their short-cut methods of building their man-centered kingdom on earth. So God was banned as an anti-people myth.

The revolution ended up satisfying man's pride and will. The resultant evil destroyed moral responsibility, enthusiasm and purpose in the people. After swallowing up its own leaders and millions of ordinary people, the revolution collapsed on itself. The verdict of history is – the aim and purpose of the revolution was not big enough or true enough. It was wider in scope than Hitler's idea, but it too was man-centred.

Our preoccupation with the political goal only, ignoring the other dimensions of our struggle, produced the attitude in our people that those we call 'national workers' will bring independence for us to enjoy without any exertion on our part. Nagas have thought that somehow someone will always pay for our economic development and bear all the tough responsibilities of nation-building. This easy-going attitude about wealth-creation has come from our experience as citizens of the State of Nagaland. And this attitude has rendered the state thoroughly unworkable.

Have not Nagas treated the State the same way leeches treat living bodies they suck blood from? Leeches are not concerned about the health and strength of the bodies they suck from. If there is no more to suck, just move on to the next body! Where their head should be there is an awesomely powerful mouth, which goes to work without wasting time. The only difference between us and leeches is that leeches don't suck from other leeches.

Unless this philosophy of life is replaced by the opposite one that believes that 'it is in giving that we receive', progress towards achieving our goal is ruled out. And should we achieve it, we will destroy it as surely as the Rwandans, the Liberians, and others in Africa, have done to their republics.

*A Naga Speaks*

When a venture of trade and commerce begins to fail, a drastic assessment of every aspect of the enterprise is taken, and the remedial measures are swiftly executed. The whole process is always costly and painful like a surgical operation. But if it is avoided the consequences will be worse than painful. The Naga venture of the past 50 years needs such a bold and open analysis. It has to be viewed in its entirety. That is why I believe the State too should be viewed as part of the whole.

British philosopher John Stuart Mill said, 'No great improvements in the lot of mankind are possible until a change takes place in their modes of thought.'

A radical shift in our thinking is now unavoidable to match the all-round 'shift in paradigm' that has taken place in the world. But have we become too selfish or too ego-enslaved to allow any change in our ways that will bring the cure?

Has our society become the monopoly of a few and ceased to be the common property and joint responsibility of all Nagas? If this is true we need not wonder what hell will be like. No hell beats the one which follows success wrongly won.

Yours is the organisation with the widest outreach and acceptability among the Nagas. Are you thinking adequately? You represent the most significant segment of our population: tomorrow's leaders already on the threshold of wielding responsibility. It is therefore surely your historic role to show our people how to accept 'the changes in modes of thought' that Mill mentioned, and thus enable them to receive the cures to our self-defeating weaknesses. You will be the bridge between our people who are still inexperienced, and the challenges of modernity that threaten to overwhelm us. If you can accept this, you will instill confidence and security in our people and enable them to cope with confusing changes. You are destined to be at the cutting edge of confrontation with the world, showing our people the right way to do it and survive.

The needed change and cure is certainly daunting, and many may say it is too late. But human cleverness often does not see the unexpected breakthroughs, which take place if we simply stop the wrongs in our lives and start to live as guided by the 'still small voice' within. As someone put it, 'What God puts in front of us is what requires our attention, whether it is a small thing or a global decision.' It means making truth and wisdom practical. And if it is practical for the individual it is practical for the community. All of a sudden, things unfold in an uncanny way. 'Man's

*A Naga Speaks*

extremity is God's opportunity if we let Him.'

We pull everything down to suit our pride, greed and ambition even if it means the common good is damaged. Unless we will change this dangerous irresponsibility, 'new strategies' are only high-sounding words. George Washington, the first President of USA said, 'Let us raise a standard to which the good and honest can repair.' Many of us do the opposite. We cheat, use lies, twist and bend rules and establish norms to get what we want – in exams, getting transfer certificates from schools and colleges, in contracts, getting jobs, and in the performance of our duties. We are addicted to the easiest ways and shortcuts in all we do. No wonder most of our projects are non-starters.

Life is an organic whole. The wrong things we justify because they suit us cannot be isolated from our struggle for our aspirations. They subvert our struggle and it starts to destroy us. But when we end our wrongs firmly, new strategies become possible because of the liberation in our spirit and thinking.

Phizo could not proceed beyond London. He ran out of money and guns to continue the struggle. To his high credit, he did not call for money to be collected even by wrong means or methods. But as in Nkrumah's case, Phizo too missed out on getting the people to be morally and spiritually responsible for the health and vigour of the revolution. As the masses had not been prepared to do or think beyond what their leaders and fighters were doing, the trumpet sound became distant and uncertain.

Long isolated from his people he came to depend on a few for information and evaluation of developments and trends. The patriotism and dedication of the inner circle of like-minded national workers was beyond question. But they became exclusive, rigid and self-perpetuating while those who were disillusioned by the increasing organisational paralysis were branded as unreliable.

At the risk of being thought self-important, I ask if I could have helped, even in a small way, prevent some of the mistakes had I dared and thought enough for him and the crisis our people faced. I regret I did not.

Phizo was an effective communicator. But the weakening of his link with his distant people led to serious misunderstanding between him and some of his colleagues. The all-round deterioration was also a sign of ideological bankruptcy in the struggle; the thinking that had served us had become inadequate for a vastly changed situation. A 'paradigm shift' had

taken place and we failed to see it and respond correctly.

My honest assessment of what I, as a citizen, think are Phizo's failures is motivated by the conviction that the greatest need in Naga politics right now is restoration of trust through transparency. I also believe that we must not allow our mistakes to become the servants of our pride, so that they divide us from God and others we are meant to work with. What is right for all, or God's best plan, is enabled to win, if we are open and truthful about our mistakes and errors. Our pride is crucified and trust is born. But a destructive and unwinnable fight over 'Who is right?' starts if we defend or hide our mistakes insisting that others too are wrong. Trust dies. Can we deny that Naga politics is trapped in an unending, vicious fight over 'Who is right?' in which the victory of personal or tribal prestige, not truth, is the issue?

The risk of being misinterpreted or misunderstood is real. But I am clear in my heart and conscience that my motive in expressing my thoughts is to try to reduce our dangerous crisis and my respect and affection for Phizo can stand any scrutiny. I am also sure that:

- a. In heaven, criticisms are valued not resented, and he is happy Nagas are battling for the truth to be established to restore full health to the struggle for which he gave everything he held dear;
- b. Were I in his place at all, an academic supposition only, I would have erred much more and done much less;
- c. The unique contributions he made to his people's history are a matter of record. And absence of an objective scrutiny of where he failed will only damage them; and
- d. The distrusts and vengeful feelings against one another have become so dangerous, transparency must be attempted to help reopen the locked doors between individuals, tribes, factions and parties. To keep silent will enable the worst to happen needlessly.

To the inevitable question why I am so transparent about someone else's failures, I can only say that the citizens have the right and duty to raise questions about the performances of their leaders because the consequences of the actions of the latter affect everyone. The other leaders too have made serious mistakes. But in the present situation, I can discuss objectively only about Phizo.

Isak and Muivah have demonstrated versatility and tactical and organisational competence of a high order. They and Khaplang have

done the most to sustain and stretch the outreach of the Naga struggle, notwithstanding the deadly mutual hostility between them. History will reveal whether or not they have bitten more than Nagas can chew and digest. Merhupfü and Adinno, and their staunch comrades, despite organisational weaknesses and crippling financial shortages, have kept their positions alive. We respect and honour the conviction and sacrifice of all our leaders, whatever fierce differences there may be at the moment.

But all these leaders also will unavoidably come to their respective deadends and ideological bankruptcy, if the Naga straggle will remain only at the negative level of shouting boring slogans against opponents and India. It must quickly become a positive programme of nation-building in which every Naga sees he or she can play a part. Why shouldn't our concept be such that if anyone performs his or her task honestly and excellently he or she is a national worker, a nation builder?

According to this definition, all government servants in the State, including non-Nagas, who are hard working and incorruptible are national workers building the Naga nation. Why not? Not one who shouts freedom and sovereignty, but he who by his living solves problems, inspires hope and thus enables freedom and the nation to grow is a national worker!

If an ordinary citizen who has done nothing talks about the shortcomings of leaders who have sacrificed much, he rightly invites condemnation for presumptuousness. And the accusation of leech-likeness in the bureaucracy will not be welcomed by those who competently and sincerely serve our people in diverse fields. But we have to face how we have all helped to produce the society we have today, although some may think they are blameless. After all some mysterious beings or forces from outer space have not done the damage. You and I have done it in our varied ways.

Therefore the whole analysis boils down to this: that the next stage of our struggle is in healing the wounds we have inflicted on one another and accept together the task of bringing about all-round growth in all our people. Real growth if undertaken faithfully, and demonstrated to be possible, becomes highly infectious because growth is the law and meaning of life.

Let us admit our errors truthfully and enable forgiveness to win. Let us be grateful for what we have inherited because of great sacrifices made. Think correctly and begin to build our future on sound foundations having learnt from all our mistakes.

*A Naga Speaks*



## Strengthening Peace Initiatives and Networking in Nagaland

Nagaland Development Outreach, NBCC, Dimapur, 22 June 2005

In Kolkata's widest circulated *Desh*, an *Ananda Bazar Patrika* publication

There is a vital truth in the conversation God had with our third ancestor at the very beginning of the human story. It is that anger, fear, despair, unhappiness are the surest signs of God at work in us making us aware of what He wants us to do or not to do and we are resisting Him. It also means Satan too is trying his best to get us to obey him. In fact, because of our fallen nature, we are tempted to and we choose his way first in any situation. Cain was torn and angry because he had chosen to obey Satan and God declared His counterclaim for his soul.

We also see that to be tempted to do what is wrong is not yet sin. But it shows Satan's plan has already attracted me and I am required to defeat him for the sakes of my soul and character. We must know Satan is too shrewd to tell us to do something horrible at first. He only suggests we take it easy and do something less than what is right and best. The criminal acts can come later on. What profound truths in the few lines of the conversation!

I find we come face to face with reality when we stop to find out what is going on in our soul and conscience. If our peace initiatives are to match our dangerous crisis adequately, we need to stop and identify where in our conscience and soul we too are disturbed, torn, unwilling and angry, and why. If we are really honest, we will discover clear dangers and opportunities facing us depending on our choices. If we decide to do what is right and reject the tempting opposite, we will find our soul coming alive with liberation, and hope replacing anger and despair in us.

Our feelings of anger, unhappiness, fear, despair, happiness, courage, hope and liberation are indisputable truths about us because they reveal the eternal battle between good and evil taking place in our soul and conscience. If we make our choices at the level of our soul and conscience, our religion represents our cooperation with God to build His kingdom on earth, not just pious rituals to keep the cultural aspects of religion alive, which give us a sense of security.

Therefore our peace initiatives mark the start of our response to God in our soul and conscience asking us to do something about the destructiveness and selfishness in ourselves and our families, in the State

*A Naga Speaks*



Government, in the Naga struggle and in our inter-tribe relationships. God wants us to do nothing less at this time.

Abraham Lincoln was the President who presided over the American Civil War over the slavery issue. He declared his vision and mission to be 'to bind up the nation's wounds' and to build a nation where the citizens will 'do the right, as God gives us to see the right'.

What is the peace we are aiming to achieve? Is it only to achieve a settlement of the Indo-Naga conflict and the end of warrings and killings amongst Nagas and between Nagas and India, so that Nagas will get on with the economic development and all that goes with it? We urgently need such a settlement after so many decades of continuous conflicts.

If our aim and commitment, however, will not go as far as Lincoln's went, to bring healing to the shocking wounds we too have inflicted on one another, not just to the body but to the spirit by our ruthless selfishness in diverse ways, will we have a settlement or peace and stability, cooperation and goodwill among ourselves after a settlement where development and progress will be possible?

Remember the Munich Peace Agreement the British PM Chamberlain signed with Nazi Germany in 1939. He returned to London and proclaimed he had achieved 'peace in our time'. He and those who applauded the Agreement had a concept of peace that ignored the need to first bind up and heal the terrible wounds of the First World War, which had produced Hitler. They vainly thought business and life in the British Empire could continue undisturbed.

The euphoria was of course short-lived. Because Hitler, riding the waves of outraged German nationalism, hell-bent to avenge the humiliation and despair the German people had suffered after the Treaty of Versailles, annexed the Sudetenland part of Czechoslovakia and attacked Poland. The peace the Munich accord was supposed to have achieved was completely blown away and the Second World War started.

The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union was a similar peace accord. Both sides signed it to gain tactical advantages for themselves in the fast-emerging crisis. It, of course, completely left out the deeper issues convulsing the whole of Europe, which had already produced violent Bolshevism. When Hitler moved first to decisively knock Russia out of the war so that Germany would be able to concentrate fully on defeating Britain and her allies, the Soviet Union

declared war and eventually played the main part in defeating Hitler's Germany.

Coming to our crisis, forging tribal and factional coalitions or alliances to defeat one another may bring a settlement. But such a settlement will without doubt produce greater problems than the ones that may be declared as solved.

When and how then do we start? I believe we who are concerned enough to have become searchers for peace should start with ourselves in order that we will speak with humble but unshakeable conviction rooted in reality. I also believe our initiatives must go deep enough to touch and convince the hearts, souls, consciences and imagination of our people starting with our own.

I believe our search should start with the Naga struggle because all the issues of war and peace for us originate from the Naga struggle. My deepest convictions about our struggle were formed during my two high school years in Mokokchung, 1950 - 52. My father was the Medical Officer for Mokokchung Sub-Division. My uncle Phizo used to come and stay with us whenever he came to meet Imkongmeren and other Ao leaders. His discipline and passion amazed me. After talks in the town during the day, he would go out on foot to neighbouring villages in the evening to hold discussions with Ao villagers who after returning from their strenuous days in their fields would gather together for long sessions of discussions, questions and answers.

I went to some of them with him. I will never forget seeing the bonding of minds and hearts taking place in those meetings, dimly lit by wood fire or kerosene lamps. Every night he went to bed having tidied up his papers and every morning his clothes were neatly folded and packed. When my father once told him he could be less meticulous and relax more while staying with us in our home, his reply was, 'Today we must be ready to move at any time. The situation demands it.'

It was in Mokokchung I came to know Tekatamsu, the charismatic first president of the Naga Youth Movement. Under his and Kiyekhü Shikhu's leadership ten of us walked to Zunheboto to find out the position of the head *dobashi* there on the Naga struggle. The experiences of those days were exhilarating. I was passionately for the Naga struggle to achieve independence.

Today after all that has happened, it is legitimate to ask if our

pioneer leaders did the right thing when they launched the Naga struggle to become a people and nation. I sincerely believe they did. I am clear it started the right way. And it was right and important for the Nagas. Its origins were in the facts of our history and its growth from the level of the people was natural and authentic and therefore its claim to be the voice and choice of the Nagas was valid and legitimate.

There is a tragic but heroic parallel between the stand of the Nagas and those of the native peoples of the Americas and other similar communities in the world. Just because the numerically larger white people overwhelmed them, the American natives or others like them did not surrender their convictions about themselves and start to say they were not who they really were. They fought to uphold their position as dictated by their history although they knew they could not win in the sense they wanted. But they paid the price to be true to themselves. Had they counted the cost and remained silent to be safe, the result would have been unmanageable psychological and spiritual damage to their collective personalities. I believe exactly the same thing can be said about us.

This raises difficult questions about nationhood and sovereignty. In trying to answer them we will learn that there is a political side and a spiritual side to nationhood or sovereignty. Today a separate flag, a seat in the United Nations, and exchange of ambassadors with other nations are the political symbols of nationhood and sovereignty. These glamorous symbols are of course very important, but equally important, if not more, are the spiritual and mental qualities possessed by a nation or people whatever their political status.

Ultimately a nation is judged by the core qualities of head, heart and soul in its people, not by their visible outward paraphernalia. To seek consolation in such philosophical explanations is galling and bitter for Nagas. But countless peoples and communities in the world have had to find meaning and purpose of existence for themselves in these deeper realities of life, and they are not the worse for it. The Tibetans are an honourable example. They are not ashamed that they cannot get the Chinese out of Tibet. In any case, the truth is, hardly any sovereign nation spends most of their energies and vast resources to secure the spiritual and mental qualities that their citizens must acquire for the survival and healthy functioning of their societies!

I have dwelt at length on the Naga struggle. I have done so because I believe our struggle should be understood as our natural attempt to

grow as human beings. I believe it is the most important fact about us, and our greatest common asset, because it represents what we have tried to do to defend what we honestly believe about ourselves. We need not be surprised that we have made costly mistakes. However, human beings, peoples, nations and civilisations grow only by ceaseless struggling in all areas of life. They become mature no other way.

Frank Viviano, writing about the Csango people of Romania in the June issue of National Geographic, (*In the shadow of Atilla*), says, 'Every nation has a defining moment – a moment that proclaims, in the collective imagination, "This is who we are" and its almost universal corollary, "This land is ours." Nationhood is born in such assertions, a specific identity permanently rooted in a specific place.'

The launching of the Naga struggle was this defining moment for the Nagas. The struggle for the last five and half decades has demonstrated how seriously the Nagas have taken the definition. Gaur Kishore Ghosh, the celebrated Kolkata novelist and journalist a few years back wrote in '*Desh*', the widest-circulation Bengali journal, that Naga nationhood deserved to be respected and recognised because Nagas had made it a reality by their thought and sacrifice.

I believe the struggle was right for our people. But our concept of the meaning of the struggle was too restricted. So when unanticipated issues cropped up, we and our struggle became the slaves of the limited meaning we had given to it. Our thinking became bankrupt and it could not respond to changing paradigms. When genuine misgivings were expressed they were regarded as treasonous and severe punishment was meted out to the condemned persons. This happens in most struggles. But the absence of candid deliberations within the struggle inevitably resulted in splits into factions, which reflected tribal divisions.

Today our society causes despair in us. The philosophy of life guiding Nagas today cannot be said to be too different from the one that guides leeches also, i.e., think only where to suck, suck till you are near to bursting, then just fall off and crawl away to hibernate unbothered by any concern for the body you have sucked. Leeches are slimy, cold-hearted and headless. But it has a highly developed mouth that knows where blood is. Has not this attitude in too many of us paralysed the State government and also turned the Naga struggle into an exact replica of the overground government? And has it not reduced both governments to mere distribution agencies of salaries, loans, subsidies and grants from Delhi that

produce no wealth but breed hordes of extortionists?

I feel for those overground and underground leaders who are sincere and dedicated to serve our people. What can they do with the brigades of leechlike people daily besieging them whom they have to satisfy first before they can get on to the God-given tasks they believe in?

It is said when we human beings reject being changed and guided by God, the inevitable result is 'incredible shallowness of thought and intolerable mischief of action'. The leech is a prime example of how shallowness of thought or single-purpose self-centeredness results in intolerable mischief of action which we often do not see to be all that bad!

When I first tried the experiment of 'listening' to what God must be trying to say to me, the thought that seemed to come was, 'You are a very selfish man.' I wrote it down and was stirred by it. I knew it referred to my jealous and loveless nature. I saw a flicker of hope that God would change me. He did – in a very practical way. So as an authority on selfishness I know how easy it is to think and act like a leech. Yet we are capable of understanding our unhappiness inside. Isn't it fascinating that our anger and despair is the surest sign of God trying to get through to us as he did with Cain? So blessed are the poor in spirit, the unhappy and the frustrated, for God is stirring your soul to action!

Policy makers in the Philippines talk of a widespread 'low intensity insurgency' dragging their nation down to her knees. We have very widespread low-intensity anger and despair paralysing our society at all levels. I believe if we will pause, be still, and discover God speaking to us with passionate concern through our anger and unhappiness, and we obey Him, our peace initiatives will bear fruit.

I believe for peace initiatives to be effective in Nagaland an objective examination of the Naga struggle in its totality is called for because the origin of the destructiveness and lawlessness of our society today is in some fundamental weaknesses and errors we have failed to address. A deficiency of something vitally important for growth, or an excess of something toxic, has made our society compulsively destructive, and the overground and underground have become hardly distinguishable expressions of the same philosophy of life or the lack of it. The society we have today is the product of the lives of all of us.

An unexamined struggle also soon becomes confusing, directionless, meaningless and destructive. This is so because like a life, a

struggle too has to respond sensitively to constant changes taking place in the world. To respond correctly to changes is so important and yet so difficult. We cannot deny our unexamined struggle has run into serious trouble and is becoming impossible for us to pursue further. Let us examine the Naga struggle to identify the issues on which our peace initiatives will focus.

Now what do we mean by peace initiatives in Nagaland?

The first objective of peace initiatives in the past used to be cessation of fighting between Nagas and the Indian army to enable talks to take place for a political settlement. I believe today the first objective is to stop Nagas killing one another, and secondly, the coming together of the factions to confront and cure the root causes of the distrusts and vengeful resentments against one another so that all Nagas will stand together to reach a settlement that will be honourable and acceptable to both Nagas and India.

In the first ceasefire in 1964 followed by the six rounds of talks, Nagas were united under the one NNC, but the talks collapsed because it was too early for Nagas to start entertaining alternatives less than sovereignty at that stage. The context of the time in which our leaders went to Delhi for the talks should be objectively understood. At that time the hostility between the overground and underground was virtually complete.

The NNC/FGN treated those who had cooperated with Delhi to create the State of Nagaland as traitors and went all-out to eliminate them. The overground leaders on their part showed no hesitation to cooperate fully with Delhi to crush the NNC/FGN, root and branch. In addition, Delhi's attitude was to treat the Naga political struggle as an anti-India, secessionist movement conducted by misguided hostiles and therefore to be terrorised into abject surrender.

Many of the overground leaders chose to create and defend the State because of legitimate political realism and their assessment was valid that India could not be defeated to force her to recognise Naga sovereignty. But they lost their moral authority with their fellow Nagas by the greater zeal they displayed to enjoy their positions, which the Naga crisis gave them, than to win their people to their idea, which had a lot to its credit. In such a situation the underground leaders could not be expected to be ready to show signs that their position on sovereignty could be changed so easily so soon after they had come straight from their far-flung hideouts for the talks.

*A Naga Speaks*

They had to first establish their position for negotiation and get Delhi to understand and respect it. It would be correct to say that the talks during the first ceasefire could not go beyond the position they reached, because although the tragic inter-tribe rivalries especially between Angamis and Semas had started to seriously weaken the Naga struggle inside Nagaland, a fresh momentum had started among the Nagas in Manipur, which greatly boosted the struggle.

Much water has flowed under our bridge since the first ceasefire and the talks that collapsed. Today Naga public opinion has shifted to accepting an honourable settlement with India. India too has recognised that the Naga struggle cannot be treated as a secessionist one in view of its unique legal position, and hence a military solution would prove to be counter-productive. Those who created the State too have recognised that the State, an outcome of the Naga struggle, cannot ignore the political prestige of the struggle and the people's feeling for it. Today the State, showing shrewd realism, has come around to supporting a settlement between Delhi and the Naga fighters.

Unfortunately, it is the dividedness of the fighters of the struggle that has become the main obstacle to a settlement. Should the Indian intelligence agencies today be feeling they have no more work to do in Nagaland and are rejoicing over what has eventually emerged, we cannot blame them.

We must not underestimate the long-term costs if we fail to work out an honourable settlement at this stage due to inter-tribe ill will. Equally important is not to underestimate the consequences of a settlement that would be less than sovereignty, without all the factions first reaching a consensus on the terms for a negotiated settlement.

From what the NSCN (IM) has strongly indicated at their consultations, it seems they are now negotiating for something other than sovereignty. This is my assumption and I admire their courage and realism. They are doing the right thing. Naga rights and claim for sovereignty are legally valid and legitimate because they established their stand before the British left. It is a precious heritage of the Naga struggle. But it is something India cannot handle and will not be able to do for a very long time to come. So it is right for Nagas now to negotiate for a settlement that will give due recognition and honour to Naga history and will be acceptable to both sides. In the vastly changed situation today nothing can be wiser than this at this stage.



The well-organised consultations by NSCN (IM) in Niuland, Bangkok and Hebron Camp were inspired and they showed their high competence and ability to collect resources for their objectives.

I believe the NSCN (IM) leadership has the requisite qualification to conduct the negotiations. The firmness, courage and clarity with which they have taken the talks thus far deserve acknowledgement and high praise. But if they think they can bring a settlement that is less than sovereignty without first working out a consensus with the other factions, it would be dangerous disregard of all those they have killed on grounds of surrender of sovereignty.

We all know it is well nigh impossible to get the different groups of the struggle to sit down to thrash out the terms for negotiation with Delhi at this stage. And the NSCN (IM)'s profound unwillingness to allow such an honest conversation with the other groups, some of them called traitors by them, is fully understandable. But it would be fair to surmise that the vast majority of the public see this to be the only way a settlement, which would not create deeper bitterness in its wake, will be possible.

Recently my son connected me to the Naga Kuknalim website and asked me to read what was being said about me also in the Internet conversations. The derisive things said about me casting unpleasant aspersions on my character made me feel as if I was naked on a stage but unable to do anything to help myself because I was at the mercy of those who had turned the lights on from hidden areas I could not see. Those who spoke so freely to smear me chose to hide behind false names. I decided to take the positive attitude that the views expressed helped me to understand better Robert Burns' words that we do not see ourselves as others see us. I also recalled something St. Francis of Assisi reportedly said when some false accusations were made against him by someone. He said before God he was much worse than what a fellow human being was saying. So there was no room for taking offence and asked instead to be helped to change more deeply!

But what I read about others also made me sense that the Naga website is like a dark jungle where faceless Nagas obviously from diverse tribes come out to viciously stab and slash one another in the twilight beneath the foliage and not a single one participating in the mayhem is identifiable because of poor visibility. What disturbs me is the most venomous expressions used to describe tribes.

What I am trying to say is that our peace initiatives should focus on

***A Naga Speaks***



the feverish areas of our anger and hates. It was from such hidden levels of society where uninhibited mutual demonisations and mental stabbings were allowed for generations that the Serbias, Kosovos, Rwandas, Burundis, Sierra Leones and Cambodias of the recent past decades materialised. The horrific killings and rapes of countless thousands were no longer done by faceless persons but, often, by neighbours and fellow citizens who had known one another for years.

I believe that our peace initiatives will be strengthened if we will seriously, sincerely address the root causes of the wounds in our inter-tribe relationships. This will involve identifying the mistakes that have been denied or defended for so long by those who have committed them.



### **Naga Reconciliation: Reconciling Beliefs and Ideologies, Reconciling Ideals and Practicability.**

Angami Students Union, Shillong. September 2005

*I*t seems reconciliation is such an idea – it is now the essential prerequisite for the effectiveness of the UN agencies striving to maintain peace, stability, growth and global security.

The breakthrough achieved by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa enabled the new South Africa to start afresh as a multi-racial-cultural-faith nation. It was a rare event where the best in human beings prevailed, not the worst, as expected. Truth, forgiveness and understanding instead of hate and revenge, were chosen to be the basis of the multi-racial relationships in the new nation.

The result was what was right for all in perhaps the most wounded and embittered situation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. No one believed the ideal of reconciliation was a practicable objective in the South Africa known to the world up to that time. What was humanly impossible became a reality because a 'creative minority' in the crisis dared to risk everything for the truth to win, wanting no fame or gain for themselves, because what is right and best for all was more important to them than their pride or selfishness.

The South African miracle has given hope for change in numerous situations around the world where unspeakable horrors of violence and destruction have crippled entire communities. In Rwanda, Burundi, Sudan,

*A Naga Speaks*

Sierra Leone, Somalia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and other nations, people are admitting wrongs done, opening doors for mutual forgiveness and rebuilding of societies through cooperation. In these devastated nations reconciliation is now regarded not as utopian idealism, but the only way to ensure their survival as nations.

In Australia, New Zealand, Western Europe and North America, admission by the white people of their past genocidal policies to wipe out the native races from their lands and apologising and making restitutions to them is producing change in people at the level of conscience. This has produced legislations for returning land to natives and allocation of funds for education, health and other needs, which is opening the path to political empowerment as well.

At this stage Nagas are discussing no other subject as intensely as we are discussing reconciliation in one form or another. We have come to it later than we should have. We had no idea we needed such a thing at the initial stages of our struggle when Nagas launched out unitedly to become a people.

The power of the idea of the struggle will not die. However, unaddressed but deeply felt hurts caused by mistakes and wrongs wilfully ignored or denied due to pride, selfishness and fear have bred ill will and vengeance. The poisoned legacy threatens to undo the brilliantly argued and orchestrated Naga case in the current talks with Delhi. The intra-Naga crisis over Naga integration clearly shows restoration of trust through fearless, transparent dialogue is the most important Naga struggle now.

Without it, Delhi knows our number and therefore how to handle us. It is a waste of time to keep on blaming Delhi for exploiting our divisions. Why not end the curse of division by ending our selfishness and pride for the sake of the right future of our people?

E N Rammohan, formerly Director General of the Border Security Force (BSF), has written *Insurgent Frontiers: Essays from the Troubled North East*. Speaking of the Nagas in an interview published in *The Indian Express* on 22 July 2005, he said, 'They were never a collective people. They have no collective history. They say they want a nation – that is absurd. We need more force to deal with this issue. The ceasefire has to be slowly tightened. Once the guns are removed, they will be confined. How long can they fight? They are an inherently divided society.'

This is an indicator of how opinion makers are seeing us. We must

know by now that our best hope for an honourable settlement acceptable to both sides lies in the understanding and support of the Indian public of our case. Unless Nagas win the thinking and support of the Indian public, Delhi, i.e. the bureaucracy, will not do anything controversial. The Indian people can be reached if we will unitedly do it with sensitivity, transparency and imagination by going to them, as we started to do a few years back through the 'Journeys of Conscience, Understanding, Friendship and Peace.'

A sustained effort to reach the Indian people by Nagas united on what they will negotiate with Delhi will produce politics of the kind worthy of our history and struggle of which we can be proud. And as Delhi and the Indian public will also respect it, the honourable and workable settlement we need will become a possibility. The battle will not be won from Bangkok, Amsterdam or London, or from consultations that serve factional advantages only.

Our next journey should be to our neighbours to evolve with them a solution that will bring development and security to the whole North East, not just to us. Delhi on its own cannot go beyond talks. Any idea that leaves anybody out is too small and too dangerous for Nagas today. Let no faction ignore this simple truth.

Rammohan's impatience with the Nagas is understandable because Delhi's carrot and stick policy of over half a century to destroy the Naga struggle and erase its facts and memory has not worked. But his dismissal of the idea long nurtured and fought for by Nagas that they are a people is 'absurd', is arrogant and uninformed. Their choice articulated in the statement Nagas made to the Simon Commission in 1929 and reaffirmed in the declaration of 14 August 1947, represents their considered response to the situation that confronted them.

The former BSF chief must keep in mind the bloody caste divisions of centuries in Bihar, UP, Haryana, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, etc... before venting his feelings so easily about Nagas not being a 'collective people' and 'an inherently divided society'. He speaks as if he is not aware of the unspeakable atrocities officers and men of the Indian security forces have perpetrated on the Nagas to squash the deepest beliefs they hold about themselves. On our part we need to show that we can sacrifice our pride, prejudices and selfish ambitions to achieve together what is right and best for all Nagas, or be destroyed by our paralysed, bankrupt politics, underground and overground.

*A Naga Speaks*

We need to wake up to the fact that if the present negotiations should fail due to the unaddressed hurts, short-sighted selfishness and rivalries in our inter-tribe relationships, the legacy the coming generations will inherit will be a vicious, revenge-driven society in which growth and creativity will not be possible.

We urgently need to touch one another's hearts, leaving behind our well-developed skill of stabbing and freezing one another's heart. We will do this and awaken hope and faith if we will show as much honesty to go far enough towards courageous transparency where we are truthful about our own failures, wrongs and regrets. Our standard for finding reconciliation is often too low. It should go far enough to heal our relationships, move our hearts and awaken hope and faith in one another.

The Dalai Lama often talked about his favourite phrases 'warm-heartedness and compassion' being the guarantee of 'global well-being'. And the Bible says, 'Keep thy heart with all diligence: for out of it are the issues of life.' (*Proverb 4, 23*)

At a most critical point when the future of the newly emerging South Africa hung in the balance, Nelson Mandela took a highly imaginative stand that opened the way for reconciliation and cooperation among the races of the new nation. Early in 1994, the Executive Committee of the African National Congress (ANC) met to decide on the country's national anthem. The country's first fully democratic election would be held soon and it was clear the ANC would win. The existing anthem of the white regime, *Die Stem*, was no longer acceptable, as it celebrated the triumphs of 19<sup>th</sup> century *Afrikaner* (white) trekkers as they fought and conquered the indigenous peoples.

An overwhelming majority of the Committee resolved to end the use of *Die Stem*, replacing it with *Nkosi Sikele*, which expressed the suffering of the black majority. When Mandela arrived and came to know the decision he disagreed with conviction. He said, 'Well, I am sorry. I don't want to be rude but this song that you treat so easily holds the emotions of many people whom you don't represent. Yet with a stroke of a pen, you would make a decision to destroy the very – the only – basis that we are building upon: reconciliation.'

No one in the room protested. After the ANC victory in the April election, South Africa adopted *Nkosi Sikele* as an additional anthem. Both are always played in succession in official ceremonies! Just think of it!

In 1995, the year following Mandela's election to the Presidency, South Africa hosted the World Cup Rugby Championships, the most significant international event to take place there since the fall of apartheid. South Africa had been barred from the first two World Cup Rugby Championships in 1987 and 1991 because of its policy of apartheid. Indeed, the 1995 tournament would be a test for the new image of South Africa. What Mandela actually did, however, went far beyond ensuring an organised tournament that reflected well on the new government.

Mandela created an emotional atmosphere that not only enabled the South African team to win the championship, beating Australia, France and New Zealand – but also helped to teach his fellow citizens a new way of thinking about each other and the nation. The stirring account of how Mandela managed to get the black and coloured majority to fully support the white Springboks team to a thrilling historic victory is found in *Blind Trust* by Vamik Volkan.

In reflections later I was ashamed my jealousy revealed my effortless assumption and demand that my family and my tribe should be in prominent decision-making positions for my benefit! My hunger for reputation and attention, which I expected to get from my uncle's success was something more difficult to face. How uncaring and blind one can become, completely thoughtless of the bitterness such selfishness causes in others!

This sharp insight about crusading for God rather than faults of others always helps me to get back to transparency, humility and peace whenever I start to get obsessed with where others are wrong but do not see what others see in me.

Aldous Huxley echoes almost the same thought expressed in the ancient Sanskrit verse which says, 'Do what you know is your duty and leave the results to God.' The chaos and frustrations produced by our unsolved problems have piled up so much that they seem to have paralysed our thinking. No doubt this explains why we Nagas are ending up as a people who are most honest and loud about the mistakes and evils of others but are embarrassingly silent or casual about our own.

Will history's verdict be that our leaders irresponsibly wasted their opportunities of inspired statesmanship by crusading too much against the devil in others but too little for God or truthfulness in themselves? Of course the rest of us need to see where we too are failing to play our parts as God expects us to.

***A Naga Speaks***

It will be in order to end this piece with this pledge for reflection by all who want to see where they can help in the Naga search for reconciliation. If we are honest enough to approach our adversaries by admitting our share in the wrongs they have done to us by acknowledging where our failures or misdeeds must have provoked them to hurt us, an opening of trust and dialogue is always found.

We should know that whatever settlements we may achieve will be at the mercy of entrenched ill will and vengeful distrust unless we go as far, and as deep, as the provocations in our story because we have all been perpetrators and victims in one way or another. The fact is that provocations not transformed always justify hate and revenge.

Even our short history has amply demonstrated this bloodstained truth about all conflicts in the world. Yet this need not continue to be our story if we will decide that starting with ourselves, truthfulness, another word for reconciliation, will not remain a pious ideal, but the way we will treat one another to become a nation and people who can succeed in the modern world.



## Telling Truths

*We have to deal with the wrongs that have piled up in our society*

Correct Response To Crisis	429
Telling The Truth	433
The Importance Of Struggling	434
The Price To Be Paid For Peace	438
For The Recovery Of Our Society's Health	444
Listening To God And Reconciliation	446
Rejoicing In Iniquity Or In The Truth	447
Our Mistakes - Our Common Meeting Ground	449
How Does God Communicate With Us?	453

## Correct Response to Crisis

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**N**agass need to truly know themselves and what they will have to wrestle with in the 21st century.

A model of analysis frequently used these days to bring about changes in people, in situations of industrial, political and other conflicts is called 'SWOT' Analysis. This analysis gives a balanced, correct picture of yourself or your organisation, of where the weaknesses and threats are, which if ignored or treated casually, will produce negative, destructive results. It also identifies the strengths and opportunities, which you can be grateful for and build on. (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats).

In the 50 years of struggling for what we deeply believe to be important for us, we have experienced progress and defeats, triumphs and tragedies, just like other people who have also struggled for their beliefs and aspirations, we are at the threshold of the 21st century which also marks the beginning of a new millennium. At this stage of our history, we need urgently to do a SWOT analysis of ourselves, as individuals and as a people, to know where we stand.

Milovan Djilas, Vice-president of Yugoslavia under President Tito and a highly respected thinker, said, 'We are living today in tomorrow's world with yesterday's ideas.'

Frank Buchman, who started Moral Re-Armament (MRA) at the beginning of this century, said because of the inadequacy and self-centeredness of our thinking many of us end up pursuing goals that are irrelevant. He called this 'Painting your cabin while the ship is sinking.'

The meaning of 'Response' should be understood in considering what Nagas will face in the 21st century. It is said, whether we like it or not, aware of it or not, we are always responding to reality of one kind or another. And the quality of our response decides what we become, individually or as a people. The example of a drug or alcohol addict is a clear illustration of inadequate or wrong response. Alcohol or drugs are not the problem. They are very useful medicinal chemicals.

The problem is in the quality of our response to life's challenges. Our failure to respond adequately results in increase of problems around us, and inevitable neurotic crisis within us. We turn to chemicals for escape

*A Naga Speaks*



from this crisis, which is made up of regret, self- pity and blaming.

The 21st century will force us to face unprecedented changes hitting us from outside in values, culture, politics and education because of fast economic development set in motion by new breakthroughs in science and computer technology.

Something that has already started to be a decisive force for fundamental changes, and which will become increasingly strong in the 21st century, is the shift of industrial and economic growth from North America and Europe to the South, Southeast and East Asian and Pacific nations, stretching from India to the Philippines, and from Japan and Korea to Singapore and Australia and New Zealand.

We are extremely close to this region of high speed economic activity and change. If we will learn to adopt the right attitude and respond correctly to the changes, we will experience all-round growth, becoming a people who can handle development and change in the right way.

But if we should fail to do this, a few will become very rich. They will look, smell and act like the sophisticated jet-set of Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Hong Kong, Shanghai and Tokyo. But the rest, denied of opportunities, will be forced to become extortionists and terrorists who will hold our entire society to ransom; or the addicts and peddlers of drugs from the Golden Triangle so close to the homeland of the Nagas.

We should be ready for anything that can happen in the 21st century out in the world. Will religious fundamentalism or racism of white, yellow or black produce uncontrollable hate, violence and nuclear destruction, which will damage the future of all mankind? Weak and insignificant as we are, we too are required to think and live as responsible citizens of our planet.

The main point I want to make here is that if we say we want to advance into the 21st century with the rest of the world, we have to deal with the wrongs that have piled up in our society. Let us be clear the wrongs that are destroying our society today are not because of a few people only, or because of a faction or a party. All of us have helped to create the wrongs -the corruption, the extortions, the distrust, the vengeful hatreds. Do we admit where we are part of the diseases of our society or do we ignore the question and blame others?

Unless we will heal the wounds we have inflicted on one another, and change the wrongs that have become so destructive, we will get

bogged down in our problems. This has happened in Afghanistan, Algeria, Cambodia and other disaster-struck nations today. Nations like these ones are simply not going forward because the unrighted and buried wrongs of the past have become too heavy. Wrongs always exact a heavy price.

The good news is that Nagas have planted thousands of tree seedlings, and the trees are growing well. We should keep planting more. The bad news is that Nagas are not growing as we should. Will the Nagas who are not growing eventually destroy the trees, and our society, by their decadence and ruthless selfishness? The central issue for us at this very stage is total growth, in mind, spirit and character, which will alter the mental climate of our society. If this is accepted and achieved by Nagas, economic growth through our honest labour will be the natural result.

The sense that we are meeting our own needs through responsible action, will give us the self-confidence we need to face the challenges of nation-building and coping with the world.

A Delhi journalist working with an international media group recently made the following observation to this writer, 'The flames lit by the Sikhs in Punjab burnt fiercely but only for a few years. It is more or less the same in Kashmir, despite repeated eruptions of violence that capture media attention. But even after 50 years of continuous struggle, the Nagas are as ardent for their goal as at the beginning and there are not strong signs that their beliefs are weakening. What is the reason?'

One of the permanent questions on the agenda of every government that comes to power in Delhi is how to end the troublesome struggle of the Nagas for their political aspirations. The reason why the crisis has remained unsolved for so long is because Delhi views the problem as mainly one of 'misguidedness' to be rectified by the judicious use of the carrot and the stick. Indians who think realise that the Nagas cannot easily forget, that they made their position categorically clear before India became independent. However, the question in the minds of all who are watching us is if and how we can sustain our struggle into the coming years. They have assessed our weaknesses and strengths over the past 50 years.

Increasingly, our younger generations are asking questions about struggling for anything beyond wealth and the comforts of life. Is it important for a people to struggle? Many have not thought of what would have become of our spirit if our elders had not fought for what they believed. But the pressure of these questions on us is all the greater

*A Naga Speaks*

because Delhi's response to our political struggle has made Nagas think that whatever may be the rule elsewhere, we Nagas do not need to strain and stretch ourselves to go forward because Delhi will pay our bills.

And tomorrow 'foreign aid' from various nations will pay for our republic when that comes! Divorced from reality, this type of thinking produces addiction to chemicals and other addictive diversions. But this is our attitude to life. It is not surprising too many Nagas think being a people requires no more than mouthing political slogans, producing aggressive statements, or taking part in elections to form government which come into being mainly to receive money from Delhi and spend them as salaries and development funds which are wildly misused producing no development.

Alexis de Tocqueville, French statesman and author in the 19th century, said, 'It seem as if the rulers of our time sought only to use men to make things great; I wish they would try a little more to make great men; that they would set less value on the work and more on the workmen: that they would never forget that a nation cannot be strong when so many belonging to it are weak.'

These wise words of Tocqueville express what we should learn from the past 50 years, whether we are overground or underground. Our conviction to become a people and a nation is deep and genuine. But looking back on the destructive trail behind us we have to admit that our personal ambitions and self-vindication have been more important to us than 'making great men' out of our 'individually weak' people. Our concept of leadership has to break out of pompous VIP-ism so that leaders are statesmen who enable others also to become what they are meant to be.

Let us face it, unless we succeed in producing a better version of our present selves, we will continue to destroy everything we touch, as we have done to the State, and virtually all subsequent projects of agriculture, industry, health and education. Our people have reaped bitterness and despair instead of hope and growth because of massive irresponsibility and selfishness by too many who should have known better.

Whatever our serious failures, in choosing to fight for their beliefs our elders took daring risks, including being wrong, so that future generations may not be deprived of any options that should rightfully be theirs. The following lines will help us to appreciate better what we have inherited.

*But risks must be taken because the greatest hazard in life is to risk*

**A Naga Speaks**

*nothing;*

*The person who risks nothing does nothing, has nothing, is nothing.*

*He may avoid suffering and sorrow,*

*But he cannot learn, change, feel, grow, love, live.*

*Chained by his certitude he has forfeited his freedom.*

*Only a person who risks is free - Anonymous*

Let us learn, change and grow.



### **Telling the Truth**

**S**C Jamir, NSCN (IM), NSCN (K), NNC (Adinno) have all at various times admonished, at times rebuked, the Church and Naga Hoho to 'tell the truth'. The Church here means all the Churches.

This is Naga unity or consensus of one kind on one issue. Something in the right direction! The Church and Naga Hoho should perhaps be flattered that all the groups so naturally expect them to perform the highest task in life, namely, telling the truth! But the problem of this epidemic for truth is about others' failures and wrongs!

But there is a real difficulty or error here, which the Church and Naga Hoho leaders cannot treat lightly and they have not done so.

The Naga struggle for sovereignty has split into four groups. We seem to have decided our cherished aspiration is so important that one group alone cannot, must not struggle for it! So four factions are trying to achieve it for us. Then we have Mr S C Jamir holding sway overground. Dev Kanta Baruah once said, 'Indira is India, India is Indira.' The Congress (I) in Nagaland seems to have decided and I think have declared S C Jamir is that equivalent for them. Whether or not Jamir thinks such man-worshipping adulation is healthy for any party or our society is not known.

With all Nagas, the Church and Naga Hoho also have a rough list of the plus and minus points of all our leaders and their groups. Some of the minus points are too concealed and defended that they cannot be proved besides being too dangerous to be pursued.

The Church and Naga Hoho may not say anything in response to the frequent calls and criticisms they receive to tell the truth. One, of course,

does not know what the two apex bodies think or will do. But as a well-wisher of the Church and Naga Hoho and involved in some of their efforts, one is aware that the meetings of the Church and Naga Hoho discuss nothing but the concealed truths about our various groups and leaders, which are keeping our society so divided and weakened.

It will be so easy to simply tell the truths, that is, the specific failures and wrongs of the various leaders and groups. But, wisdom has prevailed and the temptation resisted so far. The Church and Naga Hoho are clear that if they also start to recklessly point out the wrongs of the groups and leaders, the precious, but fragile, common platform for all Nagas will disappear, and the Church and Naga Hoho will become two additional factions telling the truths about others, Naga style. Having four factions is enough for our small population!

But the truth must be told to stop the immaturity of blaming. However, what Christ is waiting for us to do is that we are first truthful about our destructive failures, mistakes and wrongs we regret when we wake up at midnight, or are not proud of, but have concealed or justified. This will inspire the others to do likewise and become better human beings. Can we deny we urgently need a radically changed version of every one of us, which gives faith and hope to others, and brings our Christianity alive? The kind of change which makes people say to themselves, 'If a rascal, a thief, like him can be different there is hope for me also!' Every saint has a past, every sinner has a future.

So the next time any leader or group is tempted to admonish the Church, Naga Hoho, the various NGOs, or others, to tell the truth, let them be honest about themselves first, where they have been a part of the problems of our society and drastically change themselves to become a part of the cure before making dishonest attacks on others. We will then be telling the truth God's way, that is, about our wrongs which gives hope to others to do likewise.

## **The Importance of Struggling**

2005

*L*ast year Naga Students' Union Shillong organised a one-day seminar at Nagaland House. The debate was on the consequences of the

*A Naga Speaks*

Naga political struggle on the Nagas. Two young ladies won the first and second prizes. Their contention was that the struggle had done more harm than good to the Nagas!

An Indian historian with long and intimate experience of the North East said later, 'Those who pointed out the failures of the struggle won because, apart from their excellent performances, the negative points they listed have become so painfully obvious. But the present generation of Nagas must ask where would Nagas be today if the earlier generation of Nagas had not risked to be true to themselves and struggled for what they naturally believed to be the right course for their people?' Then expressing his admiration for the day's events, he said, 'To the extent things were done so splendidly today, to that extent Nagas are independent! Sovereignty is not just a matter of flying the flag of a republic! Doing things well is the significant part of freedom.' There is something here we should understand.

Nagas declared to the Simon Commission in 1929 and on 14 August 1947 what they naturally felt and saw about themselves at those times. The timings of these declarations indicate the degree of thought they had given to what they aspired to become one day. The tenacity with which they have fought for their goal is the central fact about the Nagas over the last 50 years.

It is equally true that something has gone wrong with the Naga struggle because it has become excessively destructive and divisive. Our people have begun to wonder about this. We cannot take comfort in the fact that this kind of deterioration takes place in all struggles and do nothing to rectify our failures and weaknesses. To do so would be to give the coming generations of Nagas a cursed, poisoned inheritance, similar to the nightmare the people in Rwanda, Algeria, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Cambodia and a few other nations are experiencing today.

Therefore, the greatest priority facing all Nagas today is to restore to ourselves a struggle that will demand the best and highest out of all and take us correctly forward. This statement implies two vital points:

1. A people cannot live without struggling and wrestling for a goal.
2. The meaning and size of the goal decides whether the struggle is destructive or creative and inspiring.

Now let us examine these two points. We can be gratefully confident that our elders were right in taking the stand they did. It was most important that they truthfully asserted what was most natural

to them showing high courage and commendable initiative. It is also a significant point to be understood that their unity and strength came from their confidence in the stand they had taken, or in the thought they pursued. What is sought to be pointed out here is:

1. Confidence in what we stand for is the most important factor in the struggle of a people.
2. Continuous confidence comes from the rightness or correctness of the thought behind the stand. A wrong stand can be pursued with great confidence for some time, but its error is revealed sooner or later, and confidence vanishes.
3. Our thinking to be right, should be fully relevant to the changing realities of the world around us at any given time, not subservient to personal agendas. This is the meaning of 'What is right?'

What emerges from this analysis is that there is an incompleteness, an error, in our thinking which has made our struggle destructive. Now where is this defect or incompleteness that has produced the hellish situation of today?

As in most political struggles or movements, ours too was full of high emotion for the goal and dream that had formed in our imagination for a long time. It was a simple, single-issue aspiration, namely, to become a people and nation by exercising our right of option warranted by the facts of our history. So at the initial stage the struggle was full of confidence. Our national workers and fighters felt independence was about to be achieved in a matter of months, or in a few years.

'It was the best of times, and the worst of times' to borrow Dickens' words about the time of the French Revolution. But as is often the case, the thinking was tragically and dangerously incomplete. Our people did not bother themselves with the practical aspects of being an independent nation, - the economic aspects and the crucial qualities of responsible citizenship that a modern State requires from its people.

Our leaders must have thought as Kwame Nkrumah, Father of Ghana and pioneer of African freedom struggle did. He told his people, 'Seek ye first the political kingdom and all else will be added unto you.' Drive out the white rulers and milk and honey will flow for Africans to enjoy as a matter of course; Our version was essentially the same, namely, that if Indians left the land of the Nagas, our abundant natural resources would automatically enable Nagas to achieve rapid growth and easily run



their republic.

Those who are knowledgeable do say our natural resources are plentiful. But a modern State does not succeed with natural resources alone. The decisive factors for success are installation and maintenance of infrastructure, possession by the people of a developed work culture rooted in discipline and a responsible attitude towards life.

In other words, being morally and spiritually mature, realising that the common welfare of a community is achieved only by everyone giving their best. There is enough for everyone's need but not for everyone's greed and selfish irresponsibility.

Is it then anti-Naga in declaring that we need to learn from the errors, that misled many nations into ruin?

I am not saying that to fight for a political kingdom is wrong. Indeed if the legality and historical validity of a struggle is as clear as the Naga case is, and if the people believe in their case enough to fight for it, as Nagas have done, it is vitally important that they don't casually abandon their stand and go for easier options that give immediate returns. But what is asserted here is that the decisive battle is in the human element of the struggle. The struggle can have the most stirring revolutionary slogans with people whose selfish, self-centered lives can destroy the struggle.

We should become worthy of our aspirations by accepting the changes needed in our thinking and living. The destructiveness of our struggle comes from the simple fact that our thinking and living, our caring and responsibility, and our character and integrity do not at all match the standards of excellence and selflessness required by our goal.

Our concept of freedom and sovereignty needs to shift from the present one of instant gratification, financed, paid for by others, to that of freedom as essentially a process of nation-building where the problems are being tackled and solved individually and collectively because everyone is living responsibly. We need to implant at the center of our thinking that freedom, sovereignty and development are not finished products that someone gives to us to enjoy. These highly desired things are projects or processes that are exciting because each one of is meant to finish them by giving our very best, wanting nothing for ourselves. It is surely significant that the same thing can be said about salvation and eternal life!

The main points from the examination are:

1. One of the costliest errors a people can make is to want the material



fruits of political freedom and ignore the caring for the tree of which politics is only a part. When this tree loses its health because it is neglected, the other fruits like peace, stability, trust, hope, concern and compassion also disappear. The ruthless fight for the material fruits then take over society.

2. Political targets like independence with a national flag and diplomatic recognition by other nations and the UN are important. But these formal political symbols of nationhood are worthless status symbols for a people if they have not acquired the qualities of mind and heart and conscience and work skills to make their society work to meet their own needs.
3. The wisest thing Naga leaders can do at this stage is to reach a provisional settlement with Delhi for a specified period on conditions clearly spelt out, and get our people fully involved in the urgently needed process of all-round growth: mental, spiritual, character and economic. Because of the uniqueness of the Naga case clearly established before 15 August 1947, Nagas are fully entitled to expect the people of India and their government to agree to negotiate for a final settlement that will be satisfactory to both sides. Nagas should help the people of India to understand this. This approach will make our struggles safe, meaningful, effective and unstoppable.

No leader will put it in so many words. But this hidden demand can create havoc in a people's struggle because it inevitably breathes tyranny and dictatorship. It will require our leaders to be free from the attitude that 'a final settlement must be reached in my or our lifetime.'

### The Price to be paid for Peace

*P*ace, like love, happiness, democracy, freedom, and even fresh water and pure air, is one of those precious things of life which, when we have it in abundance, we human beings take it so much for granted as something that happens easily and naturally. When in due course peace starts to be replaced by division and conflicts, and tension rises, we quickly and smartly find someone or some groups to blame for the deterioration in the situation, and we even congratulate ourselves on the brilliant insight we have contributed to the search for peace!

*A Naga Speaks*

Only when it is too late and chaos and violence have resulted in massive destruction of lives and property, including our own, then we grudgingly begin to accept that like others we too have played perhaps quite an important part in the slow but sure murdering of peace by our divisive self-righteousness and ineffectiveness or callous indifference.

The lessons from the newly launched global struggle to protect the environment have much to offer for our search for building peace, which is a venture that is centuries old. Success in both these perilous enterprises depends entirely on us human beings, individually and collectively, to simply care till it hurts and which changes us so that the bountiful resources of our planet will be available for the needs of all and exploitation of none. For there is enough in the world for everyone's need, but not enough for every one's greed.

Perhaps the chief function of this special day of commemorating peace is to put the spotlight on the costly price that each citizen must pay for the commodity that is getting rarer and rarer - peace. The quality decides the price.

Our papers, playing their full role as the fourth estate, are full of charges and counter-charges of misdeeds and ruthless exploitation of public property on scales that are immense. It is said that half the lies they tell about the Irish are not true. It would seem that not all the things said about Nagas today are lies and those that are true are sufficient to cripple the proper functioning of the administrative machinery and every other area of society. And that's what we have.

The trouble is we are so good at telling the truth about the misdeeds and illegal dealings of others but crudely hide what we ourselves have done and perhaps are still doing! This is called 'Judging others by their ugly actions and myself by the high ideals I believe in!' The result is deep resentment, distrust and vengeful rage poisoning every conceivable relationship in our society.

Millions of people are hungry for and clamour for peace. But as individuals we live so selfishly and irresponsibly that peace is impossible, British writer Dorothy Sayers said, 'War is a judgement that overtakes societies. Never think that wars are irrational catastrophes: they happen when wrong ways of thinking and living, bring about intolerable situations.' Peace, like freedom or happiness in families, is not just a great idea, it means people becoming radically different in the way they think and treat others. Can we occasionally ask ourselves this question, 'If everyone thinks

and behaves like me in Nagaland, India and the world, will there be peace and development or will there be conflict, economic collapse and war?’

We need to now and then take a fearless inventory of ourselves, (as it is done at rehabilitation centres like Mount Gilead Home) If I may bring in a personal note here. When I decided to be responsible as an individual to build understanding and peace years ago, I found, or was rather helped by some good friends, that I needed to start by putting quite a few things right in my life. I did, and restored damaged relationships with certain friends through honest apologies and restitutions.

This helped me to further face the forces of ambition and the me-first attitude in me. What I did then gave me, I think, a much-needed personal experience of the battle between good and evil, right and wrong that goes on in all of us. It became clear that evil and wrong has to be answered at some point by my obedience to God, to ‘the still small voice’ as Gandhiji called it, which means paying the price for the wrong done at my level.

Since my return to Nagaland about a year ago, I found myself being quite indignant towards all the bad people I have read about. One day I read about the huge phone bills left by politicians and officials to be paid by the State. I felt uncomfortable because I too had made some STD calls gratis from the official phone of someone I knew well and just let it go at that. A rough calculation of what I should have paid came to a certain amount. I have not found it easy to repay this amount, as no department exists to receive such restitutional repayments, it seems! But I am clear the repayment has to be done, perhaps with the advice of Mr Krishnatry I am not making a song and dance about a small step I am taking. The point is if everyone uses public property and facilities like I ended up doing, where will the money be found to keep them going?

The part every one must play and where each should start is not difficult to find.

On August 31, the *Nagaland Post* published a photo of an office peon and his wife with their baby and the haul of drugs confiscated from them when they were caught by a certain organisation in Chandmari, Kohima. They are now in police custody. What the photo manages to show is heartrending. As the legal provisions against trafficking are now severe, the young family’s fate is tragic.

I want to add what I have written to the Editor about the couple.

The photo vividly confirms that the reality that Honore de Balzac described of the society of his day has caught up with us also: 'Laws are spider webs through which the big flies pass and the little ones get caught.'

This is not to suggest that what the couple have been doing should be condoned because they are poor and probably from a backward tribe. (We have plenty of shocking examples of the poor becoming rich using ruthless shortcuts and being notoriously oppressive because they hate their lowly beginnings.) What is suggested is that society is already paying too heavily for the accumulated rage of the small flies who do not, of course, see why they should be the only ones to get caught in the law and order web.

In order not to get caught they become the lethally armed extortioners and goondas now dictating terms for every area of our polity including, of course, the conduct of elections. Can we deny that if one is from a backward tribe and therefore inadequately protected, or from a poor family without the right linkages with the emerging power structure, one's chances for getting a fair deal in any situation (in this Christian State of ours) are extremely limited?

The pathetic couple must have concluded from their observation of the ways in which others have achieved success that what they did could not be all that wrong. If you get caught and you are not properly connected, then you've had it for you'll be properly dealt with according to the law!

How many of us will promise after seeing the photo to end our fraudulent and callous ways of advancing ourselves so that the less successful ones like the young couple and their child may see hope for a just future? If we will stand by our promise, God will have a chance to intervene in our affairs.

It is said 'A nation's thinking is in ruins before a nation's institutions, systems and buildings are in ruins.' We have seen the reality of this at the local state level. But peace is indivisible and cannot be fought for at the local level alone. There is the national and international dimension as well of which what we have is a small part.

The utter lawlessness everywhere and the livid rage that is shaking India and the sub-continent and rendering India and all her neighbours virtually ungovernable today, have their origins in millions being provoked or feeling justified to do their worst because they have seen for too long those who can well afford not to be corrupt being rapacious and



monumentally greedy and being unpunishable because of their privileged positions.

I read Gandhiji's autobiography, *My Experiments with Truth*, in my first year at College. By the end of it I found a real love and respect for India and I remember feeling ashamed for being so critical and negative towards India while being so selfish myself. Without these deep emotions of love, respect and shame being roused in the hearts of millions of ordinary people by the leadership at the national level, it is really futile and even counter-productive to call for national integration and that sort of thing. Which leader in Delhi today stirs these profound emotions in us today? Indeed, which leader in our state who will come asking for our votes before long?

As one looks back, one sees a scenario of disgrace, shoddiness, stark betrayal of values and manipulations, instead of bold statesmanship and compassionate leadership. When Babu Jagjivan Ram was discovered to have failed to pay his taxes for ten years, he was let off the hook because it was case of 'absentmindedness'. More to the point was that the Harijan votes he represented were too crucial to be risked by the Government of the day.

When scandal after scandal surfaced under Mrs Indira Gandhi, including Sanjay Gandhi's fraudulent attempts to get two car engines imported from Germany, certified by the relevant department as his own prototype Maruti engines, designed and built by Sanjay at his Gurgaon factory, Mrs Gandhi blithely brushed it aside saying corruption was a global phenomenon.

This permissive attitude led to one of India's richest industrialists importing an entire petrochemical plant from Europe for his mighty industrial complex without paying any customs duty. Bofors is too well known. The opposition, which did a splendid job of exposing the frauds, showed that they were interested only in their own aggrandisement. The roles played by Devilal, Chandrashekhar, etc... are all known and V P Singh has been shown to be incapable of rising above playing politics with the hurts of the down-trodden instead of mobilising the nation with vision to give a fair deal to those who have suffered so long.

Yes, none of the great pronouncements, nor the much-publicised Accords have inspired trust and respect, because personal motivations have been perceived behind high-sounding, hastily contrived policies. Has not all this contributed to the tragedy of what is going on in Punjab,

***A Naga Speaks***



Kashmir, and elsewhere? What Pakistan is doing to help dismember India in Punjab is so wrong, dangerous and shortsighted. But Pakistan is hell-bent to make India pay for Bangladesh.

The thinking of Delhi became shallow and was in ruins some decades back. The ruins of towns, villages, farms, lives of millions are the all too obvious ruin.

Christ somewhere asked, 'Do you give stone when someone asks for bread; serpents when someone asks for fish?' Rebirth of peace and its growth starts when we learn to give bread instead of stone to one another and fish instead of serpents. Gandhiji's wisdom is worth remembering: 'Things of fundamental importance to our people cannot be secured by reason alone; they have to be purchased with their suffering.'

To resolutely and painstakingly but with vision rebuild peace of all our lives is possible, and it can be normal living for everyone.

I end this with the prayer of St. Francis of Assisi:

*Lord,  
Make me an instrument of Thy peace,  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love ;  
Where there is injury, pardon;  
Where there is doubt, faith;  
Where there is despair, hope;  
Where there is darkness, light;  
Where there is sadness, joy.  
Oh! Divine Master,  
Let me seek not so much to be consoled as to console,  
To be understood as to understand,  
To be loved as to love;  
For,  
It is in giving that we receive,  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
It is in dying that we are born to eternal life.*

## For the Recovery of our Society's Health.

Angami Youth Organisation

Our aspirations are so important to us. So we are baffled and dismayed our struggle for them has become so destructive to itself and to the people for whom it was launched. The overground Nagaland State has become equally destructive to itself and to the people for whom it was supposedly created. The State is the first disputed child of the struggle, and therefore a part of the struggle. The comprehensive degradation of our society that every Assembly election causes and the consequent degradation that continues on a larger scale thereafter tell the story of this terrible destructiveness.

If the Nagas were asked what worried and concerned them the most today, all will mention the lawlessness and selfishness with impunity that have paralysed our society. The wrongs we have allowed to take over our society have become unmanageable and too difficult to tackle or even discuss. Roman historian Titus Livius said of his society in the 1st century AD, 'We have reached the point where we cannot bear either our vices or their cure.' Is this not true of our society today?

As World War II started to rage across Europe, Dorothy Sayers, Christian playwright and apologist wrote, 'War is a judgement that overtakes societies when they have been living upon ideas that conflict too violently with the laws governing the universe. Never think that wars are irrational catastrophes: they happen when wrong ways of thinking and living, bring about intolerable situations.'

In 1998 Martin Woollacott wrote in *Manchester Guardian* about former Yugoslavia that was being violently torn apart by hate-driven nationalist rivalries: 'The most terrible process of all is not the war-making that takes lives and destroys villages and towns, but the irrevocable damage to the majority who survive. The killing may stop... but societies undermined by distrust, deformed by a literally hateful politics, ashamed of a murderous past, and burdened with criminalised economies do not recover.'

The two observations are about us and our society also – undermined, deformed, ashamed and vengefully bitter, and burdened by a criminalised economy that is blatantly defended with impunity by ruthless, faceless operators. Indeed, the chickens of the Naga struggle have

*A Naga Speaks*

come home to roost, as the expression goes. And the neurotic chickens are disturbing our peace of mind. Will we care to figure out what God is requiring all of us to be and to do, individually and collectively, and start to be the changes we want to see? This is the calling of destiny to each one to become a responsible human being!

Condemning the struggle or the chickens is understandable. But that alone will make things worse because there is no change in any one. We are required to do more than condemning. We will need to struggle for changes to enable our society to recover from its terrible wounds and grow properly. Struggling is imperative for all people on this planet. We too will make many mistakes just like others battling to grow. The point is to learn to be responsible, to show understanding of others' mistakes as we want others to understand ours, thus inspire one another to respond correctly which is the toughest thing to do in life.

The easiest things are said about peace and reconciliation. 'Give peace a chance' for instance. It is catchy but so incomplete and misleading. Diplomats who negotiate to avert conflicts and war know it takes more than that. So do peacemakers creating connections for honest dialogue to remove hatred and distrust. To search for peace is to discover that its birth or its destruction starts inside each one of us. The needed macro socio-economic and structural changes that deliver justice and progress have to be sustained by the changes in the lives of sufficient number human beings who care enough to be responsible. 'Peace is not just an idea, it is people becoming different,' said Frank Buchman who started the Initiatives of Change movement.

Apologising to the IM for my deep inner jealousy of NSCN (IM)'s impressive competence in organising efficient all-Naga Bangkok consultations, I found this personal experience deeply transformative for me and unforgettable. It did not change Nagaland or the world. But I certainly have learned from it the importance of always stopping to examine my unease whenever it occurs, willing to be vulnerable, so that what God is trying to tell me is given a chance to be discerned and obeyed giving Him an opening through me to intervene.

This needed change is demanding but it is the only way to live on our endangered planet. To discover that it is do-able and accepting it as normal living is sanity. Life becomes meaningful and satisfying because it is challenging.



## Listening to God, and Reconciliation

**G**od can speak to us. He wants to and does speak to us. This surely is the most precious truth about each one of us!

Just think of it. I am not just a meaningless package of flesh, blood and bones with my name tagged on the bundle simply for easy identification and nothing beyond that. No. I am not biodegradable junk, perfumed, painted and clothed to walk down the desperate catwalk of life as if in a beauty contest, to disappear into the fearful void soon after. Not at all! For I am wonderfully made to be guided by my Creator to achieve his plans. If this is true, then listening to what he wants me to do and be, is as important as praying to him so that he knows what I want!

‘What is man that you regard him to be important, and give him so much attention, that you visit him every morning and test him every moment?’ (Job 7). In utter exasperation, but no doubt also wonder, Job asked God, ‘Will you never look away from me, or let me alone even for an instant?’

God has been called ‘the Tremendous Lover’, ‘the Hound of Heaven’, who pursues us with ‘deliberate speed’ and ‘majestic instancy’. God’s unyielding, relentless interest in us has been clear from the very beginning.

To be jealous like Cain is so human, but to be misguided by it is to be needlessly destructive because the person you are jealous of needs your help and friendship, not your hate, bullet or dagger.

God made an all-out attempt for Cain’s sanity, character and destiny. God wanted him to find the highest philosophy of life to give creative leadership rejecting lesser alternatives.

Then we have the endlessly thought-provoking story of Jacob all night wrestling with God. One important meaning of the story must be that God expects us to wrestle with him, doubt him, and touch him; to dare to do our utmost to defeat or disprove him. He does not mind. But He expects us to be truthful, fearless and open in our search for truth.

Jacob was being true to himself when he wrestled fearlessly with the intruder. This was what God approved, and even respected, if one might so put it. Jacob was a grown-up man, physically and in terms of material wealth. He grew mentally, spiritually and morally by the wrestle, which clearly symbolised the experience of a man learning and growing from facing difficult challenges instead of avoiding them.

*A Naga Speaks*

This is probably the meaning of the unusual wrestling. In deciding to wrestle with the stranger, Jacob fully used his God-given thinking faculty to assess and confront the situation instead of giving in to fear and panic.

Jacob struggled and fought all-out. His hip joint became dislocated when his opponent struck it. Jacob became aware that it was not an ordinary wrestling because something more than human was involved. Instead of giving in to fear and panic, he used his thinking faculty to the full. So when the man said, 'Let me go, daylight is coming,' Jacob boldly answered, 'I won't, unless you bless me.'



### Rejoicing in Iniquity or in the Truth?

The formula for building hell or the kingdom of God on earth is precisely and simply stated in 1Corinthian 13:6 – 'Love does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth.' It is strange but true that politics and religion play equal and the same parts to create hell or heaven on earth depending on the desires and passions that motivate us human beings. We are the deciding factor. That is the bad news as well as the good news!

It doesn't take long to discover that God is the toughest, most important issue in politics and in religion because the moment we ignore or disobey Him in politics or religion we inevitably condemn ourselves to be Satan's instruments for building his hell on earth, as it must be in hell. Hell and heaven are instant happenings like the Big Bang that we are told launched the Universe. Hell and heaven start in extremely small thoughts and deeds. But they too expand like the Universe.

If we go far into politics we find God sitting there giving no room for any doubt that it is meant to be run His way, not our way. And if we go far enough into religion we find the same God sitting there of course maintaining the same claim over religion. What is curious and so significant is that the tunnels, so to speak, through politics and religion are really an extension of each other and God is found to be at the meeting point of the two tunnels!

To explain a bit this geography (which some may think is something from a story by Tolkien?) the tunnel that starts from the area of life called 'politics' turns at a bend where God is sitting, and ends on the surface in an area of life called 'religion'. The border between the two areas on the

*A Naga Speaks*

surface is not too clear. A careful survey reveals that in Nagaland the two areas have overlapped extensively over the years.

Those in politics, underground and overground, say and do things that are supposed to show their religious loyalty that even God must be baffled all the time. Some of the underground show no hesitation in insisting that their factional position is sacrosanct because God's spirit has told them it is His position although many Nagas are clear that is an insult to God's understanding of Naga politics and history and His love for honesty.

Others declare that Nagaland is for Christ even if a lot of the things they do in his name and with his stationery to control and tax Nagaland have made many Nagas to think that Nagas don't need to go to hell to find out what hell is like. And it is no secret that generous contributions from the overground political process called the State have enabled many church buildings to be built for the glory of God. What God thinks about the sources and routes of the contributions is anybody's guess, and yet if we say it is for God's glory what can He say?

To read the accusations, flaying and castigations of one another and the inevitable 'rejoinders' that make up our public discussions is to discover the level of bankruptcy we have reached in politics, spirituality and the philosophy of life we live by. No wonder what we call our 'economy' is an ugly reflection of this bankruptcy of mind, heart and soul. The origin of this bankruptcy is in our violation of the standard of obedience and truthfulness to God.

The terribly destructive bankruptcy in our politics and religion will be ended if we can learn from the harm we have done to ourselves and to one another so far. Sooner or later none of us will be exempt from the guilt and regret for our individual share in the destruction of our society.

Out of a long list of missed opportunities which have given Satan a clear advantage over God I venture to discuss only a few which if pursued will immediately give an opening to God to enter and change our political crisis that threatens to overwhelm us and destroy all we hold dear.

As far as I am concerned the Shillong Accord issue has the greatest potential for doing the greatest good to our inter-faction crisis if with God's grace and vision we can be sufficiently truthful and give Him the chance He is waiting for. This is so not because it is the worst mistake but because it requires all to be truthful if we are to become free from its curse.

A simple acknowledgement by Adinno's NNC and FGN that those who called for a straightforward rejection of the Accord on the ground of its sheer political invalidity and uselessness because it was signed under duress was right, and the delay in saying so is regretted will open the door to a new kind of politics for our people.

Only three of the signatories are alive today. Sani Darhü returned to his village of Tungjoy after he discovered that there was no transparency about the Accord in the Transit Camp and his misgivings were ignored. Biseto Medom who got associated with the Accord at the earlier stages of examination of its terms rejected it as unacceptable and dangerous for Naga unity. Temjen Ao, the 3<sup>rd</sup> surviving signatory, appears to be ambivalent in so far as he has not publicly said much about the Accord.



### **Our Mistakes, our common Meeting Ground**

*E*very nation needs a challenging aim to struggle for or the people perish. We Nagas have valiantly struggled for our aims and we have achieved much.

But isn't the situation we are in today comparable to two different train journeys? First, our society's performance in running the State government is like a train journey that has come to a stop because the engine is dead and the compartments are in disrepair due to neglect, misuse of funds, and pilferages of parts and accessories by the crew, the passengers and the public ever since the train started running! The truth about the budgeted funds cannot be found because everyone has had a part, some major others small, in the stealing and mismanagement. According to a former State Governor, quoting economic intelligence reports, 90% of funds that come annually from Delhi disappear. Truth is stranger than fiction.

The other journey is our people's political struggle. It is like a speeding train that has gone out of control. A fight has broken out in the engine room over some issues. The dispute has spread to the passengers also. The members of the crew are totally preoccupied with the fight leaving the train to hurtle dangerously on its own momentum. The issues in the dispute are obviously important. But what is going to happen to the people when the train smashes into another train or into a station ahead?

### ***A Naga Speaks***

The passengers and people along the tracks are helpless spectators.

The risks of misunderstanding due to careless or deliberate misinterpretation resulting in dangerous complications have become too easy in Nagaland today. For instance, the suggestion that the train has gone out of control can be misinterpreted to mean that it is a politically motivated attack on the engine crew! But our leaders owe it to themselves and their people to reassure them by resolving their differences at this dangerous juncture. This too can be interpreted as a sinister suggestion against our struggle or that the differences are superficial. On the contrary it is a cry from the heart to rise above differences however tough, and show high statesmanship and restore to our people a struggle they can participate in with fullest confidence and hope so that we may win.

The restoration of our struggle will be possible only if we can all agree to go beyond the present fruitless debate on 'Who is right' and accept a joint search for 'What is right'. The exercise should be safe, as it will require everyone to change equally and rise to something higher and better to achieve a common good! The sensitive victor-victim, winner-loser issue also becomes redundant. If what is right is our aim and achievement, everyone wins because it is God's victory. Can a people's struggle rely on a lesser standard? Is this simple-minded utopianism? But try to establish it in society and you will discover it is the quietest, most comprehensive revolution there is. For no area of your life can be left out of reckoning, private or public, if what is right is your aim and commitment. This is so because God draws the battle line, not the soldiers.

After more than half a century of unyielding struggle, intense differences, solid achievements and painful failures, our most urgent need now is to take stock to get a correct assessment of ourselves. We may complain about things we do not yet have or what we are not. But we need to know that we are not less than what we are. Then faithfully build on it with joy. What we are is significant.

Looking at our situation today, overground and underground, one is driven to conclude that probably 80% of what we call 'Naga politics' is really inter-tribal, inter-personal rivalry, shameless pursuit of easy money and mutual disgust and insecurity, all covered up with loud statements which convince no one least of all ourselves; and only 20% is genuine struggle for political principles and aspirations.

The temperature and delirium of our politics has become abnormal because truth is the missing factor. The suppressed truths of our

*A Naga Speaks*

mistakes are wreaking vengeance on all of us. Our politics has now been reduced to a fierce confrontation of hidden agendas. We use lies, violence and money to resolutely hide our own agendas and attack others for hiding theirs.

We seem to think that if the hidden skeletons of our opponents get exposed to the public, our problems will be solved. The trouble is our opponents take the same view about those in our own closet. The result is pollution of the fountain spring of trust. The contaminated water of distrust from the spring has produced an epidemic. Look at how we treat one another in every area of society now?

Can we Nagas show sanity and true greatness at this critical stage and agree together that mistakes and failures are no longer personal affairs and our survival demands that we address them objectively, fairly and radically, before it is too late? The exercise is hazardous as deep personal, family and tribal emotions can come into play and deepen the prevailing misunderstanding and bitterness. But we can no longer discuss our crisis at the surface level only and hope that the killings due to mutual distrust and vengeful hate will stop. The process of mutual elimination has acquired its own momentum and logic.

Only a miracle of heavenly grace from the blood of Christ crucified can slow down the process and forestall total tragedy. Will the leaders of the warring groups show us the way?

Our leaders' challenging task is to give us a struggle that will work. At this stage we need to find agreement that both our aims and our methods to achieve them will stand the test of our conscience and win the respect of our own people as well as the people of India. Without such an adequate philosophy as the basis, our struggle cannot survive the pressures it will have to confront. Guns and money can take a people up to a certain point. Beyond that the fundamental issues of national success or failure are decided in the hearts and minds of the people. Can we not help one another to accept this central lesson of this century by deciding that we ourselves will not accept anything less than that which will work?

It is said, 'Statesmanship is oftentimes the moral courage to do today what events will force you to do tomorrow.'

The imagery of the speeding train is used to convey the helplessness of the public and the centrality of the role of the leaders in our present situation. This is undeniable. But today's crisis is only a part

of the larger story of the Naga struggle. Our struggle has definitely become unmanageably destructive. And we so carelessly think that the blame for this rests mainly with the clashing factions. This is perhaps natural and inevitable in view of open claims that the factions have frequently made for their side, some of which have been too arbitrary and excessive for their own good. But let us be clear that today's storm and chaos have not arrived suddenly. They started from yesterday's mistakes and wrongs of the underground and overground people. Who then can say he or she is excluded from the burden of responsibility.

We need to develop an objective attitude towards our mistakes and wrongs! Not that God made them, but that there must be something in our mistakes, which we have made in such abundance! We seem to be guided by an immature and unexamined fear of mistakes. If we can be less defensive about them, God can show us how to use them for His work of healing. It seems our mistakes and problems are interlinked in layers in the shape of a bush. In the top outer layer, they appear as flowers and fruits with cultural, eco-political names. At the bottom, at the individual family level their names are ego, pride, greed, indifference, jealousy, cruelty and perversion, all growing in a rich manure of blame and fear. Reality is at the concealed lower level.

Our mistakes are costly to ourselves and to others. We cannot treat them lightly. What we need to realise is that there is God's right and our human wrong way of dealing with them. Dealing with them God's way, we help to build His Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Doing it our way we instantly create hell on earth as it must in hell.

To truly examine our mistakes is to go through a frightening hell. But if our hand is in His hand, He takes us to unexpected joy at the other end. Let us understand how our mistakes become our assets.

The big mistakes are made by those who attempt to do big things. Those of us who think we make no mistakes, and so can easily talk of the mistakes of others, perhaps do not dare to do anything!

If our mistakes are known and we cannot hide them, we try to show how harmless and small they are. But others are more interested why we defend our mistakes, not in their sizes. Often the biggest mistakes are forgiven if there is total transparency.

Our stoutly defended or hidden mistakes are the logjam blocking the free flow of the river of understanding, trust, compassion and



forgiveness. The dammed river soon bursts what is blocking the flow.

God and others, starting with our spouses and children, are more interested in our honesty about our mistakes and failures than in our imagined virtues. If we are sincere and open about our mistakes they become our bridges to God and our fellow human beings.

Mistakes if defended or hidden produce children after children! Acknowledgement of mistakes does not cancel those achievements that are genuine and great. On the contrary they shine out more brightly. Acknowledgement of our mistakes enables God to 'recycle them into something precious and highly productive of good.'

Nagas in the depths of their hearts long for nothing more strongly than transparency and truthfulness in our dealings with one another. If we can achieve this unitedly, all else will be added to our struggle. Why not start by declaring a moratorium on hate and evasion of truth; and a decision by all Nagas to forgive all our leaders for their most protected or suspected mistakes, starting from Phizo; and all the way down to the present day, including our overground leaders?

They will find that at the levels of their mistakes, sacrifices and sufferings they share a common meeting ground where they need, and will want to show compassion for one another. At this deep enough level no one can cast a stone at another. There is no suggestion that the risks and cost of transparency are not high. But against the renewal and strength it will produce for our people, the price to be paid is worthwhile.

The costs of continuing in the old way are too high. As for us who criticise the errors of our leaders, our part is to recognise that our thoughtless demands and irresponsible ways have caused a major portion of their mistakes. This heart-felt appeal to turn our most difficult problems into our common strength is made because they now threaten our survival.

### How does God communicate with us?

According to Newman life is about growth through change, constant change. We cannot doubt what we should be ready to be and to do wholeheartedly. The question is – change and grow fully for what? Or what is the meaning and purpose of life? (Newman is known to us as the man wrote the 'Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom', the hymn greatly

*A Naga Speaks*





loved by Mahatma Gandhi and often sung in his mass prayer meetings).

The modern world has learned the most about the human mind and soul from three remarkable Austrian psychologists, Sigmund Freud, Albert Adler and Victor Frankl.

Freud, who was also a neurologist and known as the father of psychoanalysis, said that the most powerful force that drives human beings through his mind and soul is the libido or the drive for satisfaction of sexual urges.

Adler said it was the desire for power to control. He cited the examples of dictators as extreme instances of this urge that drives human beings.

Victor Frankl said these two urges are fundamental forces in each human being. But he said there is something beyond them that is something even stronger, and that is, human hunger and need for meaning and purpose. He called it 'man's search for meaning', the title of the book he wrote to explain it. From this insight he gave 'logo therapy' to the world, which came from his own experiences of unimaginable suffering as a survivor of one of the horrible Nazi concentration camps during World War II.

If someone is studying to be a professor of psychology, psychiatry and psychotherapy, he/she should read at least the main volumes by these three Viennese scientists. But *Man's Search for Meaning*, a thin volume, is a must-read by everyone intending to live rightly, abundantly, relevantly.

Man's need and search for a satisfying meaning and purpose is the same as man's need for a demanding calling from his Creator to live and fight for. A careful reflection on Frankl's words clearly reveals this most fascinating spiritual principle at work within us shaping our lives.

We now come to how does God communicate with us? It seems God communicates with us through questions. His first recorded communication with the human race was "Adam, where are you?" when He returned to the Garden of Eden and found that Adam was not on duty keeping watch over the garden as God had assigned him.

There are other ways in which God communicates with human beings and makes Himself known to us. For instance, what we become aware of from our experiences and observation of nature all around us and out into unfathomable space.

Cain was angry because the role God expected him to play

### *A Naga Speaks*



challenged his selfishness and his fear to get out of the comfort zone with which he was familiar and safe.

I have learned from my own experience that I make the biggest mistake if I try to ignore the beginnings of anger, bitterness, jealousy, regret, fear, despair and so on forming inside me. The same things formed inside Cain and that was what God came and dealt with. I do not need to condemn these negative feelings and attitudes inside me or feel hopeless because of them. But I should get to the reason why. This is something I do not want to do because I do not want to accept the task God is offering me to fulfill.

Jesus said, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God.' I think the meaning of this declaration by Jesus is that if I am feeling poor in spirit it means God is giving me a role to play for the building of His kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. And I am angry, resentful and insecure because in the role God is giving me to play I may not be a success and thereby deprive myself the enjoyments of living a selfish safe life. I am poor in spirit.

One day I discovered that I should welcome poverty of spirit or the anger, jealousy, despair, doubts and fears that so easily form inside me and take over my life, instead of being fearful, try to ignore or avoid them. But the important thing is to be truly honest about the real reasons that produce any of these negative feelings and emotions in me. I have found that these feelings are the 'beep beep' sounds or the red lights flashing to tell me that I should stop and find out whatever is going wrong and urgently requiring my attention.

Arnold Toynbee observed that history is the record of how human beings respond to challenges of existence. This is a most helpful guide for my understanding of how the quality of the response of an individual and that of a people or nation to the daily challenges of life decide the total quality of the individual's life and of the people and nation considered.

Most of us in the world do believe in the existence of God. And we declare this belief easily from a natural, instinctive, intuitive awareness inside us because God made us in His own image and the living soul inside us is the breath of life He breathed into the image He had made. Is this life originating from our creator's breath only to make our physical body grow? And is our capacity for thinking and awareness that is part of the physical growing mainly to be used to maximise 'the pursuit of happiness' and self-serving vain-glorious pleasures?



After learning from our encounters with the problems of existence many of us become aware that our ability to think and understand sustained by the life in us is actually the communication system in us our Creator uses to guide us to serve His purposes in this world.



## The Needed Leadership

*We have not yet tried the right way which challenges us to rise above self*

Call For Transforming Leadership	458
Learning To Say Yes And No – Life's Main Battle	460
Yes To God, No To Pride	462
Our Common Responsibility	464
Leadership And Society	465
Beyond Recrimination To Understanding	467

## Call for Transforming Leadership

*F*or Nagas, money and guns have become the sole measurement of power and leadership. Instant success and unrestrained enjoyment of 'the good things of life' seems to be the sole motivation for achieving power. We do not hesitate to sacrifice for our own immediate gains. We are either ignorant or too greedy and thoughtless to think of the destructive consequences of our selfish actions. It is urgent we stop to examine the things we are chasing and the crooked methods we adopt to get them.

This call is focused on our leaders who control power today, overground or underground. They are better placed than others to stop the reckless wounding of our society and bring healing and understanding before it is too late. The call is not an accusation of anyone or any group. Accusations and blames cause more confusion and bitterness. But this is a call addressed to all Nagas for sanity, perspective and wisdom. All of us have helped create our sick society. We may prevent tragedy if we will begin to reject what we know in our conscience is wrong.

Therefore, can we consider the following realities and possibilities to guide our thinking and action?

1. People are not political raw material to be used for personal ambitions. To enable them to rise to their fullest potential is the divine meaning and purpose of politics. Abuse of this sacred function results in uncontrollable corruption, violence and instability. Politicians and revolutionaries become men of destiny if their leadership inspires their people also to rise above self-seeking pettiness and irresponsibility.
2. Eliminating, dividing or bribing people are tempting short-cuts that irresponsible seekers take. But the inevitable fruits are a cynical people who despise their leaders who have prostituted their moral authority by stooping so low for their personal ambitions. Why not challenge and stretch our people by example to work and sacrifice for their own progress? The people's high mandate to leaders is, 'Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.'

Why not rise to it and win trust and respect? Then money and guns will not be needed to buy votes or extort support for worthless power. Let us remember, without deliverance from evil in leaders and the people, economic development and freedom end in unimaginable chaos and destruction. We do not get out of the cycle of hate and revenge.

*A Naga Speaks*

3. No people on earth have ever escaped the terrible consequences of achieving noble goals using wrong means. We need leaders who will set satisfactory standards for nation building, by refusing to adopt immoral methods to achieve their goals. 'He who takes more out of society than gives to it is a thief,' is an ancient saying. Can leaders see the connection between the examples of their lives and the worsening behaviour of the public, especially the youth?
4. Nagas know the immense cost that hasty agreements or accords without sufficient openness among leaders makes us pay. They produce distrust, mutual blaming and endless bloodshed. The Naga question represents the deepest conclusion by the Nagas about themselves. We dare not drag it down to serve our personal interests. It should be solved on the basis of facts of history, supported by the united vision of all Nagas and the goodwill and the understanding of the Indian people. Facts do not take sides. They cannot be twisted, bribed or blasted out of existence. Solutions imposed by ignoring facts and hurts, never work. Northern Ireland is an example. The right way may take time, the wrong way may seem to succeed quickly but it opens the way for oppressive lies and vengeance to destroy society.

We have not yet tried the right way which challenges us to rise above self. We can begin by becoming responsible men and women. Leaders and led have to find God's superior wisdom and obey it. It is always available to all who will humbly listen for it. It corrects us and directs us daily if we are willing. Free from our ego-driven preoccupation we become more interested in what is right which is a higher and far more reliable formula for lasting solutions than what we want for ourselves only.

Nagas are hungry for a way that will work. To continue to give them only party or factional propaganda slogans is to produce deeper cynicism and insecurity. It is criminal irresponsibility in the context of our crisis today, why not start to develop with them the thinking and discipline that will begin to demonstrate responsible citizenship, freedom and economic self-reliance today, not tomorrow. This task is unavoidable now or later.

Show every Naga how to progress from abusing freedom to building freedom. The response from the people to such truthful leadership and high vision for them will be surprising. It will also show that the toughest, most decisive struggle is in the growth of our thinking and our character, individually and as a people. The terrible experiences of many independent African nations today point to this truth. Let us learn from the

experiences of others. God and generations to come will then bless you and your courageous leadership.



### **Learning to say Yes and No – Life's Main Battle**

**T**hree recent events make us to think afresh how we live our lives.

First, after shooting through space for seven years, Cassini-Huygen, the European Space Agency's space probe, made a perfect landing on Titan. It immediately began to send back never-before-seen vivid images of the biggest of the moons orbiting Saturn. The objective of the 3-billion dollar probe was reported to be to look for 'data that could shed light on the origins of life on earth'. The excited scientists were clear concern for costs should not prevent the launching of more missions to Titan or other moons and planets!

Soon after, a global scientific project was launched to create a veritable census of all living beings in the seas and oceans - from the floating minute organisms to the massive leviathans swimming the deep waters. The scientists said the census would give us a better understanding of the story of life.

Third was the decision to make a 'DNA code bar' of all living creatures on earth. The complexity, scale and cost of the venture are hard to imagine. A BBC analyst explained that such a comprehensive inventory will give us a fuller understanding of what we call life.

It is obviously important to explore and discover everything possible about life in all its manifestations on earth and on distant moons and planets. But we need to ask 'What am I actually doing with the life that is in me where I, like everyone else, am a sensitive, crucial part of the phenomenon of life – the most fascinating and intriguing mystery in the universe?'

Does the life that is in us have a meaning and purpose beyond itself ordained by our creator? If we are 'wonderfully and fearfully made', as the Psalmist said, it is up to each one of us to discover why, and live out our lives accordingly.

Job and Blaise Pascal clarify that man is more than chemicals, tissues and bones. Our Creator visits us expecting us to use our faculty

***A Naga Speaks***

to think and discern, to listen to Him, know and love Him, and to live according to His wisdom. If we do, is not the outcome the kingdom of God 'on earth as it is in heaven?'

Dag Hammarskjöld, the late UN Secretary General, once wrote, 'I don't know Who - or What - put the question, I don't know when it was put. I don't even remember answering. But at some moment I did answer "Yes" to Someone - or Something - and from that hour I was certain that existence is meaningful and that, therefore, my life, in self-surrender, has a goal.'

Saying Yes and No reveals our thinking. Saying them in self-will, or in self-surrender, are two totally different things. If we are guided by self-interest or fears, we say Yes or No to protect our selfishness and our comfort zones. But if we are living for a calling and purpose that is higher than us, we say Yes or No to stay true to the purpose and meaning we have decided to serve in self-surrender. It is our daily battle for freedom and growth.

My son and I recently watched Mel Gibson's 'The Passion of the Christ'. At the end we shared what we felt. The point that struck us most was that Christ went all the way to the Cross on Golgotha because to be true and loyal to what he knew to be God's task and calling for him was the most important thing for him. As a boy of 12 he told his anxious parents in the temple his father's business came before everything else. The same incorruptibility and integrity of character was shown when, soon after he was baptised, Satan tempted him to be successful, powerful and famous by simply agreeing to be mutually co-operative and wisely flexible for his own welfare. The margin of error was extremely narrow.

To turn stones into bread to prove that he was the Son of God, one of the temptations, was not something bad in itself. But in doing it God was going to be pushed to second place in his life. He refused to be untrue to his conscience and soul. He said Yes to God in his conscience and No to Satan in his nature, the only way to clash with Satan and defeat evil.

Nothing is more educative, liberating and worthwhile than to make an honest list of the things we know deep down we should say Yes or No to, and start to do so. My list has embarrassing, bewildering, seemingly silly items! But they define the battle line between my freedom and decadence. No wonder Dostoyevsky said, 'On earth God wrestles with the devil and the battleground is man.'



## Yes to God, No to Pride

Appeared in *Disha*, August 1998

**AK** is young businessman in Dimapur, Nagaland. About four years ago he was one of the leaders of his village that decided to stop the rapid destruction of the virgin forest that had sustained and inspired his village for centuries. Repeated resolution by the village failed to restrain the organised band of young loggers. They kept felling the massive, ancient trees for the sawmills in the plains showing un-traditional disrespect of elders. AK and his colleagues realised that the suppressed hurts and vengeful feelings at the roots of the inter-clan division had to be addressed.

The renewal programme that the village adopted resulted in a series of meetings, including several two-day seminars for the different age groups. The basics of turning the searchlight to one's own failures, of achieving transparency through honest restitution and apology, were examined together. The culminating point was the day of quiet introspection that was observed by the whole village.

AK says he understood from the village exercises the importance of meditation each morning, to be guided by God rather than his own selfish impulses. The first decision he made was to cut out many of 'the social activities that kept me busy but which in reality did no good to anybody' and to 'do honest work' for his small business.

AK was impressed by the changes in himself as was his wife; that is until...

Last year their little son's malaria fever returned. After a few days at the hospital he pleaded to return home. The doctor showed AK's wife how to fix the drips. But in the first attempt the son's vein couldn't be found and the medicine was wasted. AK told his wife, 'Don't pretend if you don't know how to do it. Go and buy the medicine. Find the money yourself, not from me.'

She took it all in silence. AK knew she didn't dare to say anything.

At his workshop too things were not right. One morning he woke up his Bengali *mistry* (machine operator) at break of dawn to complete a contract before Christmas. At 8.30 a.m. he found the *mistry* was not at his station. When he returned and said he had gone for a few minutes for breakfast, AK told him, 'You can go for lunch also and don't need to return.'

The *mistry* apologised and pleaded not to be sacked, as he was the

*A Naga Speaks*

only bread earner of his family. He was told to get out without any word. The situation worsened because AK had to do the work of the *mistry* to keep the workshop going. The contract target could not be fulfilled.

Christmas was at hand. So the workshop was closed. The whole family left for a village in the interior where his brother lives. Over Christmas he reflected on what was really going on in his heart. Peace started to return when he admitted he hadn't stopped to think properly. He saw that he had become insensitive to everyone and driven by his own plans.

One night after they returned to Dimapur he sensed that his wife too was awake. This was his opportunity. He said, 'Can you forgive me for the very hurtful words I said to you when you were trying to fix the drip for our son?' He also shared how convicted he felt for his heartlessness and cruelty towards the *mistry*.

His wife started to cry and said, 'I was so hurt. I was made to be so fearful.'

AK says, 'What I had done was on my heart all through Christmas. My wholehearted apology and her acceptance of it freed both of us again.'

The next person to meet was the *mistry*. In the first week of January when AK was on his way to work he ran into the *mistry* for work. He was fearful and tried to look the other way. AK smiled and beckoned him with his hand. The *mistry* smiled back immediately and came forward. AK said, 'Both of us were wrong. I am sorry for sending you away in my anger. If you are looking for work I welcome you back.' The *mistry* immediately rejoined the workshop.

Last year AK was offered a small contract by a Central Government Scientific Research Centre in Nagaland. It was to extend the office of the Director. He took it because the Assamese officer in charge was a close friend. The rate was lower than the state Public Works Department rate. The engineer from the regional office in Shillong met AK. He had asked the resident officer, 'Is this man a greedy, difficult contractor like others here?' He told AK he was impressed by the quality of the material collected for the job. On his next visit the engineer said, 'Hurry up! You are not going to make a profit. Let it be done poorly. I'll pass it.' AK said, 'I must make profit. But if I do as much as the money's worth it is my profit too. It builds Nagaland and it is my property that way.'

It was decided to add a retaining wall to the whole office structure.

Giving the contract to AK the engineer said, 'The workers have told me that you make them to re-do three times a section of the previous job. We have decided to cover the extra amount you spent to give us a perfect job because something that lasts will benefit the Government also.'

These days the news from the North East is usually violence. The story of AK is a positive alternative.

## **Our Common Responsibility**

2018

**W**e must now go beyond our bitter mutual accusations and recriminations because the distorted truths and hidden lies in them are killing the better angels in all of us. They provoke the worst out of one another, which is something we must not do at this time. The wrongs of others we point out so well, make others see more clearly with deeper resentment the wrongs in us that we do not see, or which we deny, hide or regard as unimportant. God sees what others see. Giving stone and snakes to one another, instead of bread and fish, is missing the need of our common humanity. It is therefore ultimately suicidal.

The boat we are travelling on is in need of major repair. The sea has become very stormy and we know it will become stormier. Our common responsibility is to keep our precious boat afloat and repair it. We made it ourselves, it has served us well and most important, we must continue the journey in it.

The adventurous journey we decided to make towards becoming a people and a nation was right. It was our bold response to the crisis the changing world brought to us. Our response showed we valued what we knew about ourselves and our history up to that time was authentic because to live is to grow by venturing and struggling. The time of the decision was wonderfully right. The thought, vision and conviction were perilous, but they were natural, authentic and right.

In addition to knowing about the boat's structural weaknesses and the dangers from the unpredictable sea we must know ourselves and act responsibly.

Our accusations of one another are part of the process of

*A Naga Speaks*

democratic debate over issues and the skill used to point out where the others side is wrong is a function of the debate. But we cannot get away from the reality that the accusations are partial truths.



### Leadership and Society.

*L*eadership is one of the central, ever-new issues that decides whether societies and nations grow creatively or destructively. The outcome has a direct bearing on peace, stability and development, or conflict, instability and war.

Col. Muammar Gaddafi of Libya while rising fast to become the ruthless dictator of his newly-liberated nation once told *Time* magazine of the US, 'I am really a great leader who can do much for mankind. My problem is my followers are too few.' Libya's population at that time was a little over 3 million. Gaddafi's vainglorious concept of leadership and society is more widespread than the world actually discovers because democratic elections do prevent many self-obsessed leaders from becoming full-blown dictators, as well as making sure other types who should not hold positions of political power do not prolong their rule beyond their entitlement.

Thomas Carlyle was a prominent Scottish thinker and historian in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. His books on heroism and the hero significantly influenced the thinking of his day when global European empires were getting established. He advocated 'a political system in which the many are guided and ruled by the superior few'. He was criticised for propagating the view that history is merely the record of the doings of heroes and powerful personalities.

Hitler's Nazism talked of the superior Aryan race being the only race fit to rule the world. This came to be seen essentially as an extension of Carlyle's view of the superior few ruling the many who are of a 'lesser breed'. Both these contrasted sharply with the liberal, democratic ideals that had started to ferment and erupt across Europe and North America.

This ideological view about human beings imbued with their innate dignity eventually prevailed. But gradually the world discovered that leadership of society and the exercise of power is not at all that simple, because it has to do with human beings and what drives and motivates

### *A Naga Speaks*



them.

After repeated instances of disastrous consequences on nations due to abuse of power by democratically elected leaders for their own greed and glory, mankind has discovered that the issue of leadership is the hotspot of contest between God and the Devil, his adversary, for the building of their respective kingdoms on earth.

When we talk of leadership and society we are actually referring to two ideas. The leadership given by leaders in positions of power and influence is one. This is more discussed than the other idea which is the leadership that comes from every individual alive, the vast majority of whom hold no positions of power and influence beyond their immediate families and the very few who know them.

This idea of leadership at the level of individuals does not feature in our discussions on leadership and society. But it is a fatal mistake to give so little attention to this other leadership, because the accumulated power of this leadership ultimately decides what happens to society.

I think the core issue in leadership of any kind is this: *Doing what needs to be done* at any given time and in any situation, at the level of individual lives in families, villages or where people work in different fields of life and callings.

What needs to be done in the crisis of a people or a nation, and what is the response of leaders to that challenge, decides whether creative growth is the result, or it is stagnation, conflict and destruction.

By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the world was clear the social, economic, political injustices of history had to be ended and changed. This was seen to be what needed to be done by mankind, or the idea whose time had come.

The materialist ideas of Karl Marx and of Hitler represented one kind of response history had produced. The other kind of response to the challenge of what needed to be done was the moral, ethical, spiritual response that had developed down the years from William Wilberforce in the 18<sup>th</sup> century to Mahatma Gandhi in the 20<sup>th</sup>.

What I am talking about is the difference in the qualities of the two opposing responses. We know what the responses of Karl Marx as carried out by Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, Mao Dze Dung, Pol Pot, and so on, and of Hitler and of Mussolini produced for mankind. What they produced was the direct consequence of the quality of their responses.

*A Naga Speaks*



We also know what the responses of William Wilberforce and Mahatma Gandhi produced for mankind. The quality of their responses to what needed to be done that confronted them produced what we all know about.



### **Beyond Recrimination to Understanding and Solutions**

*In 2010 the Mao road to Manipur was blockaded in protest to prevent NSCN (IM) chief Th Muivah from visiting his Tangkhul village after decades*

**H**istoric Mao Gate is the epicentre of the present crisis. Multiple, interrelated pressure fault lines originating from different locations, known, unknown, and suspected, have combined and erupted. It has blown Mao Gate to centre-stage of our history once more. Let the world take note, this Gate predates Watergate and all the other gates ever since.

Like a volcano beneath us the crisis has exploded again and caused widespread misery and loss of lives once more. Th Muivah, Ibobi Singh and Chidambaram have been branded the main culprits. But as we know, in the life of every crisis the point is soon reached when it is futile to keep on blaming only the most-easy-to-identify few because there is much more to a crisis than the 'misdeeds' of the few who end up acting instantly because they have to.

It quickly becomes clear that we need to go to the origins of the crisis and try to resolve it adequately if the crisis is not to destroy us. This is stating the obvious but often not thought of. As to all that has been said at Mao Gate, Senapati, Ukhrul, Imphal and Kohima, would not Christ have said again 'Let him who is without sin cast the first stone'?

What is the crisis? And what should be our response to it? These seem to be the two questions we should understand and address correctly.

Does not the crisis in its totality represent the responses by Nagas, Meiteis, Kukis, and others to the rapidly changing common situation we all face today? We have no choice but to respond to the changes impacting us. That is the law of life for growth. But our responses are turning out to be too destructive to us, and those we oppose. We have to ask why? Can we deny our responses have been guided mainly by what we want to get whatever the cost to others, and fuelled by our prejudices and

***A Naga Speaks***

resentments? We insist that to respond thus is normal in politics?

Our slogans may differ but the doctrine of life we have followed is the same. It is not getting us to something better. Speaking of the global crisis of meaning and purpose of life is this not the reason why our responses too have become so bankrupt politically and spiritually and destructive in every way?

Can we pause to realise that our common inadequacy and poverty of spirit is our common crisis? And that if we will learn to help one another to win together imaginative, constructive politics will be born that will produce surprising solutions that will match the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

Muivah cannot be blamed for wanting to go to his village. But everyone knows his reason for wanting to go to Somdel is not as simple as the desire of a mere native returning to his birthplace. He is not Thomas Gray's ploughman simply plodding homeward his weary way.

Muivah on his part can't be all that indignant toward Ibobi. One is pretty sure he is not, although the situation demands him to be. If he were in the latter's place he too would surely have done the same thing. After all in politics, leaders are condemned to address their respective galleries they have nurtured in order to keep 'politics' going. And Ibobi too cannot go on addressing his naturally ever-alert gallery acting as if the things the Nagas feel will fade away if he repeatedly ignores them and adopts measures he knows are not sustainable.

This is not to trivialise the issues and the strongly-held positions all sides take on them. But deep down all of us know we can't go on politicking the way we have done. Politicians address the issues that shape society. The pressing issues are the raw material they work with. They remain politicians if they speak only to the emotions of their galleries. They become statesmen the moment they start to speak to the consciences and souls of their people and give 'principle-centred' leadership that solves problems and takes society forward.

Nagas, Meiteis, Kukis, and all in the NE are on the same ship taking us into the future. It would be fair to say the passengers were put on the ship without their full knowledge or consent. So at the start of the voyage the travellers seemed unbothered. Indeed most were still asleep and snoring, as it were, as the ship pulled away. The sea too was calm and balmy.

But some resisted being put on the ship from the start. They were outraged and adamant citing their history to defend their position. When they started to vigorously assert that they could not travel on the same ship they were called 'underground hostiles' and treated as such. Becoming aware of what was going on, those hitherto passive passengers also started to reinterpret their histories and in no time the ship became chaotic with protests ending in violence and bloodshed.

The journey has taken us far out to sea. Engrossed in their conflicts, the crew and the passengers have neglected the ship. The battered ship is no longer safe. Will we be painting our cabins or fighting to be supreme on a sinking ship? Or will we save the ship together so that the voyage will continue?

'Statesmanship is to do today what events will compel you to do tomorrow.' The confusion, using rubber and steel bullets to communicate, the tragic deaths, the blockades and counter blockades have once more shown our responses are inadequate coming as they are from yesterday's ideas, fears and hates.

According to Rahm Emanuel, Obama's tough Chief of Staff, 'You never let a serious crisis go to waste. It is an opportunity to do things you think you could not do before!' We have a serious crisis all right. So have not Nagas, Meiteis, Kukis, and so on, reached the crucial stage where we are meant to start to sit down for heart to heart discussions as neighbours can and should to explore what will be right, just and best, for all concerned?

No real damage will be done to the real interests of any group if the discussions are not solution-driven but motivated by a sincere desire to first understand the fears, difficulties, resentments, needs, hopes and longings in all of us that have played havoc with us because we have not listened to one another sufficiently to understand.

The crisis has emerged from all of us neighbours who have been placed so close to one another. Is it a grim, hopeless fate because our selfishness has to change if we are to survive and succeed together, or an exciting, inescapable challenge for change and growth we must rise to? It depends on what we think of the relentless realities impacting us, and what our response to them should be. This is easily stated but it is formidably difficult to develop the thinking and living the challenge demands of us.

An attempt to do this reveals that we judge others by their despicable actions, ourselves by our high ideals. But others do the same



with us. This is our common stalemate and starting point.

The Naga Reconciliation Process, as it was called, was launched jointly in Kohima by the Nagaland Christian Forum and Naga Hoho on 20 December 2001 with all tribe chiefs, pledging to see where they have caused hurt and need to seek forgiveness.

The Pledge recognised provocations to be the origins of human conflicts and therefore the starting point for breaking the chain of hate and revenge which happens when those who have provoked others accept ownership of their role and lead the way in breaking the deadly logjam. A vision is given to those who will dare.

It called for putting oneself in the shoes of the other person as taught by the Native Americans:

*Walk a mile in another man's moccasins,  
Walk awhile in another man's shoes,  
Before you leave him condemned forever,  
Put on his boots, there's nothing to lose;  
Live a day with another man's family,  
Live a day by another man's side,  
Years of hurt can end and a foe become a friend,  
As you find that he's just the same as you inside.*

Walking on this seldom-travelled road promises to take us beyond recriminations to solutions. It has become clear the old roads have failed us. The new road beckons.



# Elections

*Elections are turning us into leeches*

Elections And Truthfulness	472
Elections – Can We Survive Them?	474
Election Crisis – A Common Opportunity	478
Issues Facing Nagas In The Present Elections	481

## Elections and Truthfulness

NAGALAND POST Dimapur. 9 April 2002

*Nagaland Post* editorial on 1 April 2002 with the heading 'Where do we begin?' strongly expressed the sheer dismay and dread that grip countless citizens every time elections come upon us.

The much-appreciated editorial commented on the opening barrage from Minister's Hill and Congress (I) Bhavan inaugurating the coming Assembly elections, which provoked the expected opposition artillery salvos from Mr K L Chishi and Mr Huska Sumi.

After portraying the all-round degradation of values, relationships and behaviour that successive elections have inflicted on our inexperienced, and therefore, highly vulnerable people, the editorial pointed out the key issue for all of us if we are to reverse the deterioration – 'A changing economic and social scenario indeed calls for more commitment on development of the human resource and Nagaland indeed needs it.' The editorial identified the immediate need for 'greatly minimising corruption.'

English poet John Keats called autumn 'Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness', when, among other pleasing happenings in nature 'gathering swallows twitter in the skies'.

An election campaign period in Nagaland has to be described as 'Season of myths and shallow truthfulness' when, along with other activities that are so destructive; the candidates are compelled to fritter away their resources, often of others' also, to wine, dine and entertain voters who may vote for all the candidates against cash payments or other inducements. Their prostituted votes produce a democracy dirtied at birth which none can respect, least of all those who win the elections. One can imagine with what contempt for the selfish voters and deep unhappiness in their hearts the 'winners' rule our society?

The monstrous political phenomenon of election is grandly but fraudulently called 'Power to the people!' It is Orwellian Doublespeak because a close scrutiny reveals that it has proved to be an uncontrollable destroyer of our people. The myths and shallow, partial truths, in addition to the festivals of free food, drinks and entertainment of election campaigns produce an all-pervasive atmosphere of permissiveness. The greatly lowered level of ethics and morality then becomes acceptable and normal.

*A Naga Speaks*

An increasing number of our vulnerable people exposed to it are becoming like leeches who come out to suck till they are full and roll away thereafter to their holes to hibernate unproductively till the next season of free feasts.

Is this an exaggeration? It will be difficult to argue that many of our people have not been forced to this level of degradation and exploitation. We cannot go on much longer thus and retain our decency and capacity for survival.

This fulmination of helpless outrage of a citizen must not be interpreted as condemnation of the election process. I am clear about the indispensability of elections. We cannot do without them.

But the election process is one of the most easily abused instruments of political governance and management of society. It is indisputable we have become servants of the process, instead of being its masters. It is therefore our inescapable responsibility to face the deterioration calmly and determinedly, and restore the needed balance, so that the election process is restored to its proper function as the powerful engine for healing, stabilising and developing our society.

This brings us back to the point about 'commitment on development of the human resource' and 'greatly minimising corruption'. The response from many may well be 'Don't waste your breath.' But I believe if we will turn to God and commit ourselves to obey His guidance and wisdom, He will show us how to make elections our servant, our engine for development, not our destroyer.

I would venture to share a thought that keeps coming. Could God be telling some of the candidates directly or through their family members and trusted friends to say no to the coming election and make themselves free to take on as their commitment to 'the development of the human resource'? Some of the veterans may say, 'How I long to do it? But it's too late for me to do such a thing. I'll be a failure because I will not know where or how to start it.'

To them God will say, 'You just say yes to do the most urgent thing for your people - rebuilding the moral and ethical foundation of Naga society. If you simply obey I will change you and guide you to develop your people, the most precious Naga resource. Your change and your transparency and obedience no matter how poor in spirit you may feel at first will give hope to your people. It will be nothing short of co-operating with me to build my kingdom on earth – a just, truthful, caring society

where there is enough for everyone's need but not enough for everyone's greed.'

To quite a number of the candidates would not God be saying, 'Don't you have eyes to see what is happening to your people? Instead of creating more waste of resources, time and energy and more division in your ever-fragmenting society, why don't you commit yourself to think out how Nagas are to take intelligent responsibility to build their society using all your love and imagination? Think, pray and listen honestly to me and your family before plunging into the abyss.'

If all your candidates will give God His chance to have his say it is likely that we will have candidates contesting with greater care and a sense of responsibility and many deciding to do things differently. We will have more Christians who are obedient to God and inspiring others to do likewise.

Let's face it, with apology to Churchill, we will have to say to our elections, 'Never in the history of the Nagas, has so much been wasted, by so few, to destroy so many.'

As for all our leaders, in or outside the election, the mandate from your people is – 'Lead us not into temptations, but deliver us from evil and decadence and take us to a new future we can be proud of.'

Don't give us myths and shallow truths, which is like giving us stones and snakes instead of bread and fish. Don't be guided by your selfish demands, but by the deepest meaning of life God has given you. Those who will dare to do so will start to lay the foundation to be true Naga statesman, election or no election.

### **Elections: Can we survive them?**

Questions After Nagaland Elections.

Appeared in *Eastern Mirror* and *The Shillong Times* March 2003

Was God not interested in how we conducted the elections? Or did he try to say something but our prayers for support were so loud, and we were so busy with 'vote management', we did not hear him? This has to be asked as we have built so many churches to worship Him, and if God is not just a harmless, weepy Santa Claus good only for distributing gifts.

*A Naga Speaks*

There is no suggestion here that we can do without elections. But the urgent point now is, unless our purpose and meaning of life changes from plain hedonism and irresponsibility to responsibility, we Nagas cannot survive elections much longer. By responsibility I mean the ability of leaders and led to say 'yes' to what is right; and 'no' to what is wrong, to restrain oneself, because one feels responsible for consequences.

The graffiti in *Eastern Mirror*, Dimapur, on February 7 declared, 'Nagas have Four Prominent Animals: the Hornbill, the Tragopan, the Mithun and the Politician.'

On February 5 the paper had carried Thejangulie Kire's unforgettable, deeply disturbing report with photos, 'Meant to Roam Free'. It powerfully revealed what we are doing to ensure the early extinction of our precious wild life resources. Many want Thejangulie to keep it up.

The damage being done is obviously irreversible, as the appetite of those who can afford the very expensive delicacy of our vanishing animals seems insatiable. From being exquisite, unique parts of our delicate ecosystem, our animals and birds are rapidly vanishing as digested products flushed down toilets in Kohima and Dimapur. We call our animals 'wild'. But we are the ones who are wild, criminally wild. Made in the likeness of God, we are sensitively designed to be guided and used by His Holy Spirit and grace. But we are wilfully guided by what we want.

Judging by the rate of massacre of the innocents in the forests, we will soon have left only the politician species the graffiti mentioned. And judging by what elections have started to do to politicians, as we have just seen again, the politicians too will become extinct.

Harish Chandola wrote from Dimapur, 'Elections in Nagaland are the country's most expensive.' He described some of the frantic, often ugly fights for the money the 'national parties' from outside brought to support their candidates. The representatives of these parties vastly underestimated the capacity of the Naga voters to devour cash, food, drinks and other items of inducement.

A virtual black hole, like the ones astronomers talk about, seems to develop inside Nagaland during elections. And like the ones in outer space, our election 'black hole' too sucks in and swallows up everything within range, including even the light of shame, grace, and care for consequences.

Also swallowed up are a sizable number of our dropout youth. They find the free entertainment and diversions at election times so irresistible.

They become 'election addicts'. When the election binge is over they begin their lonely wrestle with their withdrawal symptoms till the next fix, the next election!

When Chandola asked a Naga campaigner why Nagaland holds the record for election expenses, the reply was 'You should know our mouths are very big!'

An official observer from Delhi asked a voter, who seemed to be greatly enjoying his role of helping to produce the next Assembly and government, what he thought of the election. The man replied, 'Nagas have three great festivals – Christmas, harvest and elections. Election festival is the best. It lasts longest and the feeding and drinking most plentiful and free!' Sometimes this is called 'Naga honesty and simplicity'. We should be deeply alarmed by what it reveals.

Can we deny elections are turning us into leeches, in the sense that leeches have awesome sucking mouths but are headless, and they are driven by the single instinct to suck till bursting point whence they retire to total cessation of productive activity?

The most frightening aspect of our elections is surely that the candidates who start as hunters for votes 'to serve the masses' become the hunted. No wonder the 60 winners who survive the nightmare of being sucked alive tend to become ruthless suckers with a vengeance themselves. After all, they have to recover all they lost and much more to establish themselves, and of course to fight the next election. So much is collected to feed so many for the success of so few who have to collect so much again to replenish themselves so that little time is left to fulfill their promises when the next time comes. There may be some echoes of Churchill in this description of our elections!

Britain organised an opulent *darbar* in Delhi to mark her power and glory under Queen Victoria. It astonished her subjects. Others watched with admiration and envy. However, historians like Arnold Toynbee saw through what he called the 'mirage of immortality'. Rudyard Kipling, the great, often unabashed voice of the Empire, saw the danger signs of vanity and blindness. He warned his people, referring to the *darbar*,

*The tumult and the shouting dies;*

*The captains and the kings depart:*

*Still stands Thine ancient sacrifice,*

*An humble and a contrite heart.*

***A Naga Speaks***

*Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,  
Lest we forget - lest we forget!  
If, drunk with the sight of power, we loose  
Wild tongues that have not Thee in awe,  
Such boastings as the Gentiles use,...Be with us yet,  
Lest we forget – lest we forget!*

Toynbee and Kipling were warning a people who thought they had achieved everything. We are just starting our journey. But we too have had 'the tumult and the shouting' of our own election. The candidates and the feasting, revelling crowds have departed. Perhaps some of them will now be thinking of what they have done to themselves, their families and their society. May they say, 'Speak Lord, Your servant is listening', and make a fresh start with Him for their own sakes and for the sake of our people. Somehow, somewhere, our selfishness and irresponsibility has to end.

What we have seen, done, or experienced deeply disturbed us, raising fearful doubts about our society's ability to cope with changes we cannot avoid. What should worry us most is that our purpose of life is revealed to be so unequal to the merciless waves of changes impacting us. We are seeing our precious assets from our past being rubbished and trampled under as we fight without any thought of our history to grab the money from the national parties to buy the votes of our people who are unaware they are being killed softly but surely.

Will some leaders stop to ponder the price our people are paying for them to become leaders? Not that they should not lead, but that they 'lead us not into temptations, but deliver us from evil.' Shouldn't this be normal politics and normal Christianity?

Whatever our status may be after an eventual settlement with Delhi, we have to learn to handle elections and such other devices for managing growth in the modern world. We have to learn to make the complex processes and devices of modernity take us forward instead of being destroyed by them. To make sure this will be so, 'the ancient sacrifice' for us is to be guided by the still small voice of wisdom and conscience that is in 'the hidden and inward parts' of all of us. The battle is there.

If we really care for the security and happiness of our children and their children we will sacrifice all that does not work and, sticking to the voice that never fails, start to raise our thinking and responsibility to levels expected of human beings who even brag about being Christians.

***A Naga Speaks***



Politicians alone cannot do this, as they are not the only sinners. A coalition of the politicians and the people, fearlessly and selflessly supported by the bureaucrats, will have to do it. Will our Church leaders provide the thinking and example needed to project the compelling vision and challenge? Will our politicians start to play their part by initiating reforms, and paying the price to implement them? If they will not, they are simply increasing the voraciousness of the election black hole that will not spare them, or any one of us.



### **Election Crisis a Common Opportunity**

Appeared in *Daily Review*, Kohima, pages 5 & 6. 21 January 1998, .

Also in *The Naga Voice*, Kohima, Nagaland, 25 February 1998

**F**rom the ever-bewildering womb of Naga politics has emerged an unbelievable child, namely, the call by Naga Hoho and NGOs for deferment of the general elections in Naga inhabited areas, and the massive response to it.

The Government of India is scandalised and has condemned it as secessionist and anti-national, as if that would mean anything to the child. The child is blissfully unaware of the commotion it has created by its sudden birth. Whose child is this extraordinary baby? Those who have acted as midwives to help the delivery of the baby, the Naga Hoho and NGOs are, it would be fair to say, as surprised as anyone by the suddenness and the ease of the delivery.

One is inclining to conclude that, like Joseph, we too must humbly accept the child without being afraid of what might be said about it and us. It has lessons that we need to accept, and it is going to reopen doors that we have long shut to one another. For we cannot get away from the fact that the child has come out of all that we have done to ourselves and to one another, and brought our society and our struggle to where they are today. Our deepest hopes and fears as a struggling people, our triumphs, our painful failures and mistakes, are all embedded in the subconscious of the child.

Right now a general euphoric, upbeat feeling prevails today among those of us who oppose the holding of the elections. After all 43 out of 60 seats going uncontested is not a small political message -whatever it

***A Naga Speaks***

is. Different groups are relieved and are happy for different reasons and motivations. But the situation is too perilous because it is really too good to be true for everyone, whether we are for or against the elections. The present fantasy can result in a dangerous crisis unless all of us will let God's wisdom and truthfulness, not our own agendas, guide us.

But what is most important is that driven by partisan interests, Nagas do not misinterpret the meaning of the phenomenon unfolding before our eyes.

The Congress (I) in Nagaland and Delhi has naturally accused the NSCN (IM) as the father of the child. The potential of this charge to keep Nagas divided is not to be underestimated. The NSCN (IM) leadership happily accepts the charge. And it would naturally claim that the Nagas have totally shifted to their side.

This is where the unexpected opportunity that has emerged can be identified and wisely nurtured together to serve the best interests of all concerned, including India, or be buried because of tempting personal and partisan agendas.

The Congress (I)'s accusation and NSCN (IM)'s claim about the child is true in so far as the call would not have materialised if the unconditional talks between the NSCN (IM) and Delhi had not started. The tough and competent stand taken by the NSCN (IM) brought about the present talks. But at the risk of being seriously misunderstood and misinterpreted, it should be pointed out that there is a wider reality at work in the present situation of which their achievement is a vital part.

The massive call represents the desperate longing of the Nagas for a just and honourable settlement of the protracted Indo-Naga dispute so that Nagas may begin their growth and journey as a people. The Naga Hoho and NGOs have concluded that continuation of the talks between the NSCN (IM) and the Government of India are the most important issue at this stage.

Their readiness to rise above deeply felt reservations and personal hurts in order to promote the common interests of the Nagas is truly praiseworthy. The discreet and correct positions that all the other elements of the Naga political scenario have taken have also helped in no small measure to raise hope and expectations in the present situation.

At this time the Nagas fervently believe it should not be beyond the NSCN (IM) to look back to correctly understand what may have descended from heaven, and show statesmanlike humility and wisdom as the group

that has achieved the most in strategic terms because of its high quality of dedication, thinking, and sheer vigour in collecting funds and military hardware. A priceless opportunity has come for them to reach out and start to bring about the widest possible Naga consensus. This will be sound politics too. At this time, the longing of the people must not be treated lightly, nor the reality of the hurts and raw wounds in countless families underestimated.

One costly lesson out of the past 50 years is surely that any victory achieved without transparent and unquestioned consensus is counter-productive, destructive and a terrible waste altogether.

The ancient Greek King Pyrrhus said of such a victory he had won, 'Another such victory and we are lost.' This kind of tragic victory has since come to be called 'pyrrhic victory'. Let us never forget that today's hopeless collapse into endless violence and chaos in Algeria, Afghanistan and other similar situations are the result of wrongs committed in the name of politics over a long period, but never resolved or healed in God's light. 'Except the Lord builds the house, its builders labour in vain,' has always drawn the toughest battleline for people struggling to become nations of earth.

Speaking to the 'Christian' Britain at the height of her imperial power, Rudyard Kipling wrote,

*For heathen heart that puts her trust  
In reeking tube and iron shard,  
All valiant dust that builds on dust,  
And, guarding, calls not Thee to guard,  
For frantic boast and foolish word...  
If drunk with sight of power, we lose  
Wild tongues that have not Thee in awe,  
Thy mercy on Thy people, Lord.*

The truth is that the historic struggle of the Naga lies prostrate today, wounded and with raging fever endangering its survival. The need of the hour is for all Nagas to wisely and selflessly agree together that no one will do anything recklessly or deliberately that may serve immediate party or factional interests, but which will kill our common struggle, our common story.

The present upsurge on the election issue challenges us to rise

***A Naga Speaks***

to a difficult level of thinking, cohesiveness, responsibility, integrity and competence, individually and collectively. We are way below the required level. We will decide to match the challenge? This is the crisis. A risky one, as any real and worthwhile crisis should be! But it should be seen as a common opportunity for all of us to leave our past ways that have not worked and begin to rebuild our struggle together on foundations that will last. Our difficulties are not meant to destroy us because of our pride. But they are meant to be God's opportunities to change us and become our strongest assets that keep us needing one another.

The present sense of something good happening is like a good monsoon rain that comes and goes. Hardship and disappointment lie ahead if we will not do the tilling and growing that we should do now.

Let no Naga think his individual contribution, positive or negative, is unimportant. Or that his life is an isolated entity and his own business, and he can continue to live as he likes.



### **Issues facing Nagas in the present elections in Nagaland.**

**S**ome points: In the event of a boundary dispute between a cat and an elephant the priorities for the cat are to know itself and be as realistic and disciplined as the crisis demands, in order to stay alive to fight to succeed. A cat and an elephant have the same right to flourish on Planet Earth. But the cat has more threatening reasons to be more careful and wise.

India is changing fast. Nagas must understand the challenge of this changing India and what we should learn to be and do to survive and succeed so that we may flourish as we must. The Indian National Congress (INC) was produced by the Indian freedom struggle. Except for very brief periods the Congress Party ruled India from 1947 to 2014.

Up to 2014 this Government in Delhi adopted severest military measures to deal with the Nagas and their struggle for their identity and development aspirations based on the facts of their history. When it became clear a military solution of the Naga issue would not end the struggle, the alternative policy of increased infusion of cash flow for development was introduced. The military option was put on the back burner, ready to be brought back into operation at any time.

***A Naga Speaks***

The accumulated failures of the INC down the years have produced the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party). The massive majority the BJP won led by Narendra Modi revealed how much the people had lost confidence in the leadership of the INC weakened by complacency, corruption and other shortcomings.

BJP is the new reality of Indian politics. It is likely that BJP will be in power for the foreseeable future. Nagas must understand that we face a new Party with a new ideology and set of priorities. And we urgently need to respond to it correctly and wisely. We must be sure we do not depend on shallow conclusions and easy sloganeering and fail to respond correctly to the new situation with its momentous challenges to the way we think and live.

That Hindutva's RSS is the creator of BJP is well known. In our context the vital question is how do we respond to the Hindutva reality through BJP, its political wing? There is a distinction between the political, religious, cultural base of a Party and its political wing that has to contend with other parties and ideologies in the democratic arena of Parliament. The candidates, who get elected as BJP MLAs in Nagaland will be supporting the BJP's development policies with their National Democratic Peoples Party (NDPP) allies, always alert to defend the rights of the secular and religious rights of the Nagas as all Nagas must and will do. 'This is a pledge I make to the people of my constituency.'

On February 19, while campaigning in Nagaland, Kiren Rijiju, Union Minister of State for Home, himself, vowed, 'If during our reign, any Church and Christians in the State are persecuted, I will leave politics.' BJP's position on the matter is abundantly clear. This pledge shows the small but significant part that North East BJP leaders can and must play towards enabling Hindutva face the region's realities.

We know how much Naga society has suffered because of the killings and all-round destruction perpetrated by the Indian security forces and agencies ordered by the Congress Party Government. Any Government in Delhi, whatever the Party, will adopt the policy the Congress Government adopted during its regime in dealing with the Naga issue. No Government in Delhi can or will dispense with the policy of protecting the territorial integrity of India as enjoined by the Indian Constitution.

This policy will prevail till the people of India sufficiently understand that the Naga position on sovereignty cannot be treated as anti-India or secessionist because the Nagas had established their position

*A Naga Speaks*

before the British Empire ended and they therefore were not a part of India and they defended their stand with their demonstrated unity thereafter resisting the superior might of India.

The Nagas have suffered immense wrongs done to them by the security forces and other agencies of India. The destruction caused to us from outside has been immense. What we have done within our society to ourselves, to our values, our character and our culture has been equally serious if not more. It will be downright dishonest and irresponsible on our part to deny the truth about this self-inflicted internal destruction.

When people in politics and in religion respond correctly and properly to the changing realities, the result is the right kind of politics and the right kind of religion, which produce the right kind of development for society. If the response is guided by shortsighted thinking for cheap gains the long-term good is sacrificed for short-term advantages. Such societies become impossible to develop properly. The political parties competing in the election and the Church must not let this happen.



## The North East -II

<i>Understanding India's North East – A Reporter's Journal</i>	485
Clueless In Bodoland	487
Society, Social Organisations And Social Capital In Nagaland	491
Human Aspirations And Struggles	496
Going Far Enough	503
Role of Traditional Institutions In Addressing Contemporary Issues	507
Ethnic Conflicts And Christian Response	511
Nagas Only Want Their Traditional Homelands	519
Nagaland – India's Vietnam Or Bulwark	521
Our Common Crisis: What Are We To Do?	524

### ***Understanding India's North East – A Reporter's Journal***

At the release of Rupa Chinai's book of the above name, Kohima. 4 June 2018

**F**or two reasons I am feeling greatly honoured for being asked to participate in the launching of this book in Kohima, Nagaland today. First reason is personal, and the second reason is because of the timeliness of the book in meeting a pressing need in the worsening crisis of Nagaland and the North East region.

The first reason for my appreciation of the invitation is that my wife and I have had the joy and privilege of knowing the author, Rupa Chinai for many years since the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century! The second reason is because the book is about the urgent issue of starting, deepening and widening understanding among peoples in situations of longstanding conflict so that their formidable difficulties become their common strength instead of causing their destruction.

'Be the change you want to see in the world.' This action-provoking thought said to be from Mahatma Gandhi is well known. Anyone who sets out to be the change in any manner discovers it is the simplest but most important and toughest thing to do because it just means doing what needs to be done in any situation. What needs to be done touches reality. It is therefore the thing that is seldom done or attempted.

I have known Rupa and her family since she was still in school. Their beautiful family home in a luxury apartment building that is a landmark that stands out on Bhulabhai Desai Road running along a stretch of the Arabian Sea that washes the coast of Mumbai city.

We have had the joy of receiving Rupa many times in our home in Zubza and earlier in Shillong. We have also travelled with her to various parts of North East India and into the interior of Nagaland. Every time we have welcomed Rupa we have always thought of the highly demanding long journeys Rupa has made over the years from the very visibly affluent Bhulabhai Desai Road to pursue her deep convictions and commitment for the sake of bringing about a better life and better understanding of the dignity and self-respect of numerous obscure people far far away from her comfortable home and community.

The first introductory chapter of the book starts with this memorable quote from a Professor of Harvard University, 'If you want to understand what is going wrong with public policies, go to the most



marginalised community. Don't seek them at the centre of the village, but at its periphery and see how they have been affected. Then you will begin to see the whole picture.'

This acute grasp of where things are going very wrong for ignored and deprived communities for untold generations and her compassionate, fierce concern for their needs to be met made Rupa take all the journeys she has done. She has journeyed not only to North East India but also to the tribal regions in the violence-stricken interior of Maharashtra where the deprivation and the despair of marginalised people are the same. She has survived the wear and tear of the travels so well because of the clarity of her commitment and purpose of life 'to see the whole picture' in order to help properly. After reading the book you will realise that the author from Mumbai knows about the peoples of our region much more intimately than many of us know about our own region. Now that's the way to do it!

Historian, journalist and author Rajmohan Gandhi, Rupa's mentor and friend as well, has observed in the Foreword to the book: 'Indian society ignores and even penalises persons with independent minds before it discovers their value. The Indian media does likewise. Rupa Chinai, whose conscience is as active as her pen, is a perfect example of this.' This tribute gives an assessment of the book with which I fully agree.

I want to return to the issue of understanding what the book is about. From our own attempts in Nagaland and in the North East region we have discovered that understanding is a moral and spiritual quality that originates from the same source as truth, love, healing, reconciliation, peace and so on. If finding fullest understanding is more important to us than the solution we are after, the right solution that is right and best for both becomes possible. But if achieving the solution is more important to us, distrust and manipulation takes over and the solution becomes more and more impossible.

The understanding of the North East that Rupa has sought in order to convey it to the people of India and their government in Delhi is strikingly free from pressure of achieving the needed solutions. That is why the stories are captivating and hope-giving.

The book is very much about a better future for the region and all concerned with that challenge. So I feel to share a thought or two about the stalemate in the search for a settlement that has greatly agitated all the Nagas for a long time now.

Our leaders have to make sure the increased tension that has undeniably come into the discussions made more dangerous by acrimonious blaming and condemnation of one another do not result in our resorting to use of force and violence again. Our leaders owe it to the Naga people to show statesmanlike leadership at this time so that what is already very bad is not made worse and the destruction that will result goes out of control.

We have all, without exception, in our different ways contributed to the society, politics, religion, culture, economy and all else we have today which threaten to bring us down. There is no room for blaming one another.

I shall conclude here with two points Forum for Naga Reconciliation (FNR) has in a statement just published on the interactions it has been conducting with the public during the past months in Dimapur, Kohima and Delhi:

1. In a time of crisis God *challenges* us to do what is right and best for all. Satan, the Devil, *tempts* us to do that which is to our advantage for the moment but which brings inevitable disaster for all later on.
2. '*It is always wise to seek the truth in our opponents' error, and the error in our own truth.*' (Reinhold Nieburh)

With these thoughts it is my privilege to release *Understanding India's North East – A Reporter's Journal*, and thank you very much, Rupa Chinai, with all my heart, for all you have done to understand us and give your understanding and convictions for us to the rest of India and the world.

### Clueless in Bodoland : Fear, Anger, Politics

2013

**S**mall may be beautiful but is it safe?

I went from Nagaland to Bodoland in the last week of July. I was touched to be invited by a group from various parts of Assam to go with them. We joined some friends who came from Delhi, Ahmedabad, Mumbai and Hyderabad. Our mission was for Peace and Solidarity. The group I was a part of visited a Muslim camp at Bidyapur, and a Bodo camp at Gambaribil

*A Naga Speaks*

near Kokrajhar.

An *Al Jazeera* TV programme on situations of conflicts in the world is called 'Fear, Anger, Politics'. I would add 'Confusion and Despair' to the *Al Jazeera* title to describe what happened in Bodoland in the second half of July and the continuing tremors though the lava flow has stopped.

My attempt to put together a simple article on what is happening in Bodoland has shown me that anything I can say is either too inadequate or obvious to need to be said at all or too true to be helpful in the present situation of explosive tension. It is also not likely to be part of the 'dominant discussion' and consensus that decide how issues are defined or understood and expressed in the nation and beyond.

That feelings are more critical than facts in a situation is what people in Bodoland and just about everywhere else in North East India will also say and do if asked to describe their crisis, although they may not use the same expletive. Also coming to me as I try to figure out how we are to respond to the rapidly escalating crisis is the observation R D Laing, the doctor and psychologist made some years ago about the difference between Disease Origin and Disease Process. Most of the time, he pointed out, a conflict or a disease is rendered more destructive causing enormous expenditure that increase with time if the efforts to resolve or heal it do not go deep or far enough to the origins, and only the process and consequences of the conflict or disease are dealt with.

A profound truth, but like all truths, easier said than done.

The despair, fear and anger of the victims of the latest eruption of violence and the dangerous politics produced by the crisis are now increasingly unmanageable. And the immense pressures of feelings and political compulsions, especially electoral, at work are so strong that all efforts by the State and Central Governments, political parties and NGOs are getting further and further away from the origins of the conflict. The result is the processes and ever-diversifying consequences are getting more complicated and poisonous.

One reality that has stood out for me from this recent visit and from the national and international media reports is that our natural and legitimate reactions of fear to threats to our survival as very small, fragile ethnic communities in our hitherto isolated corners, can set off wider reactions elsewhere that are quickened by reasons that have nothing to do with us, that is, not until recently.

It is bewildering to us that our response to the issues and developments as perceived and experienced at our level helped to create the present crisis. But in no time it was lifted away from its local origins by the centuries old conflicts on the sub-continent and made a part of that ancient hardened conflict equation which is now steering the dynamics of the crisis. It seems the destabilising confrontations in Assam and the region can no longer be dealt with separately although we are the ones who bear the brunt of the conflict spiralling away across the cities of India where also those from the NE are the ones targetted.

Emerging from our respective sanctuaries, as it were, we find the safe and undisturbed existence our people have been used to for generations is now under grave threat. And we sense we cannot match the challenges posed by the threats. Our responses to the challenges are inadequate or wrong and so counter-productive. The recent and the ongoing responses from the Bodos in particular and by the other communities like them in general, indicate the quality of response we are capable of at this stage. This is not to suggest that our wrong actions are justifiable. No. But that we need understanding by those who can help us, while on our part, we too have to change what should be changed in our ways.

Now that certain dynamics of changes in the world have forced us to become part of powerful processes unfamiliar to us, we are the least prepared mentally and in other ways to respond properly to them. In terms of numbers we are hopelessly unequal. We are therefore most vulnerable. The result is our response to the crisis the world has brought to us is woefully inadequate because for one thing we have played no conscious part in creating the crisis. Our wrong response thus makes our crisis more destructive all round.

For instance, we in Nagaland and most of the other parts of the region do not see why we should work hard at all when the Bangladeshis we call *miyas* are so plentifully available to do all that is required for our lives to stay comfortable and free from work, all paid for by money from Delhi! *Miyas* naturally come in steadily from Assam and spread out across our foothills to work in our paddy fields and into our towns in the districts where most of our shops are run by them. Some of our school drop-outs get trained for their future profession, namely, extortion, by getting the bare necessities from the *miya*-run shops paying nothing. A disturbing but inevitable trend is the increasing aggressiveness shown by the *miyas* who

are now reportedly engaged by political factions as free-lance arbitrary tax collectors to collect their 'taxes'. But who can say he has not contributed to the crisis?

In communities like ours there are simply too few whose response to the challenges are anywhere near what can be said to be adequate. Isn't this why we have more problems than solutions?

Are not the majority of mothers in our villages and towns completely at a loss to know how to protect and save, and raise and educate their children?

The crisis of many of them becomes all the more overwhelming because too often their husbands give up the fight and become useless drunks who beat them and force them to keep on paying for their addiction and life-style, and to produce more babies in the bargain, and so on? Only a minuscule few among us who have acquired some education and positions of influence may think we are managing to handle change.

But many of the 'successes' are actually disastrous examples of wrong, unsustainable ways of responding to challenges, and therefore role models our society should do without.

It will be unpopular, risky and extraordinarily complicated but a way must be found to address the Disease Origins together by all who have contributed to produce the present chaos that seems to be out of control. It will be found that no one is blameless enough. In any case there seems to be at least sufficient understanding now that we are all in the same boat and unless all will act together, the creaky overloaded boat will sink taking us all down.

The situation in Nagaland is not yet a demonstration of the successful implementation of this pledge. But it cannot be denied that it has become the standard to which our society must rise if we will have something better than what we have created together. The honest conversation on difficult facts and realities that is now unavoidable must include all who have a stake in evolving a way of living together that will work. That coming together can start with the following – North East India, Bangladesh, Myanmar and West Bengal. The process if started will take us in the direction of the origins of our common crisis if the issue of provocation and counter-provocation will be examined.

## **Society, social organisations, social capital in Nagaland**

Department of Humanities, IIT, Guwahati. 20 August 2010

I once came to participate in a seminar for the senior classes of a High School in Guwahati. I stayed with the family who run the school. Driving through the city in the evening my host said to me, 'Niketu, we in Guwahati have seen Nagas can fight for what they believe in, and it seems they cannot be terrified by anyone into surrendering. But we are sad that Nagas are showing they do not need anyone else to destroy them. They will do it themselves if they will continue what they are doing now.'

He was referring to the collapse of the Naga struggle into inter-factional killings and extorting groups in Dimapur, Kohima and some other towns completely paralysing our society.

What my host said made me to realise again that if we pay heed to what others see in us, especially our neighbours, we start to build bridges to others to develop mutual understanding, goodwill and co-operation. The need for this was expressed by Professor Archana Barua in her letter kindly inviting me to come and share some thoughts here today. As she puts it, 'The NE should come close, to discover one another more closely, sharing our common concerns to be inspired to dream of a peaceful and prosperous NE India despite many problems confronting us.'

I am sorry I am not academically qualified to present a paper here today of the kind expected for such occasions. But I decided not to let my doubts about the quality of my presentation bother me too unduly and accept the invitation to interact with thinkers in this vital institution in our region. So please bear with me as I try to share my thoughts with you as best as I can on our reaching out to discover one another more closely. I think we are all seeing that unless we evolve together a new thinking with a sense of urgency that will enable us to create a wider common stability for our whole region, events will overtake us and our accumulated problems will produce unmanageable destructive consequences.

But if we will think and act together I believe we will be surprised by what will be achieved. It is all going to depend on our willingness and commitment to do what needs to be done, wanting nothing for ourselves, including that we should be rewarded with success. This I am told is in keeping with the priceless truth from the Gita, 'Do what is shown to be your duty, leave the results in His hands.' I am saying things we Nagas do

very poorly indeed, namely, reaching out to others to listen to them and learn with and from them, and sharing the best we have. But we must learn together how to meet our common needs.

Most of you here have very old histories of your communities that go back many centuries. Although we too have been around for many centuries, many tribes like the Nagas do not have recorded or written histories that tell us about our past beyond the immediate few centuries back. Our oral histories, valid and important as they are, suffer from being only word-of-mouth accounts passed down from generation to generation as narrated stories, and so what is known of us does not go too far into the past.

Before the British came and made the Ahom and Kachari kingdoms in Assam Valley and the Nagas and other tribes part of their empire, there was very little contact between us and the peoples of the plains of Assam. The only contacts were infrequent instances of Naga villagers coming down to markets along the foothills in the Rengma, Lotha, Ao and Konyak areas to purchase salt and other simple items of merchandise.

The people who came to the Nagas from outside and made a lasting impact were the Christian missionaries. The first missionaries were on their way to China. Due to various reasons their plans were changed and they came to Sibsagar and Sadiya in Assam. In due course they came to know about the colourful tribal people living in the distant rugged mountain ranges rising along the south-eastern horizon.

One moving account known widely among the Nagas describes how Naga warriors confronted the first missionary who came to their village. They apparently came out fully armed with spears, shields and *daos* (machetes) to prevent his entry into their village. They threw their spears at the missionary. He knelt down and started to pray. None of the spears touched him. He got up and collected the spears and returned them to the intrigued and disconcerted village defenders. Discovering that he meant no harm to them he was allowed to establish his first link with the Nagas. The first few Nagas to become Christians were converted by an Assamese evangelist who came at the same time.

Thus began what was to prove to be the most significant encounter Nagas had had with the outside world up to that time. The missionaries were the first to bring education to the Nagas. The British maintained only the simplest structure of governance to make their presence and control known to provide protection and security to the extensive tea



plantations they had established in the valley and along the foothills. But for the constant headhunting raids by Nagas into the tea plantations, the British would most probably not have come to the remote villages in the mountains.

While on the subject of tea, was it tea from Assam that the English settlers in Massachusetts on the other side of the globe used for their famous tea party in Boston harbour to launch their revolution to break away from Britain? For Nagas their unlawful acts that disturb tea production in Assam led to their becoming a part of the eastern edge of the British Empire on the Indian sub- continent!

I should pose a question here. If the Hindu swamis, Muslim maulvis and Buddhist monks of the time ventured out at all from their more familiar and secure bases in the plains and came to our villages hidden in the forested mountains, would Nagas today be Hindus, Muslims or Buddhists? Big doors swing on small hinges, and history is so often shaped by small silent events that nobody notices at first.

### **Society, Social Organisations, Social Capital in Nagaland:**

I have tried to figure out what aspect of Naga society I should discuss today that will be relevant for this gathering. I decided the sensible thing for me to do will be to talk about the issues that concern me most about our society and for me that is how we understand and respond to the challenges from the changing world that are powerfully impacting all areas of our lives today. For my people this is the toughest challenge although we do not think enough about it.

Only a minuscule few in our society who have become obscenely rich through ruthless corruption may think they are managing to handle change. But in reality they are disastrous examples of unsustainable solutions. Alas, they are the high profile role models in our society, so that many come to think it is quite normal to be shamelessly selfish. Is it surprising our society has become unmanageable as it is now?

The standards for matching challenges correctly and adequately are very high. It would be fair to say even the most advanced societies who are more prepared than others to respond to challenges are making costly blunders although they have had leisurely centuries to learn from many trials and errors. Billions of us have to learn highly important and complicated ways of solving problems in a very short time. The result is we



are creating more problems than solutions because our responses are far below what they should be.

As a counsellor for drug and alcohol addicts, in my own family and at rehabilitation centres in Nagaland, I have found this explains the bewildering crisis of disconnection between parents and children, especially sons, which is the main cause of most addictions in Nagaland today. This problem also explains why a lot of our conflicts are so difficult to address and resolve because we become rigid due to insecurity when we find our ideas and ways cannot match the combined challenges of today and tomorrow already confronting us today all at the same time.

The all-pervasive crisis of response all developing societies have to contend with as they struggle to move forward with others in the world. We are plagued by this crisis and our society has become stagnant and explosive at the same time due to incompetence, ignorance, mismanagement, indiscipline, irresponsibility and corruption preventing speedy development. These failures and shortcomings are examples of defective or wrong responses to challenges of change, the common problem of most developing societies. Our failures and blunders are not because we are worse than others but because we simply have too much to learn in too short a time, made worse by our weakness for instant success and enjoyment.

This crisis of response which is an enormous burden to all developing societies causes the greatest misery to those who are least equipped to cope with it. Those better or best placed to cope with the challenges are the educated elite, meaning those in positions of power in the bureaucracy, politics, trade and industry and various other professions.

The size of the socio-economic-political problems caused by the poorest peoples in all developing societies is so huge that endless discussions to solve the problems take place at endless conferences and workshops all over the world. Massive economic plans funded with enormous amounts of money are definitely needed to solve the problems and make 'poverty history'.

But unless the conscience for responsibility and imagination and vision of the well-established in our developing societies will also get somehow get engaged to meet the crisis, the capacity and concern of the rich nations to give aid can run out due to cynicism, and the frustration and bitterness of the ever increasing poor explode cancelling all developing efforts and strategies.

It was reported some years back that at a discussion between Nigerian officials and the World Bank, when the Nigerian officials mentioned the amount they would like to take on loan from the world Bank, they were told that a few of the Nigerian multi-millionaires living in various rich nations could have easily lent them the amount!

Can we do anything that can make a difference in our situation is always the question. It should be asked to keep us realistic. I have tried to share my experience that if we simply decide to 'Be the change you want to see in the world', as Gandhiji put it, more things happen in unexpected ways than we can imagine or understand. There is more in the verse in the Gita that we are to do what we know is our duty leaving the results in His hands, than we realise.

Trying to understand the struggle of the Dalits in modern India, James Massey writes, '...only historical roots can provide the clue to the lost identity of the Dalits.' (*A Concise History of the Dalits*). The same perception has operated with the Nagas also. It was a struggle to get the foundation right first. This has resulted in the foundation becoming permanently set and rigid and the future paralysed. *A Movement in Search of Its People*, the subtitle of the last book on the Naga struggle by N Pamei, (*Naga Crucible*) aptly describes what this crisis is at this stage

Our vision or conviction to be a people and a nation is a normal mental, spiritual urge or compulsion that, as with others, we too have grown with from way back in our past. But if we are to grow as we should, we must know ourselves and the world we are a part of, be realistic and learn to grow intelligently by responding correctly to the opportunities and dangers that life brings to us all the time.

This principle of response to challenges decides whether a people grow up or down. The quality of the response decides the quality of the outcome. If we want to succeed as a people we too cannot treat this truth lightly. The arithmetic of this boils down to how each one of us actually thinks and acts daily.



## Human Aspirations and Struggles

Accepting the U.N. Brahma Soldier of Humanity Award.

Kokrajhar, BTAD, Assam. 24 July 2011

*I*t is a very great privilege and honour for my wife and me and five others from Nagaland, to be in Bodoland as your guests. In trying to understand the meaning of this special occasion today, I have learned more about the costly struggle of Bodos and their deeply held aspirations, which have shaped them as a people. I have found that to understand what the aspirations and struggle mean to the Bodos is to understand the imperishable legacy Bodofa Upendra Nath Brahma of revered memory has left to his people. The legacy from his all too brief but fully lived life has galvanised them to build the future they envision for themselves by consolidating and restoring their collective personality and peoplehood based on the facts of their history.

As I believe this to be the meaning behind this occasion today, you will understand how touched I am, but also profoundly challenged, to come today to the heartland of the Bodos to accept this most prestigious Award established in memory of Bodofa Upendra Nath Brahma, the torchbearer and role model of his people he loved so passionately.

The Award represents extraordinary generosity of thought and vision on the part of the Upendra Nath Brahma Trust because although I can say I am committed to fight for what is right and best to be achieved in the situations with which I am involved, I am keenly conscious that nothing I have done or achieved deserves such an Award.

So I am humbly accepting what you have bestowed on me with deepest appreciation for your friendship, goodwill and vision that the Award symbolises for me. I see it to be part of your thinking to reach out to your neighbours in trust and faith to search and strive together to achieve a common stability for our whole region that will enable all of us to grow fully as we should. Given our present lack of touch with one another, overburdened as we all are with our unsolved problems, some of them political compulsions coming from our positions of many years, to talk of creating a common stability out of our common chaos is likely to be regarded as impractical, idealistic musing.

But is it not the need thrown at us by a crisis, which if we ignore will produce an impossible future for our children? We will have to respond

*A Naga Speaks*

to the need not because we know how or possess the qualities to do so, but it has to be done, and God will guide us to do it.

Aspirations and dreams of peoples and the struggles to achieve them: these are two separate issues but each of them is incomplete without the other. Without aspirations and dreams there will be no struggles. Without struggles, aspirations are not achieved. These two issues can therefore be regarded as two half issues that combine to produce the phenomenon in life we call crisis. The Bodo crisis, the Naga crisis and all the other crises in our region and beyond, as in Burma, where the ethnic nationalities, like us, are caught in the crisis of establishing and defending their identities are examples I have in mind.

I propose to take this rare opportunity you have given me to share some conclusions and convictions from the Naga situation:

1. I believe our aspirations and dreams are at the heart of our Creator's plan for our growth and development. Our capacity to become aware of aspirations and dreams, and be inspired and driven by them, which make us grow, is what qualifies us as human beings. They are sacred, powerful gifts put in our souls, which we cannot treat irresponsibly or casually because they are associated with our Creator's meaning and purpose for human beings. It is right and necessary we respect our aspirations and struggle correctly to fulfill them and to be worthy of them. For the same reason we should respect the aspirations of others with equal seriousness and responsibility.
2. Because our aspirations are part of our Creator's plan for our fullest growth, He requires us to struggle to achieve them obeying His principles and guidance, instead of following our own ways to please ourselves. This unchangeable doctrine of struggle is the central truth of life, which we have no choice but to understand, accept and be guided by.

During my High School years I became aware of the Naga struggle emerging out of the agitated minds and deliberations of our Naga pioneer leaders who launched the Naga struggle. In due course I was tormented by the inescapable moral, ethical, philosophical questions and choices the struggle started to raise. They compelled me to try to understand the meaning and purpose of human aspirations and the struggle they always produce. I am sure this is your own experience also, as it is with all Nagas who understand our history.

When I went to study in Madras Christian College, Tambaram, in 1955, I was asking what part I was to play in the struggle of my people. I was deeply insecure. In my soul and conscience I was not convinced by the view that in politics moral and ethical questions are not important as politics is politics and ethical and spiritual questions must not be brought in to create confusion and weaken the cause.

That if the goal is right, to adopt any method to achieve it is justified, no matter how evil or dirty the method may be. The end justifies the means. But I found I was too weak to do things the right way my heart and conscience told me, even in the smallest situations I faced daily. I sensed I was facing the most important question in my life.

Soon after joining the college I met the idea of Moral Re-Armament with the aim of remaking the world starting it in your own life through learning to obey the still small voice everyday which speaks to everyone who listens to it. I could not deny the voice was there even in me. The experiment I made of listening and putting a few wrongs in my life right, revealed the existence of the voice and it also started to change me bringing some clarity. The beginning was so small. But I knew I had been shown something I could not treat casually. I went away over fifty years to work with Moral Re-Armament in India and elsewhere because I saw that I would simply add more problems to the Naga crisis unless I learnt to deal with the control of selfishness, greed, hate, lust and fears in my nature and character.

Now I have returned with my family to Nagaland to continue the same work of tackling these passions weakening our people, our struggle and our society, always based on the experience of change in my own life which I need to renew everyday.

I venture to discuss a reality, which has reduced all Nagas to the same helplessness. All of us have contributed our share to produce the reality. It is this – why has the Naga political struggle for our deeply held aspirations which I believe to be right started to destroy itself and the people for whom it was started? Exactly the same thing can be said to the State Government of Nagaland, the illegitimate child of the Naga struggle. The child is loudly maligned and condemned. But the seemingly endless wealth it brings from its non-Naga parent has made it a much harassed provider of all Nagas today whether they condone or condemn it.

Why is this State also destroying itself and the people for whom it was brought to birth in great haste?

*A Naga Speaks*

These two questions are posed without any criticism of anyone in my mind because the common destructiveness mentioned is a baffling existential crisis before which all Nagas stand equally helpless with no one able to deny he or she is blameless. The explanation seems to lie in the truth that God allows all aspirations and the struggles to achieve them. Indeed, they are His plans for our growth. But He strictly requires us to struggle his way so that what is achieved is just and fair for all. Gandhiji called this *Ram Rajya*. Christians call this the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven.

It throws light on the unchangeable doctrine of God for mankind that the just, creative, fair, workable society we need for our proper growth on earth, can be created only His way, not our human ways. 'The high ideals, and not long after, the dark dead end of man-made schemes.' Peter Howard the English writer thus described what inevitably happens if our human ways usurp God's ways in human affairs. Think of Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, Muammar Gaddafi of Libya, Bashar al-Assad of Syria, to name a few of the latest examples of men who took over their nations as revolutionaries with high ideals for the down-trodden millions. The slogans raised hopes for the masses and flattered the vanity of the messiahs. But their man-made schemes to perpetuate their own dynasties made them forget their people's huge needs and their people are now hounding them out.

A people launching their struggle for their aspirations can be compared to a ship setting out on a voyage across the oceans. The unchangeable rule the captain of the ship has to follow is that he has to be guided by the Pole Star above the North Pole, in finding the right way to his destination. There is no record of any sailor ever in all of history reaching the Pole Star. But the unchangeable Pole Star is the only reliable and safe guide for all sailors to take their ships to their destinations. Many will say this insistence of doing things guided by God can come only from simple-minded naïve people who have no experience of the harsh world of politics, business and other human ventures.

This impatient reaction from people who are in a hurry to solve political, economic and social problems is understandable because the dilemmas blocking their paths are formidable. But there is an indestructible truth of life and history in the example of the captain of a ship being always guided by the distant Pole Star in order to take the passengers and cargo entrusted to him safely to its destination on this planet.

I believe the Naga struggle was and is right and necessary for our fullest growth. Societies, like individuals, grow only through struggles. And I revere and am grateful for all our genuine leaders and fighters who have lived and fought so sacrificially for the aspirations they held dear for themselves and for our people.

And I know that to suggest that the political and economic issues and problems of society can be solved easily by adhering to moral principles and values is simplistic and even irresponsible. But if we care for the proper, healthy, creative growth of our society it is irresponsible and unrealistic to ignore or treat lightly eternal truths and principles that govern life on earth.

Whether we are political leaders, bureaucrats, militants, contractors, businessmen, men and women in different professions, student leaders, social workers, priests, imams, or pastors, let us ponder and realise what we are doing to ourselves, to our families, our society and the world if we are selfish, thoughtless and irresponsible. We dare not forget that countless others in society far removed from the positions of power and wealth are paying an unbearable price if we are irresponsible and are run by enjoyment of instant success regardless of the consequences of the methods we adopt to get what we want. In desperate crisis situations like ours in Nagaland, Bodoland and elsewhere, the most intelligent and effective strategy to adopt is to raise networks of individuals who will accept that

‘What is wrong is wrong, even if everyone is doing it. What is right is right even if no one is doing it.’ Calmly, with a sense of real adventure we must decide to do what is right. This is the meaning of what is said in the Gita, Do your duty and leave the results in His hands. At first such men and women are likely to be a very few only. But we need not doubt that they will be opening a new door to the future if they learn to stay true to what they know is their duty or their calling. Statesmen and stateswomen, the need of the day, rise from such men and women who have learnt to love the common good more than selfish ambitions.

We need to learn to become men and women who care more for the health of the tree than the fruits of the tree. If the tree is not nurtured to grow properly there will be no fruits! Certainly in Nagaland, people in the Naga struggle, the State Government and the rest of us, have shown we have been more interested in the fruits we want to enjoy instantly, and ignore the health of the tree, or the ethics, morality and sustainability of the



process to achieve the goal. No wonder the Naga tree is seriously sick.

It is easy to make such a diagnosis about our crisis. But what needs to be done for solutions that will work is extremely difficult. And those who are carrying the struggles for our people, despite some of the horrible wrongs they are doing in the process, and those running the State Government, despite the sticky fingers of too many of them, are doing a thankless but vital task to keep our society going for all of us. The question is how long can our ship stay afloat if we will not go beyond painting our own cabins to caring for the ship in danger of sinking?

The easiest thing to do is to say nothing can be done. Everyone is doing what is wrong and convenient for their own gains. What I can do is too small and insignificant. Who am I anyway? And go away and add more to the problem. The fact is something can be done if what is right and best for all is more important for us than what we want for our own gain, success and glory.

It comes down to this: simply decide to be the change you want to see in the world, as Gandhiji said, by starting to change your life first, keep it up and help others also to find the same experience of change. This is to walk the road less travelled.

Permit me to say something from my humble experience of trying to walk on this road. For me it was to make a start in attempting to obey what I believe my heart and conscience told me. It was an experiment. I wrote a letter to my father telling him the truth about myself including the money I was spending wrongly which he was sending at great sacrifice to keep me in college and asking him to forgive me.

In response appreciating my simple honesty with him, telling me where he too regretted the way he had treated our mother at times and saying he had decided to be different, moved me more than I could express. He wrote from Nowgong jail where he was a political prisoner for a year. When he returned home he showed he meant what he had said. I had no idea my honesty with him would result in my father finding where he too needed to change! I realised I was experiencing something I should not underestimate at all.

Being the change is something that has to be real continuously. Those nearest to us help us most in this if we let them! I never forget the help my wife gave me once by telling me honestly what she had been feeling for a long time. One day she tried to say she felt I was wrong on



a certain matter because it had hurt her. My quick angry explanation brushing aside what she had tried to say was too much for her. She cried and said she was fed up with the dishonesty and bad temper of a good man who has been trying for so long to be good. She said I did not think you would be like this. I am tired. How right Robert Burns was when he said we do not see ourselves as others see us!

A Khasi friend I hold in high regard came to a youth conference of MRA, as it was then. He heard stories of change brought to difficult situations by people who put things right in their own lives as a result of learning to listen to the inner voice guiding them and obeying it. He decided to do the same thing as he deeply wanted to help his people.

When he got back home he returned all the books he had kept over the years from the State library. He hired a taxi and took the 265 books to the library manager and apologised for the way he had been part of the corruption he blamed in others. He asked to pay the fine owed the library. The manager said he had met no one like him and thanked him saying he was not imposing any fine. Today this gentleman is a judge in the state capital where he is known and trusted for his integrity.

A Naga Christian youth leader took an active part in a fund-raising campaign for a church project. From the amount he raised he kept Rs 2000 for himself explaining to himself that he deserved it for the effort he had made. He was ashamed of the fraud he had committed and returned the amount to the church as a contribution from him and his wife. The guilt that followed was worse. He and his wife told their colleagues what they had returned was not a contribution. It was the amount they had kept back from the fund-raising campaign!

These small steps of honesty, restitution and apologies must not of course be overestimated as the problems of the world are so much bigger. But it is equally important we do not underestimate them because such practical steps of obedience cut through our pride and selfishness, enabling us to understand by experience the price to be paid in the eternal battle between good and evil, right and wrong.

I have taken the liberty of sharing on this occasion what I see and believe for my people, as that is all I can do in response to the issues you are facing today as you try to build on the legacy passed on by the Bodofa to his people. Reflecting on that legacy I am reminded of an African proverb which says, 'He who wakes me up in the middle of the night to go on a long journey, I shall thank him only after I have gone a long way.' Seeing the

*A Naga Speaks*

seriousness of purpose and united commitment with which ABSU is caring for the Bodos, one feels you are thanking him for the demanding journey on the road he led you out to travel on.

Now may I propose all of us remain silent for two minutes to hear if the still small voice that speaks in all of us is telling us anything to make a fresh start?



### **Going far enough**

*The Road We Need To Travel Together*

**O**ur region's prolonged instability raises worrying questions. The deadlock in our own crisis is making the public think nothing can be done to avert disaster. But is that how God sees our situation? We say, sometimes boastfully, we believe in the living God. Is it possible He is not saying anything to us at this time when our human wisdom has failed? If He is, are we ready to go far enough with Him?

The ULFA and other killings elsewhere are in the news. In Nagaland blood flows non-stop from Nagas killing Nagas in inter-faction eliminations. Are our leaders so indifferent to the public's cry to stop the killings? Or have short-term agendas of competing tribes paralysed them, enabling some warlords and their cadres to hijack the Naga struggle for their own purposes? What is the truth? Death and fear of death, and endless tax collections across the region, especially in Nagaland and Manipur, are the daily experiences of life in our battered communities. The money collected is said to be for struggles we hold dear. But they are all the more oppressive if the stories of massive misuse are true. Are some sacrificing what belongs to all Nagas for their own gains?

The doctrine that we can do as we like to get what we want, overground and underground, has produced our lawless, self-destructive society. Can we survive without reversing the doctrine? A way must be found. Everyone is needed to think and live differently to reverse what has gone wrong.

The struggle by people for identity and political space in today's world is legitimate and it explains the intense crisis across our region, as Dr Udayan Misra has pointed out. But no crisis anywhere is granted blanket exemption to violate eternal moral, ethical principles to suit anyone. Indeed

***A Naga Speaks***

for those who really care for the best interests of their people the standards they adopt for responding to crisis have to be pure. We must know we can destroy ourselves without any help from others.

Cervantes's fictional hero, Don Quixote, declares, 'Madness lies in seeing the world only as it is and not as it could be.' And Ivan Illych, theologian and thinker, makes the intriguing observation that change in society would only come through 'the telling of a new story'.

'The world as it could be' and 'the telling of a new story' are adventurous visions. They imply costly changes in us, and readiness to act to enable big things to happen.

Only by going far enough to do the truthful thing we discover the way to 'the world as it can be'. Christ was emphatic we should go the 'extra mile' in doing the right thing, for instance, we are to forgive 'seventy times seven', not just seven times! Defiant rejection of selfishness and pride that enables God to create a new story out of us! The truth is that not going far enough merely helps Satan build his kingdom on earth.

A new story of going far enough in our situation has started. The people of Khonoma discovered that they had lost their precious traditional spirit of working together, the treasured social capital of every Naga village, because of the unhealed wounds they had inflicted on one another during the worst years of the Naga struggle. Resolutions passed by the village to stop wanton destruction of their virgin forest and the killing of birds and other wild animals could not be implemented. They were ignored with impunity by anyone who thought more for quick profits than the consequences. The elders were no longer respected. The village saw their urgent need was healing and forgiveness of one another if their delicate ecosystem was to be protected and if their youth were at all to match the challenges of a fast changing world.

The Khonoma Public Commission representing all the *khels* (clans) was formed and entrusted with the task. The Commission listed all the issues and events that had divided the village. 22 killings, identified to be due to the political differences in the turbulent '50s, were the first wounds to be healed. October last year saw the completion of the last case of the killings going through the whole sensitive process of the parties on both sides meeting one another, one side expressing apologies and asking for forgiveness for the hurt and loss of life caused, the other side graciously forgiving them.

On 18 November 2006, a memorable event took place in Khonoma when on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his killing T. Sakhrie, one of the legendary pioneers of the Naga struggle, was mourned and honoured by over three thousand people from his village and many from the different Naga tribes. Nilasieto Labu, his son, while acknowledging the unbearable pain and destructive consequences he and his whole family had suffered after they lost their father, said, 'This is the day the Lord has made. So I give praise and thanks to Him for nothing is impossible for God. Today, in the name of my grandfather and grandmother, I and my family renew our pledge to honour and respect the declaration we have made to the Public Commission of Khonoma village. This is a story of tragedy and also of triumph. May God bless the Naga people.' It was one of the 22 stories of 'tragedy and triumph' experienced by the village.

Labu was referring to his grandmother's costly decision to forgive when the tragic news of her son's killing reached her. The family had loyally stood by her decision. It was reaffirmed when, as part of the process the Commission started, the clan concerned acknowledged moral responsibility and sincerely asked for forgiveness and God's blessings. God's grace won in both cases.

Another story worth our study as we search for a future 'as it could be' is how Mikhael Gorbachev of Russia reshaped history by his surprising leadership.

At the start of World War II, Stalin's secret police arrested all the Polish leaders who would oppose his post-war grabbing of their country. In 1940 they were taken east to Katyn forest in the Ukraine and shot and buried. The 20,000 killed were political leaders, businessmen, doctors, lawyers, writers, artists, scientists, engineers, professors and senior officers of the armed forces. The Germans discovered the mass grave when they pushed the Russians out of Katyn and told the world what Stalin had done. Stalin denied and accused the Nazis pointing out Hitler's brutalities against the Jews. Britain and USA suspected Moscow but remained silent because they needed Stalin to defeat Germany. The Poles knew the gruesome truth and deeply hated the Russians for it. But they were a helpless nation controlled by their own people who obeyed Moscow.

When Gorbachev became President of the USSR he knew the Communist Empire was doomed because the people had lost confidence in its ideology. He announced a new policy to respond to the crisis. It was to boldly go far enough to reorganise (*Perestroika*) the USSR on the basis of

complete openness (*Glasnost*) to avert a nuclear war with the West as well as open up fresh opportunities for Russia and the whole world.

The powerful Solidarity movement in Poland was the first test of *Glasnost*. It was led by workers and thinkers most of whom were devout Catholics inspired by the Polish Pope in Rome, not by Marx. Gorbachev acted decisively by telling the truth about the Katyn massacre. It showed he meant business. The costly transparency touched the soul of Poland. All the files on the Katyn atrocities were eventually returned to Warsaw with straight apologies for the crimes and the lies about them. History has recorded that Moscow's restored relationship with Poland played a vital part in the huge changes taking place in Eastern Europe without violence. Gorbachev gave the world a chance to make a fresh start which became the essence of his refreshing leadership. 'Statesmanship is to do today what events will force you to do tomorrow.' Gorbachev saw the world as it was and could be and responded by showing farsighted statesmanship.

Right now things can go very wrong needlessly, or go very right. It depends on whether or not our leaders will go far enough with God. If they will do so they will win the trust of the public. For the public our part is to want only what will be right and best for all Nagas and act unitedly, wanting nothing at all for ourselves.

Our crisis is far more than the political positions of the factions. The attempt by the churches for reconciliation through healing has revealed the hunger of the people for something new. It is a precious social, political Naga asset, which no group should misuse. Last September, the Nagaland Baptist Church Council, supported by the different denominations, launched a booklet which included a proposal of a scheme for 'honest conversations' to start among all Nagas. It is the road we need to inspire one another to travel together especially at this time. Yes, help, not pull one another down.

True to their conscience and God, if Nagas will converse with one another, each acknowledging their own mistakes and wrongs, leaving others free to do as He guides them, God will find He can enter our crisis. Mutual trust, respect and peace will begin to replace mistrust, hatred and tension. Constructive dialogue will start that can tackle even the issues we have avoided so far resulting in our bloody dividedness. Our most difficult problems will then unite and strengthen us. Unexpected breakthroughs will come from Him who promised He will be where two or three, or more, are gathered in His name.

### *A Naga Speaks*

As the new century and millennium dawned, the Dalai Lama said, 'The 20<sup>th</sup> century has come to be known for its terrible conflicts. It is up to us to make sure the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be a century of dialogue and progress.' Let us not underestimate what sincere dialogue can achieve. If we are prepared to go far enough with God we will see that 'Even the hour that seems darkest will His changeless goodness prove.'

We the undersigned believe by reaching out to one another to find the right plan together, Nagas have nothing to lose except our divisions that have killed so many lives and threaten to nullify our costly achievements. This declaration, however inadequate, is made to encourage truthful dialogue among Nagas.

'*Fortis est veritas et praevalabit*' is Latin for 'Truth is strong and will prevail'. It is the right motto for Nagas also.



### **The Role of Traditional Institutions in Addressing Contemporary Issues of the Region.**

North East Network Seminar, NEHU. 14 June 2002

*Like the people of Papua New Guinea who traversed 10000 Years in a Lifetime, we too have to achieve in an extremely short time what the advanced old societies have achieved over centuries spanning generations. It is not surprising we feel overwhelmed by what has to be done, just to survive and keep going. I think knowing this helps us to get the right perspective on ourselves, and what we are achieving, and to appreciate it.*

You have talked of 'examining and deepening our understanding of some of the major issues of concern for the people of North East India'. And the subject given to me is 'The role of traditional institutions in addressing contemporary issues of the region.'

A central issue of our region is undoubtedly the phenomenon of people becoming aware and struggling for diverse aspirations. Different tribes and groups have fought for different goals expressed in political terms. All the struggles are because of deeply felt hopes and fears. To struggle because you see something to be important for you and your people is a fundamentally important right, duty and responsibility. I feel it is important to be clear it is right and essential for people to struggle. It is a vital sign of their humanity.

*A Naga Speaks*

Is it not true that nations and civilisations are the results of generations of relentless struggle by individuals and communities consciously pursuing their aspirations and beliefs arising from their thinking and understanding of themselves and their history? Boris Pasternak said, 'the road to new and better days' is cleared by 'revelations, lavishness and torments of someone's soul, inspired and ablaze'. Because the struggle of a people, no matter the many serious mistakes they make most of the time, does come from their thinking and their soul, their struggle should be seen as their mental and spiritual growth.

This view may be controversial because the struggles of peoples do produce so much that is evil and destructive. But it seems to be the only way people learn and grow, i.e. by learning from the mistakes they make while attempting to be true to their convictions. The truth is, the mistakes and evils that come from not struggling for your beliefs and convictions turn out to be more destructive in the long run. Again this may be debated.

Victor Hugo said, 'Nothing is more powerful than an idea whose time has come.' Ethnic consciousness and consolidation in the marginal lands where the ancient civilisations of India, China and SE Asia meet, as elsewhere, is certainly an idea whose time has come. It is a historical development that is catching up with our people whose self-awareness has prepared them for it. It will prove to be too destructive to ignore or suppress this process. It is a huge crisis for us who are caught up in this historic development. We cannot escape it.

All growth takes place in painful crisis. The challenge for the peoples of our region is not to retreat in fear or doubt but to realise the dangers in our weaknesses and to decide to accept the changes required of us to match them. Then we will make use of the opportunities in our crisis and become stronger to go forward in the world with others.

What seems clear is that we are created and programmed to grow, to struggle towards higher and ever higher meanings and aspirations that are implanted in our minds, spirit and soul by our Maker. What is equally clear is that our Creator requires us to strictly adhere to His majestic moral and ethical doctrine of ends and means as we struggle. Job in wonderment but also in exasperation asks God, 'What is man that you should set your heart upon Him, that you should visit him every morning and test him every moment?' Who among us has not said the same thing in frustration and anger when we are tempted to succeed, or struggle for our sheer survival and growth by making compromises that we know are morally



wrong?

I have made this point about human struggle originating from God himself because that requires us to respect all struggles of peoples for aspirations. For the same reason, a people engaged in struggle are required by God to be worthy of their struggle as the impulse comes from him and he wants it to be conducted his way for our own ultimate common good. I'm trying to sort out these thoughts about struggle in my own mind because our region is going to be known for difficult, insuppressible struggles for a long time to come.

And I am concerned because it is most easy for a people compelled to struggle to grow to ignore the moral and spiritual issues of struggle. This always results in uncontrollable destructiveness both to those who struggle and others for whose sakes the struggles are supposedly launched, as well as many others affected by the struggle. Unless we know the correct meaning of struggle and accept the inescapable moral and ethical ground rules of struggle that apply to all equally, we will be destroyed by our errors and our ignorance. Rwanda, Burundi, Sierra Leone are vivid examples of this lesson.

Permit me to refer to the struggle in Nagaland here. What the Nagas tried to assert when the British were about to leave was treated with disdain by Delhi. It was considered as a minor bureaucratic problem to be dealt with by sub-inspectors of Police and their constables.

When the punitive measures by the police failed and the well-written memorandums of assertion, protest and defiance continued, the then Chief Minister of Assam, Bishnuram Medhi, came visiting Nagas distributing sweets and trinkets and telling villagers not to be guided by misguided troublemakers. When the advice given with unconcealed contempt and annoyance was not heeded, the State Government started to give the line to Delhi and the country that foreign Christian missionaries had instigated the Nagas against India.

Pandit Nehru told a Naga delegation the memorandum they had presented to him must have been written by foreign missionaries as the political aspirations articulated in it could not have been thought out by the Nagas on their own. Phizo told Nehru he was 'insulting Asian intelligence'.

There is a difference between Gandhi's response and Nehru's response. It decides whether people are won by a higher expectation and thought or they are lost because they feel threatened. The difference



becomes very important for building peace and stability in the long run. One is listening to people because you know you will entertain the same hopes and fears if you were in their place and you believe ultimately the best answer for the problems they face will have to come out of their lives. The other is to regard them as problems and you have no moral and spiritual vision or meaning in them. Your attitude is that you know better what is best for them. Often this can be true, but the attitude creates the sense of threat and hostility. So they have to be manipulated, bribed, bullied or eliminated for the success of your plan or idea.

I have often tried to imagine what could have happened if Nehru had said to the Nagas, 'I have understood your position. I respect your conviction. But what you are asking is too much for any Prime Minister of India to even discuss. A nation like India will not be strong enough to entertain a case like yours for a very long time to come. I need your wisdom to solve the question between us. Please advise me.'

Now to come to the main point of my subject – because of inherent weaknesses in ourselves, which of course Delhi too exploited to the hilt, as all governments do in similar situations, the NNC became hopelessly divided. It split and the NSCN was formed by Isak, Muivah and Khaplang. The NNC split again into two factions and NSCN also split again into IM and K factions. A period of murderous rivalries started for the control of the movement. In no time, Nagas found themselves totally isolated from one another. Fear, distrust and ruthless tribalism took over in all areas of our society, overground and underground.

It was in this nightmarish crisis that about eight years ago, Nagas decided to recreate a common meeting ground, a platform or no man's land where dialogue could start again. It is still a very loose body with structural and organisational weaknesses that are having to be rectified on the run. But its authority and influence quickly grew because it was built on the traditional tribal organisations that run our society at the level of villages. So the response from the tribes was immediate.

There is a ceasefire between IM and the Government of India and talks are also in progress for a negotiated settlement. Nagas are however clear that if a settlement is reached by one faction alone, we will have inter-factional, inter-tribal killings on a larger scale than before. The need is for an unquestionable consensus to be reached among the different factions on the issues to be negotiated with Delhi for an acceptable settlement.

## Ethnic Conflicts and Christian Response

56<sup>th</sup> Annual College Principals Meeting of Xavier Colleges of India, Darjeeling Dt.

21 October 2006

We need not doubt that the scholars of the Church have left unexamined any subject of importance under heaven, including the one before us today. I should say right away that my only qualification for standing before you on this occasion is that I come from a situation of ethnic conflict in North East India. I feel greatly honoured to be invited to share my thoughts with you on this occasion.

Darjeeling is a part of the North East. So I should mention that I am coming from a remarkable conference held recently in Guwahati on the theme '*India's North East: Beyond Blame to Responsibility*', organised by Initiatives of Change (formerly MRA) and Don Bosco Institute, Guwahati. P. D. Rai from Sikkim spoke on one of the main themes, '*Conscience, Ethics, Soul: What Place for Them in Our Development?*' We were also very happy that the Conference Secretary was a young lady from Tibet! She linked the conference to her land and people on the other side of these Himalayas.

According to Lincoln, 'God must love the common people. He makes so many of them.' It seems something similar can be said about human conflicts because there are so many of them! We can't probably say God loves conflicts. But can we not say He allows them to occur in uncontrollable profusion? And without vigorous initiatives from human beings, God on His own does not prevent or stop human conflicts? They seem to be a crucial part, even the centerpiece, of God's plan for all human beings to grow fully.

Roughly speaking we are talking about conflicts involving minority groups whose ethnic origins are different from those of the main populations of the communities or nations of which they are a part.

The first ethnic conflicts in modern history were mainly those of the native tribes and nations in North, Central and South America, Australia and New Zealand, in response to invasion and colonisation of their vast lands by Europeans from the 15<sup>th</sup> Century onwards. British settlers described Australia as *Terra Nullius* - vacant earth or land unoccupied by people - to justify their taking over of the vast stretches of the continent for themselves in the name of the King in Britain. Little did they realise how bitterly the claim would be resented and challenged in the following

*A Naga Speaks*

centuries resulting in the Australian Parliament eventually passing legislations that have returned extensive territories in various regions of Australia back to the aboriginal people.

The ethnic conflicts of today are mainly in Asia, Africa and Europe, the most well-known ones being in India, China, Indonesia, Burma, Sri Lanka, Central and West Africa, the Balkans and in some of the republics of what was once the USSR.

What are ethnic conflicts? What explains them?

My people the Nagas have been in active conflict for the past six decades. Prior to that, the Nagas were in a gradual process of 'low-intensity' ferment when they were trying to cope with their crisis of encountering with the outside world, starting with the coming of the British in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Each ethnic conflict anywhere in the world has its own specific history. But what is true of all of them is that each one of them is the struggle or fight of a particular people, tribe or community to establish their collective personality or identity in order that their chances to survive and to grow in dignity like others in the world may be secured.

Minorities or ethnic groups sooner or later raise difficult issues for the dominant, established societies they are a part of. And the attitude in general of the established core to those on the periphery or fringe, geographically, culturally and often economically is 'Why are they creating such a problem for themselves and the nation by their protests, assertions and violent struggles? What's bugging them?' Udayan Misra's important book explaining the ethnic conflicts in India's North East has the telling title *The Periphery Strikes Back*

But in the subject given to me you show your concern that the response to the conflicts should be compassionate and just, showing respect and understanding.

Ethnic conflicts are not the big headline-grabbing wars or crises involving the big powers that send celebrity diplomats jetting to capitals around the world, often compelling the UN Security Council to sit in emergency sessions. Ethnic conflicts as a whole are just quietly smouldering situations where inherent, legitimate human aspirations and longings are keeping people unsatisfied with their conditions and pace of progress. They are somewhat like the underground fires that start and go on and on in coal mining areas. They are seldom widely publicised but they

cause untold pain and suffering and damage to uncounted marginalised, inarticulate millions of people.

Ethnic conflicts become high value news only when they become a threat to the political and economic interests of the big players in the world. Or when some individuals among their people with thought and vision appear and rally them to fight for goals that are put before them. Then they become ethnic conflicts as we call them. It may be more correct to call them crises of aspirations because aspiration is always at the source of all conflicts.

Usually after a long time of crises, ethnic conflicts become so destructive and costly that governments begin to respond by formulating policies to solve them. Most often the policies do not look beyond the economic, political and social manifestations of the crises to the human beings causing the crises. Therefore in most cases the policies are 'carrot and stick' measures, which address only the 'law and order' aspects of the situation, never touching the human aspirations and longings at the deeper roots of the conflicts. The desk-bound policy makers almost always consider the aspirations and longings as anti-national, anti-centre or anti-social, secessionist and foreign-inspired problems.

The policies therefore are usually divide-bribe-control-and-destroy strategies. But because they do not touch the human aspirations and feelings burning in the souls of the people, instead of solving the problems they produce worse complications. We have seen in the case of my people that embittered, humiliated and insulted fighters learn to confront the stick used to frighten and subdue them but they become tragically addicted to the carrot!

The resultant crisis is nothing less than rapid degeneration of the soul of entire communities. Character, integrity and responsibility disappear. When the soul is thus violated and abused anything can be expected, be it moral indifference, cynicism, vicious hatred of one another, or mindless greed and corruption at all levels of society. Such a society is easily controlled by mafia-like extortion rackets whose tentacles reach deep into the entire machinery of governance rendering it useless. I have given the description of the negative transformation that has occurred in Nagaland and Manipur, the worst cases, and what has started to happen in Assam and other states of the North East.

What is the right response to such a crisis? Before I try to answer the question I think I should say something about my background by way

*A Naga Speaks*

of explaining my involvement in the humble attempt being made in faith by some of us in Nagaland to answer our crisis.

I come from a family that has been deeply involved in the struggle of the Naga people for our aspirations. But unlike many of my friends, many of whom I hold in high regard, I did not become a full time worker for the Naga freedom struggle by going to the jungle. I felt that the philosophy of life fuelling our struggle was dangerously narrow and inadequate for the long haul.

So when I met the idea of MRA as a student in Madras Christian College in 1955 I instinctively sensed that it was the idea I was to accept and try to demonstrate with my whole life. The central idea of MRA is that justice, freedom and human dignity are achieved only when we are guided by God and His highest values instead of being run by our own passions for success, fame, pleasure, hate and revenge.

It is true that a people's struggle that is not examined constantly also soon becomes unworthy of pursuit and sacrifice, and it always becomes unbearably destructive. Nagas today are acknowledging that something has gone very wrong with our struggle, which we have been very proud of. It has started to destroy itself and the people for whom it was started. The same thing can be said of the State government of Nagaland. So what do we do? What is the meaning of this common destructiveness that we must address?

Many of us do believe the struggle to be the most important initiative and experience of our people. So we have decided not to ignore it or blame others for what it has become but to understand where our inadequate thinking has caused it to go wrong, and make it what it should be so that it will be our common asset for our growth as meant by God.

God made man in His own image. He breathed into the image He had made and man became a living soul. This doctrine of man and his soul explains best, man's hunger for meaning, purpose, dignity, freedom and identity. Life is understood as a struggle at the individual, family and community levels.

So when a people choose to struggle to achieve what they believe to be right and best for them, they are responding to impulses implanted in them by their Creator for their fullest mental, spiritual, social and economic development. What means and methods we use for our struggle and for what cause are the crucial questions about the place we give God or truth

in our lives and in our attempts to grow. We are now realising that if our struggle and striving to think and to grow individually and collectively come from such a divine urge in us, then we have to conclude that our political struggle which is a part of that urge is a precious heritage we must not misuse or treat lightly.

What emerges from this understanding is a very high moral and spiritual standard of struggle which people fighting for their rights and identity find too difficult to be guided by. I will try to explain. Wasn't Victor Frankl referring to the indivisible, inviolable soul when in his book *Man's Search for Meaning* he said we have no right to do a wrong thing to respond to a wrong done to us, no matter how horribly wrong the first wrong may be? Frankl was a survivor of Hitler's holocaust, which killed his wife.

For Gandhi it was the *Doctrine of Ends and Means*. If he hadn't taken God and the human soul so seriously as to make the doctrine or fight for truth the central principle of his political and moral struggle for India's freedom, and achieved what he achieved, no one today, after all the horrors of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> World Wars and the Cold War, may have the faith and confidence to talk about ethical, moral and spiritual responses to human conflicts.

What I am trying to say is that if there is such a thing as a moral, spiritual, ethical position for a people's struggle, it is that the meaning or purpose of all human struggles is to build the kingdom of God, *Ram Rajya*, on earth that is just, fair and compassionate, built on truthfulness, as it must be in heaven. That all our human struggles are mandated only to bring about societies and kingdoms where His ways and values prevail, not our ways and values.

The truth is when we violate this meaning and purpose of human struggle because of our greater love for our own glory and success we start to build our own kingdom to get what we want for ourselves.

There is nothing new in the above analysis. Many others have done it and reached the same conclusion. The question is how are we to respond in our crisis? We find the methods we use to achieve our aspirations are the exact opposite of God's ways, which to us are too risky to adopt. Yet to reject God's ways and follow our own ways is to let our own evils destroy us. The dilemma is cruel. God told Isaiah His thoughts and ways are higher than our thoughts and our ways, 'As the heavens are higher than the earth.'

Our people's urge to struggle is not an irrational impulse we should

be ashamed or afraid of. It is part of the natural process of growth. But doing it our human way always renders the struggle totally destructive to itself and the people, as we are already experiencing. We have started to learn from our journey thus far that to live is to grow and to grow is to change. But the discovery that 'to grow fully is to change often' is proving to be too dismaying to us.

I think we are thinking of two kinds of responses to ethnic conflicts:

1. The response of those outside ethnic conflicts to those inside them.
2. The response of those inside conflicts to their conflicts.

Facts, feelings, distrust and violence are the stuff of which all human conflicts are made. Workable solutions are revealed when we respond to them correctly with the right thinking and in the right order, which restore understanding and trust. Is not conflict resolution and building peace essentially a process of learning to 'Walk a mile in one another's moccasins' in order to understand, as the Native Americans teach us?

At an Arab-Israeli workshop for peace-building an Arab participant said, 'If you Israelis would acknowledge that you have wronged us, that you have taken away our names and our land – if you did that, then we can proceed without needing to get them back.' There is more in this thought than we who think we know, realise!

If conflicts are part of God's plan for our growth to maturity as considered earlier, it is obvious our response should give sufficient attention to the feelings that produce the conflicts. This means sensitively reaching the places where people are angry, guilty, bitter, hateful and in despair and are accusing or blaming others and frequently acting violently also, and bringing healing there. It is said, 'Truth is the right we deny and the wrong we justify.' Think of it!

Is it not true that if in our search for solutions to conflicts we show understanding of the things people feel deeply angry or humiliated about, we are where God Himself is in human conflicts to bring healing, liberation and constructive dialogue which will open the way to solutions? And therefore to ignore them is to simply waste our time, energy and resources by being where He is not?

The issue is deliverance from evil. It takes place when the hurts, resentments, human self-will and egotistical self-love dominating and paralysing the relationships between human beings and between them and



God are confronted, broken and healed.

The Christian response to conflicts should be to draw the clear moral battle line between right and wrong that requires all sides to change wherever they are wrong. Our response should not be driven by a hidden motive to achieve short-term success, praise or admiration or any gain, or to prove we are right and others are wrong. Our interest must be the victory of what is right and best and wisest for all concerned, to achieve which we all must change and grow in the process.

I would like to end by focussing on what I do believe is the magic of reality that starts to operate the moment we simply ask God, 'What do you want me to do? What is my duty?' There is no doubt that we are shown something to do, if only we are prepared to be honest. As we faithfully obey whatever He guides us to do and to be, leaving the results to Him wanting nothing for ourselves, unexpected doors open up. Allow me to share something from my own experiments for whatever it may be worth.

The people from MRA I met in my College in Madras inspired me to make the experiment of 'listening' in silence. I found it was a way of becoming aware of what was going on in me. During my first quiet time this thought came, 'You are a very selfish man. You are jealous of others and hate others because of your selfish nature.' It was so ordinary and sounded so harmless that I tried to ignore it. But when I read it out to my friends I sensed that I had put my hand on the central reality of my life with all that it implied. Fascinated yet apprehensive I continued to listen and even started to deal with my selfishness.

I wrote to my father about the dishonest account I was sending him for the money he was sending to me at great sacrifice.

The experiment I had started clearly indicated that I had to act. I wrote Chhetri, the local shopkeeper a letter. I introduced myself and said I was sorry for my hate and jealousy and for my desire for harm to come to them. I asked him to forgive me and said Nagas and Nepalis could change and work together to build the right society. Nothing earth-shaking in the thought or what I did. But I felt I was getting a tiny understanding of what the Cross means and an equally faint grasp of what it costs an individual to make a choice between good and evil. A precious start for me.

I did not get a reply. But I realised a destructive thought process forming inside me had been identified and rejected. My hate was told I would not let it control me. It started to melt. And when years later I met



the eldest son of the Chhetri family who had become an IAS officer he showed real warmth towards me. It is said, my little experiment in obeying a simple thought was a case of hurt or a hate being transformed so that it could not be transferred as a deadly cargo of history.

Stanley Nichols-Roy was described by a journalist as a 'human steam-roller'. After being a successful businessman he followed his father's footsteps into politics. He became the General Secretary of the All-Party Hill Leaders' Conference, which spearheaded the struggle for the creation of Meghalaya. To cut a long story short, by 1965 the conflict between the three hills tribes of Khasis, Jaintias and Garos and Assam had reached a dead-end. Delhi could not make a decision that would result in the loss of power by the Congress Party in Assam.

Enraged by the repeated failure of their elders to bring anything concrete from their frequent visits to Delhi, the agitated youth in the hills threatened to follow the path pursued by the Nagas to achieve their aspirations. *The Indian Express* editorially warned that if an early solution was not found the North East would become an extension of the bloody war going on in Vietnam then.

By a strange chain of events, an Irish doctor visiting Delhi introduced Stanley to Rajmohan Gandhi leading the work of MRA in India. Stanley was invited to the opening of the centre of MRA, *Asia Plateau* in Panchgani near Pune due to take place in January 1968. Intrigued by the stories he had heard of the inner voice guiding people in diverse situations to find solutions, Stanley took 34 people from Shillong to Panchgani.

During the 7-day stay there Stanley decided to simply ask God what he was to do in the political crisis he and his people were in. One morning while 'listening' in silence he wrote down the thoughts that seemed to be coming to him. The first was to ask his wife's forgiveness for the non-political activities he had indulged in on trips to Delhi. The second was to call on the Chief Minister of Assam, Bimala Prasad Chaliha, to share with him the things he had learned in Panchgani. The third was to dare to make obedience to what God would tell him from then on the basis of his public life also.

As soon as he reached home he told his wife precisely what he had written down in Panchgani. His wife listened and then replied she had suspected them all along. She thanked him and said, 'Now our family can be rebuilt on a sound foundation of honesty and trust without being controlled by fear.' Mrs Nichols-Roy told a meeting soon after that the

### *A Naga Speaks*

morning after her husband was so honest with her she found herself waving 'Good morning' to total strangers as she drove downtown for shopping. The four children immediately sensed the change from temper and tension to a new freedom and happiness the family had lost for some years.

To Chaliha, Stanley told what he had said to his wife, and said he was sorry as a tribal leader he had never thought of the apprehensions and concerns of the Assamese people. Chaliha said this was something he never expected to hear from a tribal leader. He took Stanley with him to tour an area of Assam demonstrating a new spirit that had been born. He said a lasting solution between Assam and the hills people could be achieved if they could build together mutual trust and confidence.

In due course the State of Meghalaya was created as worked out step by step by the two sides. Addressing the Assam State Legislature after Meghalaya was created, Governor B K Nehru declared, 'Seldom have such far-reaching constitutional changes been brought about with so much good-will and understanding.' Y B Chavan, the Union Home Minister, thanked the new leaders of Meghalaya and the MRA centre situated near his constituency, for helping to bring about a solution without bloodshed.

In my own very limited experience of trying to bring about solutions to conflicts in my village and in Nagaland I find that wanting nothing for myself except what is right and best for all concerned is the first requirement. Then God can work through even me.

### **'Nagas only want their traditional homelands'**

*How do you analyse the ceasefire coverage and its backlash?*

In 1964 there was a ceasefire with the NNC's Federal Government of Nagaland and the Centre. At that time too the jurisdiction was all Naga inhabited areas. The new ceasefire can't be confined to Nagaland alone as the leader of NSCN (IM), Muivah is from the Ukhrul district of Manipur. As he has taken the leadership of the people, he cannot say that his area does not fall under the ceasefire coverage.

### *The interpretation of ceasefire coverage?*

The Nagas are not asking for areas where they had not lived before but the places they had been staying for centuries. This is the view of the Nagas. Many Nagas are also in Myanmar. It was the faulty boundary line drawn by the British that scattered the Nagas into different places. Nagas don't want to claim the portions, which did not belong to their ancestors. The ceasefire coverage extends to North Cachar Hills and Haflong of Assam, some parts of Arunachal Pradesh and Ukhrul, Tamenlong and Senapati districts of Manipur. What the Nagas wish to have is their traditional lands.

*Does the clause 'without any territorial limit' mean ceasefire coverage to all the places where Nagas stay?*

It is absolutely wrong to say that the ceasefire covers Shillong or Delhi where Nagas merely stay. The Nagas only want their traditional homelands. There are no Naga-inhabited areas in Meghalaya.

*How can the bloodshed in Manipur be avoided?*

There should be mutual understanding between the Meiteis of Manipur, the Assamese and the Nagas as they share the same problems. We are all equally helpless. The Nagas should talk to Meiteis and Meiteis should talk to Nagas. As we are in the same boat, we should prevent it from sinking. The Imphal riots show us that it is very important for all of us to face the truth. We should think of the other side and listen carefully.

*Your comments on the opposition to ceasefire coverage by different political parties?*

It was the Congress, which opened the Assam Valley, Garo Hills and Naga areas to the millions of illegal migrants. The same Congress Party now opposes the territorial expansion in Assam. The Congress Party has played the biggest role in granting a lot of land to the illegal migrants.

*Any solution to the objections to the ceasefire by other communities?*

If the Meiteis, Assamese and the Nagas can understand and appreciate each other's struggle instead of condemning the ceasefire coverage, that will create an atmosphere of peace. The struggle of the Nagas was for the last 50 years and before the claim of any other group, the Nagas had made clear their stand. The Nagas were never part of India. In 1929, before the Simon Commission, the Nagas stated that when the British left the Naga Hills they would decide their own future, and in 14 August 1947 the Nagas declared independence. So there is no question of secession or disintegration. Today the problem cannot be solved by Delhi alone and if

Delhi gives us independence, the Government will fall. Our mistake was that we did not talk directly to the people of other states regarding our problems. We are not against the people of other states. Our history is different.

*The future of the Naga issue?*

Efforts are on by various NGOs and Church organisations in Nagaland to unite all the Naga insurgent groups, as there are apprehensions that talk with one group by the Centre will not yield the desired result. The ultimate aim is a sovereign Nagaland carved out of the Naga inhabited areas on the basis of a position taken all along. There is no 'Greater Nagaland' as the land of the Nagas is neither greater nor less. India cannot handle the matter unless India understands that the Nagas had become independent already. Historically and legally the Naga cause is right, but politically it was not solved.



### **Nagaland - India's Vietnam or Bulwark?**

**T**ime is running out in the North East corner of India. And the situation that has built up and will build up needs to be seen in the context of the general South-East Asian land mass which is in the way of China's southward expansion to Indonesia. This land mass includes the spacious and rich tea gardens and oil fields of Assam, the rice fields of Bengal, Burma and the nations of Indo-China and the tin mines and rubber plantations of Malaysia. It is China's demonstrated interest to be the landlord over these areas that gives significance to the Naga problem. The question now is how to prevent it from developing into a Vietnam inside India, that is to say, a base of operation for infiltration and subversion for the surrounding region.

The first thing to face is that in Nagaland there is a highly organised nationalist movement bent on achieving complete independence. It does not therefore do any good to keep on calling them 'misguided', 'hostiles' and 'rebels' - true it is, from India's point of view - and think that this will somehow isolate them. As far as they are concerned they regard themselves as patriots and sincere nationalists standing up and fighting to regain the freedom they lost when 'British superior arms overpowered Naga resistance a century ago', before which 'their territory had never been

*A Naga Speaks*

conquered’.

The fight for independence started in 1945 then Mr A Z Phizo returned to Nagaland from Burma. He and his family had been away in Burma during the War. He and his younger brother had collaborated with the Indian National Army in their fight to drive the British out of the sub-continent. The brief but hectic months of the war in the Kohima area on the one hand and the momentum of events in India building up towards freedom had begun to make a deep impact on the thinking of the Nagas who had so far remained more or less indifferent and tribal in their outlook. How did they begin to think in terms of being responsible for their own future as everyone had begun to do all over post-war Asia?

On his return home, Mr Phizo immediately set to work to mobilise public opinion for his plan for the Nagas. His plan was ‘to reclaim the right over our own land that belonged to our forefathers.’ To a sensitive tribal minority people on the border with a deep concern for their own survival in the midst of teeming millions of other races around them such a plan as his was a stirring revolutionary call and not to be resisted for long. Mr Phizo walked from village to village often carrying his own luggage in a rucksack and established direct contact with the village and youth leaders. The fearless zeal and tremendous capacity for leadership he displayed soon won the confidence of the people, and before long he became the President of the newly formed Naga National Council.

Under his leadership, the Naga National Council declared independence on 14 August 1947, and sent a message to the Government of India stating their inability to accept the constitution of India that had been drawn up. When the first General Election came along, Nagas boycotted it and instead presented the result of a plebiscite that overwhelmingly supported the demand for independence.

At this crucial stage, Indian leaders failed to discern the intensity of their feelings, and dealt with them with a patronising attitude that seemed to say, ‘Don’t feel too bad. If you stay with us long enough you’ll forget all these things. You’ll come to know how good we really are and come to like us.’ It was at this stage that the foreign missionaries were blamed for the situation developing in the Naga Hills. The missionaries had to go, sooner or later, but this misplaced blame did not do any good, because the Christians who form the educated minority necessarily interpreted this as an interference into their freedom of faith.

Sir Winston Churchill once said, ‘The finest combination in the

*A Naga Speaks*

world is power and mercy. The worst is weakness and strife.'

India at this time had strength and prestige and could probably have shown the care and magnanimity of a big and trustworthy brother whose big-heartedness disarms the cussedness of a jealous small brother. The story could have been totally different.

The question now for India is how to win the Nagas and others like them on the border to stand and fight with her in a big enough revolutionary task - for big and revolutionary it must be. India must learn that giving them money and roads, hospitals and schools will not win them or cure the hates and fears in them, no more than America has succeeded in Vietnam,

India's most serious disadvantage is the lack of a challenging plan and purpose for mankind, lived and sacrificed for by at least those who aspire to lead her.

Dangerous, often impossible ideas of self-determination under the name of nationalism are rampant in India today. The recent declaration for special status by the Kukis of Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland is an indication that the Naga fever is catching on in the border area. The decisive factor without which none of these convulsive fits of dissatisfied minorities can be calmed and cured is the emergence of a dynamic India that can convince all her small, often difficult, neighbours that she has decided to care and to end the injustices and exploitation of centuries on this ancient home of mankind, not by the old method of liquidating all who stand in the way, not by imperialistic control of others, but by the greatness of the lives and aims of her sons and daughters.

The Nagas too will want to be part of such an India that challenges them too to play their part. They will respect such an India that challenges the spirit of man to be great.

On our part, we Nagas have become subject to pride and hate. Enchanted as we are by the idea of becoming an independent republic, it has become almost impossible for us to view the situation around us calmly and see it as it really is. Today, situated as we are, landlocked between India, Burma and China, to think of creating an independent state for ourselves is like trying to build a reed-and-bamboo fence around a garden to protect it from an approaching forest-fire. No one can doubt the genuineness and sincerity of our concern and fear for our own future. But may God help us not to ignore the forces and conflicts raging around us. We

shall do so only at our own peril.

If we stubbornly fight on the way we have done, India may one day be compelled to grant us independence. But an independent Nagaland will not mean much more in Asia's history than the story of Tibet repeated.

On the other hand, if we boldly made up our mind to care deeply and fight with all other races to 'build a just world for every soul on earth,' we will pioneer the true role of all so-called minorities. Perhaps we may not achieve it to start with but if our aim became as big as that, the question of whether we are within or without India will cease to haunt and bedevil our days and nights.

Nagaland will then be a bulwark that can be trusted not to betray.



### **Our Common Crisis: What are we to do?**

4<sup>th</sup> Annual Somorendra Arambam Memorial Lecture, Imphal. 10 June 2009

**L**okendra Arambam and I were together in Madras Christian College, Tambaram, way back in the last century, almost in the first half of it! So when he phoned me a few months back I was so happy we were picking up the threads again. He invited me to give this lecture as part of the series in memory of his brother, Somorendra Arambam. I told him he was giving me an assignment I am not qualified enough to handle, but I was accepting the invitation because I regarded neighbours reaching out to one another to be more important than anything else.

So with deepest appreciation I am standing before this distinguished gathering in Imphal today believing we share the same perceptions about our situation today. Needless to say I feel highly honoured to be given the privilege to be associated with the lecture series that seeks to pay homage to the enduring memory of a rare son of Manipur who was a patriot, a poet, a thinker and a writer who passionately loved his people and fought for what he believed to be important and right for them and himself.

I was very grateful that Lokendra said I could invite others also to come with me. So taking advantage of the kind offer I urged some of my close colleagues, youth leaders and relations to consider coming to this occasion, not to listen to my talk, but to meet, listen to, and get to know you,

*A Naga Speaks*



our neighbours. I should add here that we have come keenly conscious of the well-known caution that love is blind but neighbours are not, and we do not see ourselves as others see us!

The Somorendra Arambam Trust has made possible this coming together. If we will thus learn to listen and think together, we may find the way to evolve the wider common stability we now need for this region. If our commonsense and wisdom will not do it because it is still tied to the comfort zones of the past, although they are no longer comfortable, our dire needs are compelling us to develop mutual goodwill, compassion and understanding to nurture the future we must bring about together.

What I will say today will not be adequate to do justice to this occasion. I propose therefore that before I go further, we observe a moment of shared silence to try and discern the potential of this occasion. In addition let us also think of all who have died in Manipur and Nagaland over the past decades in the upheavals of our desperate struggles for our aspirations. For, if we will learn to shed tears for one another we will shed less blood of one another.

I would like to start by describing the wider setting of which we are a part. I think it gives a helpful perspective to what we will be discussing this afternoon.

We are on the edge of the infamous and dreaded Golden Triangle of Burma, Thailand and Laos, one of the two main sources of heroin in the world. But we are on the edge of another triangle that is even more extraordinary which we need to become aware of.

If we connect Kolkata, Lhasa and Rangoon with three straight lines, we discover this other triangle! The Lhasa-Rangoon line cuts across where we are. No name has been given to this triangle yet. But one of these days it is going to get one because now seven (In 2019, eight with Abjijit Banerjee - *Ed*) Nobel Prize winners have come from within this triangle. Four of them are for Peace: Mother Teresa of Kolkata, the Dalai Lama of Lhasa, Aung San Suu Kyi of Rangoon, and Mohamed Yunus of Dhaka. The other three are C V Raman for Physics, Rabindranath Tagore for Literature and Amartya Sen for Economics!

I shall leave it to you decide what the thinking, values and achievements of these great men and women from our part of Asia should mean to us as we search for ways to solve our problems. I personally think we are very fortunate indeed to share with them the mental and moral



environment they have created for our part of the continent and the world by their steadfast loyalty to their values.

The theme suggested to me for this talk was, 'My concerns about the strategic challenges facing the Naga polity today and the foreseeable future' and 'the Naga people's response', whether it is 'adequate or otherwise.' As these are issues I do try to understand, I welcomed the suggestion.

I realise to say something adequate on this occasion I should be a highly qualified professor of history, who is knowledgeable also in a host of other subjects! Alas, I am nothing of the sort by any shot. Therefore, I regret that a scholarly paper of the kind you are right to expect from such a lecture is not what you will be getting from me today.

So bear with me, and let us see where this discussion may take us?

After reflecting on the points suggested to me, and the society we have produced I decided to call my talk 'Our Common Crisis: What Are We to Do?' After seeing the title some perhaps have felt that for me to say we have a common crisis is presumptuous and unjustified. Some may feel I am too naïve and out of touch with reality to think that anything can be done about our crisis and problems. When we have the time for interaction at the end of my talk, I hope what you feel will be expressed and discussed.

I have tried to understand what 'the strategic challenges facing the Naga Polity today and the foreseeable future' means. I take it to be referring to the struggle by the Nagas from about 70 years ago till today. It represents their decision to construct their history on their consciousness of themselves and known facts of their roots, rather than on what others thought they should be or not be, and their struggle to get India and the world to recognise that position. Trying to understand the struggle of the Dalits in modern India, James Massey writes, '...only historical roots can provide the clue to the lost identity of the Dalits.' (*A Concise History of the Dalits*).

The same perception has, I believe, operated with the Nagas also. It was an instinctive struggle to get the foundation right first. This has, I think, resulted in the foundation becoming permanently set and rigid, tending to paralyse the future. The sub-title of author Namthiubuiyang Pamei's last book on the Naga struggle, *Naga Crucible* is – *A movement in search of its people*. This seems to aptly describe what this crisis is at this stage. This happens in all human struggles. What we need to do is to find the way

out by understanding it together first instead of blaming one another, or denying there is any crisis at all.

What does this 'consciousness of themselves' from which the Naga struggle germinated, mean? I shall try to explain how I see it.

Rajagopalachari, the first Indian to be Governor General of India and the last man to hold the post, came to Shillong in 1947. Two Nagas went to see him, Pfürhitsü Terhüja and A Z Phizo. They joined the line-up of representatives of tribes and communities from the region outside the Raj Bhavan to see Rajaji. The Secretary to the Governor announced that each group was allotted only a few minutes. Pfürhitsü was resplendent in the full regalia of a village elder, complete with thick ivory armbands and his striking shawl draped over his shoulder. He stood ramrod straight looking into the distance.

When their turn came Pfürhitsü started to speak with Phizo translating his words. Looking straight into Rajaji's eyes he conveyed the position of his people to the visiting leader. Turning to the translator Rajaji asked, 'Who is he?' Before Phizo could translate it, Pfürhitsü replied loudly with deliberate emphasis, 'I am a man!' He had learned some English when he was a *dobashi* attached to the British Deputy Commissioner in Kohima.

The Secretary butted in to say their time was up. Rajaji sharply told him not to disturb them saying, 'Don't you see I want to listen to this man?' The rest of the queue waited and Pfürhitsü completed what he had come to say. Phizo said later Pfürhitsü did what no one else could have done by being himself fearlessly.

About 25 years later, I was privileged to meet Rajaji briefly when his grandson Rajmohan Gandhi introduced me to him in the home of the publisher of *Kalki*, the Tamil magazine, in Chennai. Rajaji was resting lying on a cane bed, I think recuperating from an illness. When Rajmohan said he had brought a Naga friend to see him, even before he could see me from his reclining position, Rajaji replied, 'Tell Phizo to keep fighting. Delhi understands and respects only those who fight boldly for what they believe in.' I sensed that he was completely fearless and free in his mind and spirit.

The declaration by Pfürhitsü, 'I am a man!' made in defiance and desperation lest it failed to capture the attention of the Head of State from Delhi conveys well what the Naga struggle has been about.

I have narrated this account because Pfürhitsü's assertion can be said to explain what has energised the Naga struggle. And Rajaji's sensitive

understanding and respect for the Naga leader and his authentic conviction about himself and his people regardless of how far India would be able to go to meet the Nagas to solve the longest lasting conflict in South Asia, shows the attitude and body language Delhi will do well to understand and adopt if an honourable and acceptable solution is to be reached.

‘The high ideals, and not long after, the dark, dead-end of man-made schemes.’ This was how English author and playwright, Peter Howard, described what so frequently happens to noble human struggles for freedom and other aspirations. The ideals and dreams are stirring and worth fighting for. But they most easily collapse into unimaginable destructiveness when wrongs are rationalised and allowed to become acceptable in the pursuit of the struggles. I do not know enough about the issues the people are wrestling with here.

I can only share what Nagas are asking about their crisis. In our discussion of our crisis it is important we keep in mind the truth that every crisis is made up of dangers and opportunities. If we respond correctly to the opportunities and the dangers we break through to something better and the dangers become a part of our strength and wisdom.

The Irish poet, W B Yeats wrote:

*But, I being poor, I have only my dreams;*

*I have spread my dreams under your feet:*

*Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.*

These lines movingly describe the common crisis of all leaders of highly vulnerable peoples and societies who find themselves compelled to protest and fight the threats they perceive to be coming to their people from the changing world all around them.

There is desperation in the words because the odds are overwhelming. But, there is also unyielding defiance because not to fight is not an option. What King Porus said to Alexander comes to mind. Then the names, images and memories of a host of others flood in from the past and from the present. For us here some of them are – Neta Irabot, Jadonang, Phizo and all who with him launched what became the Naga struggle, Isak, Muivah, Khaplang, so on, and of course Arambam Somorendra, whose life and contributions to his people we are commemorating today.

I am inspired by the decision of Arambam Somorendra’s family, friends and supporters to build on the fire and conviction that burnt in him during his lifetime. The Lecture Series created in his name is bringing

people together to listen to one another to find solutions to the challenges that we need to confront together.

These memorial lectures are expected to provide 'insights on issues of the North East'. Seeing the issues together will help our people realise that whatever our differences we are on the same perilous boat taking us to the future. There is growing realisation now that unless we reach out and learn to help one another in response to the changed paradigms, our boat will take us all down to the bottom.

I shall try to contribute some thoughts to the discussion by drawing from the struggle of my people, which has been our most important common experience. I acknowledge that those who have actually carried the terrible burdens of the struggle are more qualified than I am to talk about it. But our situation demands that all who are concerned do not stay silent and watch something that is so important for our journey into the future destroy itself, and us. That is why I do value this opportunity to reflect together and to develop mutual understanding, goodwill and compassion, the only way to create the security we all need for our region.

The struggles our leaders and fighters launched and sacrificed for have run into problems that were not anticipated and therefore they and we were not prepared to handle them. Serious mistakes have been made and are being made – as happens in all human struggles for aspirations. And the people who applauded and supported the struggles are now starting to condemn the struggles and their fighters. This is fully understandable because all are suffering the consequences of the mistakes made.

In such a situation it is important that we the people get involved, acknowledge where and how we too have contributed to what has gone wrong; and work together to restore the things that must not be lost in a struggle; and to reject the things that should have no place in it. This involves transparent expression of our deepest fears and doubts through honest conversations.

When people thus begin to breathe freely again, vital spiritual dynamics also start to function that heal and restore relationships opening the way to unexpected solutions. Of course, all this is beautiful theorising only unless we will dare to step out, be still, and be true to our deepest thoughts and questions and be led by what they say to us. This is the missing factor in our crises.

The price the pioneer Naga fighters ended up paying was brutal and heavy beyond words. The villagers across the Naga homeland bore the brunt of the sacrifice. We can only be humbly grateful for the costly legacy they who suffered so greatly have given to us. Our part is to learn to selflessly build our future on the foundation they have laid.

But today some harsh realities rebuke and challenge us to wake up to what we are doing to ourselves. Why have the Naga struggle underground and the State Government overground started to destroy themselves and the people for whom both were supposedly launched? This is our most baffling question and we dare not ignore it.

After almost six decades of struggle the early vision still beckons, but the struggle has become a nightmare. The vengeful divisions within the struggle have paralysed our whole society. At a time when we urgently need to start to develop our economy, ruthless opportunists exploit our slogans and our dividedness to enrich themselves, behaving like leeches, making it impossible for our business community and entrepreneurs to create wealth.

Much cash has flowed down the pipe from Delhi to Kohima. We are told more is needed. Perhaps that is true? But the fact that in the last Nagaland Assembly election, the candidates who contested for 60 seats spent more than Rs.500 crores clearly shows that the greed and irresponsibility of our society has become unmanageably destructive. Has not destructiveness become the 'Common Minimum Programme' of our society, and we do not seem to be bothered by the inescapable long-term consequences because we are now so used to it, or a part of it?

'It is not that they do not see the solution, it is that they do not see the problem.' G K Chesterton thus once described a group of people in a crisis. It seems this applies to us also and our crisis, jointly created by the underground and overground of our society. We think the solution to our crisis is simply a matter of more cash for economic development, and 'giving peace a chance' as we so blithely say.

Of course, we need all these things. But how can reconciliation, unity, peace and development be achieved if our selfish thoughtless ways prevent them? It is said, 'A nation's thinking is in ruins before a nation is in ruins.' In our case it will be, 'A society cannot be developed if the people are irresponsible and their thinking is shallow, irresponsible and limited to instant success and gratification?'

What do we do with the struggle, the vision and the nightmare of our society? This is the most difficult question for us. And we must answer it together with mature wisdom and unquestionable transparency where there is no room for blaming of others and treating one's own wrongs and failures lightly.

The nightmare of lawlessness, corruption, extortion and all other forms of selfishness presently paralysing our society is too familiar to need detailed discussion.

The problems we are wrestling with are the problems of a people who have just started their journey. This perspective is needed. We need to know from history that problems and challenges become the common strength and wealth of a people or nation if they are clearly identified, acknowledged and tackled adequately. This challenging responsibility is always understood and accepted only by a few individuals at first.

In many cases this battling to solve society's problems by individuals can go on for years, even generations, without visible results, often actively opposed by those in positions of power and influence. But if the individuals who see the roots of the problems do not give up and fight on, wanting nothing for themselves, the soul and conscience of the public are impacted, and opinion changes. Finally the tectonic shift of society for constructive change takes place.

The fight to abolish the Slave Trade and slavery started in Britain in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The victory won there under the leadership of Wilberforce powerfully shaped the thinking and fight of Abraham Lincoln and others in the USA. The difficult, costly fight has now culminated in an African-American entering the White House in triumph for the first time with his wife and their two daughters, to be the President of the most powerful nation on earth in the 21<sup>st</sup> century!

This historic non-violent change would not have come about if individuals had not accepted the challenge to their soul and conscience down the generations. Mahatma Gandhi's own fight and the triumph that followed are, of course, the most powerful example in modern times of how a nation's toughest problems become its strongest assets if the methods and means adopted to solve them are free from selfish motives of any kind. Mankind finding hope in the changes his life demonstrated is his triumph.

On the other hand, problems ignored, denied or selfishly exploited multiply into more intractable problems, which eventually bring total

destruction. History is full of such examples. So God and Satan are both intensely interested in how we respond to challenges that life brings to us.

My sincere desire and humble commitment is to so live that the present generation of Nagas and of all the other communities may decide to do what needs to be done to help solve our problems which are still fresh, comparatively speaking, so that our worst weaknesses and failures may not cause our downfall but they will become the dependable foundation on which we will build our society.

Is this not the reason why our weaknesses and problems are so plentiful all the time? Why shouldn't we become known not for greed and irresponsibility as is starting to be, but for sound thinking, our rejection of short-cut wrong methods that do not work anyway, and our intelligent, sustainable solutions?

Socrates' observation about examining our lives holds true also for the struggle of a people for aspirations and dreams. God and life allow all sorts of aspirations and ideas to inspire individuals and peoples to grow to their fullest potential. But unless the methods and values adopted to achieve the goals are truthfully examined, and the needs and challenges that come with changing situations are correctly responded to, things go wrong very soon, and our efforts become worthless and unsustainable. And this has happened to the various political struggles in our region also. Why and how?

Our vision or conviction to be a people and a nation is a normal mental, spiritual urge or compulsion that, as with others, we too have grown with from way back in our past. But if we are to grow, as we should, we must know ourselves, and the world we are a part of, be realistic and learn to grow intelligently by responding correctly to the opportunities and dangers that life brings to us all the time.

This principle decides whether a people grow or remain stagnant and turn decadent and violent. The quality of the response decides the quality of the outcome. If we want to succeed as a people we too cannot treat this truth lightly. The arithmetic of this boils down to how each one of us actually thinks and acts daily.

All developing societies face an extraordinary problem in their struggle to grow.

We too are plagued by this crisis and our society has become stagnant and explosive at the same time due to incompetence, ignorance,



mismanagement and corruption preventing speedy development. These failures and shortcomings are examples of defective or wrong responses to challenges of change, the common problem of most developing societies. Our failures and blunders are not because we are worse than others but because we simply have too much to learn in too short a time, made worse by our weakness for instant success and enjoyment.

Are not the majority of mothers in our villages and towns completely at a loss to know how to protect and save and raise their children? The crisis of many of them becomes all the more overwhelming because their husbands so often are totally unhelpful. In such a society people begin to think that to be opportunistic is normal. Only a minuscule few in our society who have become obscenely rich through ruthless corruption may think they are managing to handle change. But in reality they are disastrous examples of unsustainable solutions. Alas, they are the high profile role models in our society, and so many come to think to be shamelessly selfish is quite normal. Is it surprising our society is what it is now?

Can we do anything that can make a difference in our situation is always the question. It should be asked to keep us realistic. From my own experience I know that if we simply decide to 'be the change you want to see in the world', as Gandhiji put it, more things happen in unexpected ways than we can imagine or understand. There is a verse in the Gita that says we are to do what we know is our duty leaving the results in His hands. There is more in this truth than we realise.

I shall cite two statements of conviction and commitment given to the world from the Middle East.

The first one: Landrum Bolling was a scholar, journalist and a widely respected worker for peace between Israelis and Arabs. He wrote, 'The real issue, significant for everyone, is whether the sterile negative of today's life in the Middle East, by which all men are imperilled, can be converted to a pattern of human co-operation not yet known or seen among men. This is not sentimental nonsense if we can believe that there are not hopeless situations, but only hopeless men.'

The second one: In the third week of May this year the highly popular annual Euro-Vision musical extravaganza was held in Norway. An Israeli actress-singer and a Palestinian Arab actress-singer sang together in the competition projecting their common dreams for their peoples. They were not strictly from within Europe. But that was not questioned by



anybody. They did not win the first prize but they stole the show by their vibrant presence and their sheer courage in taking a common stand.

They said they were taking part in the contest to signal to their own peoples and to the world their conviction that 'There must be another way' and it could not be abandoned, the way of 'acknowledgment of one another's right to exist', apologising for the wounds and hurts inflicted to one another and 'sharing' in the building of a common future. They were demonstrating what converting the 'sterile negative of today's life' in their devastated region to human co-operation would entail.

If there is to be another way, a better way, in all situations of prolonged disorder, distrust, vengeful hatred, despair and violence, the 'sterile negative' in situations like ours in our region also has to be addressed with the seriousness that the problem deserves.

'Sterile' according to the dictionary means 'barren, fruitless, incapable of producing offspring, results, ideas...' Is not this barrenness, this pervasive sterility that breeds despair and evil, one of the explanations of our crisis also?

We should know in what ways we are a part of the sterility and learn simply to end it for the sake of our common future we must build together.

I shall conclude what I have tried to convey by restating the main points of my talk:

\* The quality of our response to the challenges and needs in our crisis decides the quality of our people and our society. This dictum of history allows no concessions.

\* Evil is born and it becomes malignant when normal human failures and shortcomings, or mistakes and wrongs done, are denied, defended or justified because of pride, fear or selfishness. Hurts not transformed are then transferred causing wider damage. 'The most terrible process of all is not the war-making that takes lives and villages and towns, but the irrevocable damages to the majority who survive. The killing may stop ... But societies undermined by distrust, and burdened with criminalised economies do not recover.' (Martin Woollacott, writing in 1998 on the disaster that overtook the former Yugoslavia)

\* Sustainability of our ideas and plans for solutions to our problems depend on our acceptance of reality and the ethical, moral soundness of the values we live by.

## Corruption and Extortion

*Put people before profit. Others before self.*

Corruption In Nagaland	563
Our Mistakes – Weapons For God Or Satan?	539
Will Nagas Survive Dimapur?	542
Corruption And Extortion	544
Let's Save Khonoma For The Future	546
Problems & Challenges - Our Response?	548
Knowing The Consequences Of Our Lives	555
Your Christmas Gift To Nagaland	557

## Corruption in Nagaland

Appeared in *Morung Express, Opinion*, Page 1. November 2012

*We have reached the point where we can't bear either our vices or their cure*

**I**t is not necessary to explain what corruption is, to anyone in Nagaland, nor to anyone elsewhere in the world.

Indira Gandhi impatiently and famously dismissed and rationalised corruption as 'a global phenomenon' when a journalist touched on certain scandalous scams of her close associates. It revealed the doctrine of politics and governance she followed to consolidate her power base to rule India and to pass on her dynastic legacy to her sons, and for them to do likewise. The nation discovered that none of the scams directly implicating her and her family could be investigated by the CBI. The Bofors case revealed this reality and the rest is history.

On November 8<sup>th</sup> President Hu Jintao of the People's Republic of China, sternly told the 2270 specially chosen delegates attending the Communist Party Congress in Beijing for the once-in-a-decade leadership change process that corruption in the ruling party could prove 'fatal' to its 63-year-long grip over the country: 'If we fail to handle this issue well, it could prove fatal to the party, and even cause the collapse of the state.'

In the background of his report on the State of the Republic was the trial and sacking of two top ranking leaders of the Party, Bo Xilai and Railway Minister Liu Zhijun on shocking charges of corruption. Also ahead of the Congress a *New York Times* investigative report revealed that Premier Wen Jiabao's family had accumulated at least \$ 2.7 billion in 'hidden riches' during his ten-year rule.

Everyone knew who the President was referring to when he talked of 'Leading officials at all levels, especially high ranking officials' sabotaging the balanced growth of the nation by their unrestrained greed and grab.

China risks the deepening unrest in the nation going out of control. But Hu Jintao could only talk about 'unremitting efforts to combat corruption'.

'It was a conservative report. But there is nothing there that suggests any breakthrough in political reforms,' stated *Open Magazine*, an independent Hong Kong publication specialising in Chinese politics.

Indeed corruption is a global phenomenon. India, the world's

*A Naga Speaks*

largest 'democracy', and 'Communist' China with the most stirring slogans for the downtrodden, the two emerging Asian super powers, are equally paralysed by corruption. What Titus Livius said of his decadent society under the Roman Empire correctly describes the crisis of the two giants.

'For evil to succeed it is only necessary for good people to do nothing', said Edmund Burke. And people like Anna Hazare, Kejriwal, the Bhushan brothers, and so on are shining examples of good people caring and daring enough to do something to defeat evil. And these good people are discovering how tough it is to defeat evil.

What are we to do then? Is it at all worth trying 'to be the change you want to see in the world'?

Our endless discussions on corruption tend to be no more than crusading against the Devil in others. But instant interest and hope are aroused by anyone who shows what crusading for God in oneself means and can do.

I had the privilege of knowing Gottfried Anliker, a Swiss businessman, and taking part in some missions with him, in my work in Moral Re-Armament or now Initiatives of Change.

Anliker inherited from his father a struggling construction company in Lucerne, Switzerland, about 60 years ago. By the time he handed it over to his successor, his daughter, it was the leading company in the field in Lucerne and one of the top in the nation, known for its unmatched achievements in economic terms as well as in how management and labour brought the best out of one another.

I shall give his story as he had it written out in English for his visit to Nigeria some years ago.

'At the age of 25 I worked very hard and took the Swiss Federal Diploma in Accountancy. I started 50 companies. They were so interwoven that no one but I knew what belonged to whom. My training as a chartered accountant enabled me to understand the complicated connections in the financial world. But above all it enabled me to cheat heavily on the income tax.

We had three balance sheets: one for the tax authorities, that was completely crooked; one for the shareholders which was fairly crooked; and one for myself that was correct. Every year it took two months to establish these three versions. I was successful and yet I missed the essential, which makes life worth living. I was bored and empty. I had to

take pills to be fit and more pills to sleep.

One weekend I met the organisation called Moral Re-Armament. It turned me 180 degrees around. I was fascinated by the idea of living to transform the world instead of only for my own success. I was struck by the freedom of people I met who were totally committed to a world aim. It became the most expensive weekend of my life. I made up my mind to take stock of my whole life. I wrote down 20 points that would have to be different.

**Family:** I had to get honest with my wife. It was terribly hard. I thought she would divorce me. But she was most generous and merciful and forgave me. It actually saved our marriage.

**Income Tax:** I decided to go and see the Minister of Finance. He was totally perplexed to meet an honest businessman. He told me that I had to pay no fine. But the unpaid taxes from the past amounted to roughly 500,000 Swiss Francs, a big amount for our small firm. My father scolded me fearing I would ruin our building firm. But I stuck to the dictate of my heart. The amount we had to pay in taxes has naturally multiplied many times. Since that initial payment the State has received millions of Swiss francs, which it would not have if I had not made that turn around in my life.

But there is another side. Because of my honesty I saved two months I used to use before for defrauding the tax authority. During these two months I earned a great part of the money our firm had to pay in higher taxes. So I experienced this – cheating results in cheating ourselves, while honesty very soon leads to a sound economy. And so our firm grew rapidly from 50 to 500 workers over and above our office staff.

**New aim:** The important thing was that I got a new concept of my job as an employer. My aim became to satisfy the real needs of people. For decades we have given priority to low-priced housing. We refused to speculate with our reserves of building land. If we had indulged in such speculation we often could have made bigger profits than by building houses ourselves. Through our new policy we built a few thousand housing units at low cost. It is true that as a consequence the profit margin became smaller. But in spite of that the income of the firm increased.

**Trust:** Honesty is costly, but in the long run it pays. It creates trust. There was a period of recession because oil prices trebled. Quite a few building firms closed down but we always had enough contracts – some of

them from the State because of our reputation.

**Revolutionary teamwork:** One day I proposed to the Works Council to share 50% of the profit with the workers. They were speechless. We kept our promise but did not give them cash and, instead, invested the money in social benefit funds. One fund was for cases of accident and sickness, another was a very generous pension fund. We were 20 years ahead of the legislation of the Swiss Federal State. This teamwork resulted in many valuable suggestions from the workers for the practical running of the firm, especially in the field of security.

**Philosophy of our enterprise:**

1. We put people before profit.
2. Service is more important than getting.
3. He who gives much receives much.
4. We commit ourselves to offer the best value for a fair price and we regard it as our duty to make an effective contribution to the economic development of our country.

All this amazing developments grew out of my decision to take every morning enough time to reflect and listen to find new direction and to go back to the basic source. Through honesty I have found that undreamt of powers are liberated in me, which formerly were blocked by a bad conscience. I experienced the truth of the words of Christ: 'The truth shall make you free.'

**Conclusion:** I find it fascinating to be an employer in the present day period of difficulties. We are called to be tools to show ourselves useful to others and so it is with our possessions. From this point of view I do not see myself as an owner of our firm but as a temporary steward of it.'

### Our mistakes – weapons for God or Satan?

What we do with our mistakes and wrongs decides the health of our religion and politics because both God and Satan seem to be interested in our decision.

It seems it can be safely said that our mistakes are God's weapons for building His Kingdom on earth, a better society, if we are humbly truthful about them. It is equally true that they are Satan's deadliest

*A Naga Speaks*



weapons for building his hell on earth if we are selfish or proud, or are too proud to admit them. In a narrowly confined society like ours, what we do with our mistakes and failures produce hope and growth, or despair, division and destruction more quickly than in situations of wider dimensions. Mistakes unrecognised and unhealed destroy smaller societies more quickly than larger societies.

Dealing with past mistakes is very much in the news at the moment. Pope John Paul's recent pilgrimage to the Holy Land and his moving recognition of and contrition for some of the past mistakes of the Catholic Church has proved to be a most powerful message of Christianity to the modern world. The excesses committed on Muslims during the Crusades in the Middle Ages by politically motivated European kings and noblemen; extreme intolerance against other faiths in propagating the faith across continents conquered by Catholic nations; recognition of the Church's part in fostering anti-Semitic prejudices starting from the earliest blanket condemnations of the Jews as the murderers of Christ, culminating in the horrors of Hitler's holocaust, and the Church's failure to sufficiently condemn the Nazis. For all these, the Pope's millennium message has been, 'Yes, we went wrong. We are sorry. Please forgive us.'

The Pope's public recognition of some of the failures the Church is not happy about has not diminished or damaged the stature or dignity of the Church or Christianity. On the contrary, the secular world is saying, 'This is what we have expected from the followers of Jesus.' A Mexican Christian pilgrim after listening to the Pope at one of the events in Jerusalem said, 'My heart is bursting with joy. I am so happy I have come here to experience all this.' By being transparent, walking in the light, the Church has given hope to the world and started to show how to heal the wounds of history. Simple honesty is so much more effective than countless sermons that are often more statements of truths that are not lived out.

Our immature, unchristian thinking and handling of our mistakes and shortcomings has produced massive paralysis of our society. In our families dishonesty, resentment, drug addiction and alcoholism has taken over to a frightening extent because blame, self-pity denial and justification has replaced responsibility and care for one another. At the all-Naga level the suicidal divisions have revealed the bankruptcy of our thinking and character.

We have foolishly believed the shallow praise of some outsiders in

***A Naga Speaks***



the past that Nagas are a simple, honest and brave people. Our crisis has tested us and we have proved that we can be remarkably honest about other people's mistakes and wrongs. But we are too small and too proud to be honest about our wrongs. We are so self-centered that if we admit our error for us, it will be the end of the world! Our honesty is of the destructive variety, which provokes the worst in others and prevents God from coming into our crisis.

Robert Burns, the national poet of Scotland, prayed, 'Oh that some power would give us the gift to see ourselves as others see us.' An English leather industrialist wanted his Christian conversion to go deeper than emotional elation. One morning he asked his family to tell him what they found most difficult in him. His teenage daughter quickly said what she had resented was her father's attitude that anything he said on any issue at home was the final word and no further discussion was possible.

Profoundly challenged by what his daughter said, he tried out his experiment in his company with his colleagues and employees. It led to a policy decision to 'Put people before Profit', and to start to do business on strict ethical principles. Some colleagues feared it was risky. But the response of trust and cooperation from the employees was immediate. The company became a model for teamwork, productivity and profitability in England during a time of severe economic crisis.

Those close to me at home, and colleagues see so clearly my selfish and dishonest ways, which hurt them or annoy them constantly. I do not see them or I treat them lightly. Others find it too difficult to discuss them with me. Resentment grows but it is suppressed. Most of us are not dictators on the scale of Stalin, Idi Amin or Pol Pot. But the happiness, hope and spiritual growth of others around us are killed all the same by the tyranny of pride, temper and selfishness we impose on them. Our homes have become bastions of hell where growth is impossible.

What are the things you and I agree are not at peace about in our hearts? Winston Churchill once said the things that keep you awake at 2 am are the most important truths you should immediately attend to. If we are honest we all know things we deeply regret. As we are 'wonderfully and fearfully made', and our Creator 'desires truth in the inward parts' our happiness and inner peacelessness is the sign of His high, unyielding claim over us to be what He wants us to be. Our obedience enables God to start His Kingdom in and through us, which is demonstrated in our freedom and moral clarity and authority, surely the sign of His salvation.

### *A Naga Speaks*



The things we are not happy about in our lives thus give God the opening He can use to enter into our dangerous society. Imagine S C Jamir, Hokishe, K L Chishi, Shürhozelie, Isak, Muivah, Khaplang, Kitovi, Adinno and Merhupfü deciding to discover and obey God's guidance on the things they are not happy about and calling on our people to help them? We may not experience heaven on earth right away. But corruption, the killings and the extortions and all the other vile things crushing us down may dramatically decrease, and we will begin to work our way towards a solution to our ultimate problem.

If we let God use our mistakes as His tools and weapons to build trust and demolish hate, what seems impossible will be possible.

### Will Nagas Survive Dimapur?

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Some ardent citizen may legitimately protest that the question is too alarmist, projecting an unfair image of Dimapur. But the intention is to focus attention on both the threat and the unique opportunity that Dimapur today represents for our society. We cannot deny that the threat is as real as the opportunity. And in answering the question we will come face to face with what we are doing to ourselves and to one another, and the consequences the coming generations will have to deal with.

Nagaland is ruled from Kohima where the ceremonies and formalities of exercise of power are performed. But Dimapur is where the crucial battle for political and economic supremacy is fought and decided.

Dimapur is Nagaland in miniature. Here Nagas from all parts of their homeland in the hilly interior come and meet one another. In a setting that is culturally alien to all of them except for the Kacharis and the Sithekiema and Chümukedima villages, a perilous experiment in Nagas learning to live together is now on. And it is also here that Nagas meet and interact with India, and increasingly with the Islamic factor from Bangladesh expanding uncontrollably across the entire North East.

This massive double encounter with the Indian sub-continent should awaken us to the fact that our homeland is vulnerably situated on the racial and civilisational faultline where the brown and yellow races of Asia meet. This line runs from the Chittagong hills by the sea where Burma and

*A Naga Speaks*

Bangladesh meet, to Ladakh in the North. Like us, the Chakmas, Arkanese, Tripuris, Mizos, Meiteis, the Arunachal tribes, the Bhutias and Lepchas, the Nepalis, the Ladakhis and others are also on this dividing, defining line. The point that is sought to be made here is that if we are on such a sensitive, disruptive line, we must not be casual and reckless about its implications.

Nagaland, without doubt, is being remoulded by the spirit, the values, the thinking, the lifestyles, the methods of solving problems, the politics and the economics emerging from the volatile melting pot of Dimapur.

Does the purpose and meaning of life driving the rich and fast young people of Dimapur inspire hope and confidence?

Therefore, in the light of what Dimapur is now known for, the question of whether or not our society already uprooted from the traditional ways will be able to survive the way and the life Dimapur is showing, is not an idle question.

The creators of today's Dimapur have shown the kind of grit and dynamism required to build a modern society. Some of the most energetic individuals among our people have put Dimapur on the right track for fast growth and development. A good deal of the energy, decisiveness, competence and daring they have demonstrated deserves our fullest admiration.

But we cannot also deny that some of the methods and means used by many in the making of today's Dimapur are now emerging as the distressing, highly disturbing chapters in the story of Dimapur. The lawlessness that has now gone out of control: the use of glaringly unethical methods to get instant solutions to problems of gratification of one's demands, heedless of the long-term damage to society's values. The resigned acceptance of fear is now a part of the Dimapur way of life and so on.

These and a host of other compromises with what should not be accepted are the inevitable legacy from yesterday's motives and deeds. The ghosts of the past are properly exorcised only by our decision to solve our problems God's way, not our way. Will we justify today's wrongs in order to avoid facing their beginnings in yesterday's methods? This temptation will be extremely powerful. But to yield to it would be to surrender to the worst in ourselves and also to betray the great promise that Dimapur is meant to be for all Nagas.

It is always difficult and unpopular to raise the moral and ethical question of means and methods used in the pursuit of personal or community goals. But if Nagaland's elite concentrated in Dimapur will not challenge themselves with this supreme doctrine of life as they steer our society's growth, then we will cut ourselves off from God - the builder without whom we labour in vain to build our city.

The God we talk so much of is sure to be keenly interested in what Dimapur does to the Nagas if He is not a sentimental, harmless do-gooder Father Christmas whom we can fool as we like, but is the God of Abraham and the Prophets. After all it is said, 'To whom much is given, much is expected from them by God', especially their obedience to be His tools to build a just and compassionate society.

Dimapur is our gateway to the world, and beckoning signpost to the future. Will we decide to rise above our selfishness and give our best together so that Dimapur will lead our people to a saner, brighter future? Or will we waste our time and energy justifying our wrongs and give our worst together to make Dimapur our gateway to a darker, bloodier future? No one who cares for the future will want to ignore the choice in the challenge. There is more to Dimapur than we may have cared to know!

Those who have helped to build Dimapur with clean hands and by their honest sweat are requested to consider the points raised in the article as supporting the role they have played.

## Corruption and Extortion

*The Editor,*

*The Shillong Times. 1 May 2001*

H N Marbaniang of Sohra wrote (*TST* April 17) that if extortion is so wrong, as we all know it is, then corruption is equally wrong. A very loud 'Amen, Brother!' is called for here. Both show how ruthlessly selfish we can be, and not to be tolerated.

It was right his letter appeared next to the two very helpful articles on corruption by Shankar Raghuraman and Arvind Shirodkar.

A widely displayed poster of a militant outfit fighting for Meitei aspirations in Manipur justified collection of money 'with the point of a

*A Naga Speaks*

gun' because those who steal from their offices and residences 'with the tip of their pens' leave too little for the people. This self-serving justification often works but not for long. It forces the society that is sought to be saved, to take the slippery road to suicide. The same popular but irresponsible rationalisation has gained ground elsewhere also.

Yet the poster in Imphal, making the same point Marbaniang has made, does say something that must be heeded. To condemn and prosecute extortion is right. But if corruption is condoned and allowed to flourish because it is the institutionalised sin of the privileged few, then extortion matures to mafia-ism with a vengeance, producing its own hierarchy of VIPs and Mafioso. All this comes about when 'Laws are a strange spider web that catches the small flies only while the big ones go through it safely.'

Under the heading 'Corruption Matters: So Let's Cut Out The Cynicism', Raghuraman writes, 'If corruption is to be eliminated, it has to be done by punishing the corrupt. The punishment must come both at the hustings and in the courts. Both, as has been already seen, are easier said than done. Still, what is somewhat heartening is that the chances of the corrupt getting punished electorally or judicially appear brighter today than at any point in the past.' Good news.

But corruption in the political processes is only a part of a much wider decadence to which most of us have contributed our varying shares. We have to adopt the sensible attitude that we now take towards reducing pollution, namely that the action of everyone is important and indispensable, and it does make a difference. A host of strong initiatives like Transparency International clearly indicate that the world is set to tackle moral and spiritual pollution of corruption also.

Here is the story of an individual who cared enough to start with himself.

Joseph Wong runs a timber business in Papua New Guinea. He attended a workshop in Melbourne last November called 'A Different Dynamic for the Working World'. The business executives, trade unionists, and students who participated examined the practical steps individuals could take to tackle the obstacles to economic growth, social justice, peace and stability, starting with themselves. An honest evaluation of his own life convinced him that God wanted him to make a drastic change entrusting his future to Him.

Wong went back and started to pay what he owed his government

in unpaid taxes. It made national news because the amount came to over one million Kinas, equivalent to US\$260,000, - more than one crore rupees! It also resulted in the launch of a national enquiry into Papua New Guinea's huge timber industry! Here is someone who has stood *Kaun Banega Crorepati* on its head, by choosing to obey God, and hanging greed on the Cross to help God build His kingdom on earth.

Restitution by most of us will not be on Wong's scale. But if we will simply do what we too need to do, our contribution will also make a difference.



### **Let's save Khonoma for the Future**

*Ruffuno Magazine, 1984*

*I*t sounds serious and perhaps even presumptuous to suggest that Khonoma needs saving. But there is already enough indication that unless the threat is understood and something is done now, the delicate balance in the environment will be upset beyond repair, as it has happened elsewhere in frightening ways.

During a recent visit to Khonoma, where I had spent two cherished childhood years, I tried to understand why Khonoma is important to her sons and daughters. What does explain, I asked myself, the magic and the power of Khonoma that stirs me and feeds my spirit every time I come back. Part of the explanation, it seems, is history and the other part is the sense of life or the assurance that comes from the beautiful mountains that it will continue.

By history, I mean the memory of your ancestors that comes to you from the stones of the villages. The chiselled stones are everywhere, in the walls of the roads, the steps of the paths leading to the different houses, the forts and the carefully laid-out rock seats at the *Thebhu* where the grown-up young men of the village learn to face life. It is undeniable that these ancient stones cry out to you as do the beautifully terraced rice-fields spread out below. As you gaze at them in silence you seem to understand something of the struggles and achievements of your ancestors who came and made this rocky hillock their home and fortress.

It is to be inspired and taught this subtle reliving of the past that man studies history, anthropology, archaeology and literature. Without

***A Naga Speaks***

reassurance and counsel from the experiences of the past we are so inadequate to face the present and the future.

The paddy terraces are then a massive work of religious art sculptured into the earth ages ago by our ancestors, which we continue to work on. It is a heritage that is ancient and yet so new because the elaborate ritual of the sowing and harvest festival that started when the virgin valley was carved into shape is recreated anew ever year. Every year we relive the unending struggle for survival of past generations.

As we bend to break the rich soil or to plant the tender rice shoots, to weed and finally harvest the crop, we commune with our ancestors through the same pain and fatigue, the fear lest the crop should fail or the boundless joy of harvest that have been felt for generations. Our doctrine and theology of a God, a Spirit, who rules the universe and in the affairs of man is thus discerned and kept alive through reverential toil and sacrifice. It will be of interest to us to know that the terraced fields of the Igorots and other tribes in Central Luzon have been declared as monuments of the national heritage of the Philippines and given due protection.

The beauty and richness of the mountains that tower above the village are the other assets of Khonoma. George Fernandes, the Socialist leader, once observed that he had seen nothing anywhere to match the striking beauty of Khonoma with the stark mountain base of Mhoziekhie. That is high praise as Fernandes does get around. There was no reason to suspect that the compliment was given with Naga votes in mind!

The sombre majesty of Mhoziekhie seems to be imperishable. But the water system that has supported it for thousands of years can be easily damaged once the forest is cleared or even thinned beyond a certain point. Then the deadly chain of events leading to the drying up of the water base will be irreversible.

We need to realise that the mountains surrounding Dzüku valley and stretching further into the Zeliang and Manipur regions comprise one inter-dependent ecosystem, which requires to be protected comprehensively. If the delicate balance (ecology) that controls the health of the forests, rivers, and hills and of all the living creatures of this mountain block is damaged, we must expect disastrous economic and social consequences to follow because of water scarcity. It is in this perspective that the people of Khonoma should consider their responsibility in protecting the virgin forests of the common village land.

The new road to Shillong has dangerously exposed the entire foothills facing the village. The clearing of tress for easy cash returns that has already started must be stopped before it is too late. The alder tree (*rupo*) has wonderfully met our own cooking needs for generations. If we can show wisdom and foresight in protecting our virgin forest lands, we will not only save Khonoma for future generations, but we will also be setting an important example for many other villages.

Ecology or protection of the environment has ceased to be the obscure scientific subject that it was a few decades ago. It deals with the central crisis of survival that now faces mankind and the best place for launching effective initiatives to meet it is the village. Ruffuno members are uniquely placed as the youth of Khonoma to give the lead. Hence this attempt at expression of concern in the Ruffuno Magazine by a worried layman.



### Problems and Challenges: What is Our Response?

*H*ow do we define ‘problems’? We live in the midst of so many of them, often buried under them, or tied hand and foot by them, that we soon come to terms with them, resigned to staying at the level of life dictated by them. And that is a hellish dictatorship where unsolved problems accumulate and multiply. And yet we do not give much thought to what ‘problems’ mean.

But when we stop to examine them, we discover that the things we regard as ‘problems’ are simply the things we need to do properly in order to grow fully. They are the most essential parts of the drama of life designed by our Creator for our growth and development. In reality they are demands originating from our soul and conscience. And when we obey the demands the ‘problems’ are solved resulting in change, growth and confidence. Our disobedience is always due to selfishness, pride, fear, and so on, which produces the problems of distrust, greed, injustice, corruption, hate, and all else. ‘Problems’ are then matters of the greatest interest to both God and His adversary the Devil.

Problems are the key to wealth, growth, stability, happiness and beyond! This is the conviction I want to express in this article for the readers of *Katalyst* to consider. Perhaps it sounds crudely materialistic,

*A Naga Speaks*



but it is not. There is a vital truth in it, which makes sense of life, and a fascinating adventure. I wish I could explain it better than I am going to do.

All the things our conscience and soul tell us to do and to be, I shall call 'Useful Problems' because they are the seeds from which we grow.

'Useful Problems' are all the things that need to be done and done excellently, the building blocks given by our Creator to build our lives. We are to understand them properly and treat them with due respect. And as we learn to respond to them adequately and correctly we grow and thus play our part in building the just, right society on earth, the kingdom of God on earth as it must be in heaven. The list of the 'useful problems' is very long indeed because they are what life is all about. Some examples are:

**For a baby learning to grow from crawling to walking:** To a child the effort and struggle involved in rising up again and again every time it falls flat when it tries to be a walking human being is a 'problem'. The instinctive urge to walk is so strong all healthy, normal babies just don't give up and they win the battle. But how they yell in anger and frustration as they struggle!

**For a child starting school:** Everything from getting up, getting ready, doing homework assignments, going to school on time and regularly, obeying the rules to attend classes, to listen to teachers properly (instead of running away during school hours), to doing exams honestly, learning to do simple tasks to help parents at home, saying sorry for the usual small wrongs and failures, etc... are 'problems'. Most children, as I did when I myself was a child, regard these requirements as very unpleasant problems indeed and learn quickly to be deceitful. Big doors swing on small hinges. The hinges on which the big adult lies and selfish acts swing later in life are formed from small beginnings.

**For adults in all walks of life:** To learn to do things the right way and to be the person God means you to be whatever the cost, that should be normal Christianity! To accept that wrong is wrong even if every one is doing it and 'There is enough in the world for everyone's need but not for everyone's greed,' and drawing the moral battle line you will stand by in your life. Are these regarded by us as 'problems' to be avoided, or priceless opportunities to fight for, which we will give our best to? The permissiveness and impunity that have rendered our Christianity crossless and edgeless, our society lawless and irresponsible, and paralysed our politics overground and underground, are directly linked to the wrong decisions we have made and are making with regard to these misinterpreted 'problems'.

*A Naga Speaks*



So, when any 'useful problem' is regarded as an unpleasant problem and we fail to do what we know we should because of selfishness, pride, fear, etc... countless baby problems are immediately produced. They are 'useless problems' needlessly allowed to be produced. Unless we solve them we cannot make any progress. In no time they become too numerous, too difficult or too costly to solve. And even if we solve them we will find we have merely come back to where we refused to solve the 'useful problem' earlier which would have resulted in our change and growth. This is called coming back to Square One from where we have to start all over again. The tragedy is we often come back to somewhere below Square One, and it is too late to do anything.

**Our Landslides:** I shall now come to our landslides. We have many pressing problems other than landslides. But right now landslides will surely get the top prize among our problems. The people of Manipur will agree. They suffer so much more than us because of them.

The present monstrous slide at the Kohima Municipal Council Garbage Dump, it will be true to say, has produced a deep sense of defeat and powerlessness in our collective psyche and soul. We should now start to ask what we are meant to do with our landslides. They are so abundant, geologists tell us, because the entire homeland of the Nagas is part of the very young, unstable rock formation along the line where the tectonic plates of the Indian sub-continent and the Asian continent crashed into each other some 60 million years ago.

Do we then have any other choice but to decide that we will become known one day for developing the correct technology for construction and maintenance of highways in landslides-prone regions of the world? This will happen if we learn to make unchangeable reality our partner and the foundation of our growth instead of letting it defeat us needlessly by our failure to think imaginatively.

At least we'll begin to pay more attention to the drains along the highways and smaller roads and the hidden springs above and below them, which obviously cause the slides!! It is most significant that a sizable stream now flows down the middle of the long and wide KMCGD slide, starting from the top. Is not the message from the stream loud and clear?

In other word we should now regard our landslides as part of God's 'Development and Growth Package' for us! To look at them any other way is to condemn ourselves to doing nothing adequate to end them and suffer for ever while they keep pushing or dragging away our roads and highways

*A Naga Speaks*

every monsoon eating up huge funds that should go for development.

Some years back the Japanese ambassador to India visited Assam. Giving his impressions, he said if Japan had a mighty river like the Brahmaputra flowing through her his people would regard it as a huge resource, not a perennial problem. He emphasised that if its awesome assets were properly harnessed with care, wisdom and correct scientific planning, it would become Assam's river of hope and new life instead of being its 'River of Sorrow' because of the massive damages it causes every year during flooding season.

In addition to becoming a major inland water transportation solution for an extensive portion of Assam and some of its neighbours, it could provide limitless electricity, irrigate large areas of Assam, be an abundant source of fish and generate a host of other fields of economic development as well.

The Assamese professor at IIT Guwahati who told the story said he was one of those who had thought of the great river mostly in terms of the terrible floods and soil erosion it causes every year. He said he was learning that difficulties should be welcomed with responsibility and expectation, not thoughtlessly ignored or avoided because they disturb our comfort.

Making reality your partner instead of your enemy explains Japan becoming the economic power she is today fully dependent on the exports of her highly developed industry although Japan has to import all the mineral resources needed like iron ore, aluminium, copper, fossil fuel, timber, etc... to feed her industry. What the ambassador said in Assam came from Japan's well-known national doctrine of turning threats and obstacles into opportunities for growth.

Complete lack of skills and experience for modern industrial processes and of mineral resources was the extreme national crisis Japan faced when Commodore Perry of the U.S Navy forced Japan to open her ports to world commerce in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This was the start of Japan's modern history. How her people responded to their crisis has much to teach us also as it has done for many other peoples. This is not the place to go into that story.

To return to our landslides, if our engineers were to start a Society for Turning Landslides into Assets for Development in Nagaland it will prove to be a historic decision. The defiance, conviction, vision and optimism will feed the spirit of our people immensely. God will honour

the initiative. At first it may be baffling, but unexpected ideas will come including from the inspired public. Get a top civil engineer from the world, who knows the subject to launch the Society, and then the rest will follow. May be some of the unemployed engineers will do such a thing for our people.

‘It is not the size of the dog that matters. It is the size of the fight in the dog that matters.’

We are reminded of Abraham Lincoln’s famous observation: ‘God must love the common people. He makes so many of them.’ Lincoln was driving home the point that there is a great meaning and purpose in every human being. The same thing can be said about problems! Only by responding to them correctly we grow.

What we think are problems are in reality God’s way for us to grow towards Him. So we miss out completely on the real adventure of living if we waste our lives trying to avoid problems or complaining about them.

A close examination reveals that all the things I tend to automatically regard as ‘problems’ are in reality the things I need to learn to do properly in order to grow as I should as an individual. This is true for our society also. All the things we need to learn to do properly and excellently to enable our society to grow in the right direction seem to be viewed by most of us as ‘problems’ because they require us to work hard, live by discipline and free from selfishness and pride. But they should really be called ‘useful problems’ because our correct response to them produces change, hope, trust and inspiration in people needed for society to grow in all dimensions of life.

The shocking, humiliating experience resulted in what came to be called the Meiji Restoration led by some of the most enlightened thinkers in Japanese society at the time. The nation was indeed fortunate that in her moment of crisis there were men in the ruling class who saw what Japan had to do to survive and succeed as a nation.

Visionary pioneers from the high noble families did the thinking and planning the situation demanded and provided the needed leadership. As a feudal nation that had remained withdrawn and self-sufficient within her island borders, Japan had no experience or skill with which to compete with the world outside. To make matters worse Japan had no mineral resources. The problems were formidable. The pioneer nation-builders identified the first need to be to develop the immense human resource

potential of Japan.

Young Japanese students were carefully selected and sent to Britain, France, Germany and other countries in the West to study and master every subject of science and technology e.g., mathematics, chemistry, physics, medicine, biology, and all branches of engineering. They were told their mission was to save their nation by bringing her up to the level of other nations in every way by humbly learning from them. Japanese ambassadors to the West observed and meticulously copied the ways of solving problems that were practised in those nations.

Gradually the students returned and started to transform a nation without natural resources into a nation that used imported raw materials and manufactured sophisticated high quality industrial products and sold them back to the world that demanded the products because of their dependable quality. Japan became prosperous in abundant measures.

The story of Japan illustrates what is meant by transforming your most difficult problems into your most vital assets.

After all these years of watching what simply does not work at all to end landslides being done every year by us, our landslides are becoming unmanageable. Even non-engineers now know that instead of repeatedly building retaining walls below the highway where landslides have occurred and neatly arranging dressed stones wrapped in expensive metal nets along the upper side of the highway and pouring tons of dressed stones, we will have to do things completely differently.

To come to our situation, could those of us advantageously placed in society who do central planning and have the use of financial resources, especially engineers, contractors, builders, bureaucrats, and politicians, develop the thinking we need to solve problems?

If we reflect for long enough on our 'Problems' we will discover our Creator is speaking to us about them through our conscience and mind. If we solve them or respond as we know we should, the problems are transformed and they become our strength and wisdom and we grow as we should. If problems are therefore so important for us, and God Himself is showing us what we are to do with them, we should realise Satan too is definitely right there, doing his best (or worst) to guide us.

God does not regard them as problems or unimportant because only through them He enables us to grow towards Him so that we will be usable for building the just society we need on earth. We think they

are problems because to do what should be done properly we have to resolutely, repeatedly, sacrifice our selfishness. This is painful and unpleasant for us. Anything that questions or challenges our selfishness is a problem.

Everyday thoughts or awareness come to us to do specific things to be the person we are meant to be in life so that what is right, best and needed may prevail. We know what happens as a result of our response one way or the other. From my own experience I know where I would have ended up had I not obeyed certain clear thoughts that came when one day I stopped and asked God what he wanted me to see and do about my life. And every day I still get clear thoughts requiring my positive response and I know what happens to me, my family and my work with others if I do as I should or I should not.

If I do as I should not, then new problems are born which soon give birth to more problem babies. These new problems are 'useless' or needless problems insofar as they prevent our growth or our climbing of the exciting mountain of life. If they are allowed to continue unsolved, our situation goes downhill complicating everything. Even if we solve them we have merely come back to square one, often way below that, and we have to start all over again. But solving them and humbly starting afresh is the only wise thing to do. Failure to do this renders life worthless and unlivable.

What is important for us to realise is that 'useless' problems are 'useful' problems incorrectly responded to due to our selfishness, pride, jealousy, envy, fear, resentments, etc... If we understand this we understand that a titanic battle is indeed raging inside us all the time. Sant Tukaram, 18<sup>th</sup> century saint poet of Maharashtra said, 'Every moment of our lives, we are challenged to do what is right rejecting what is wrong.' C S Lewis put it this way, 'Every square inch of the universe and every split second has been claimed by God and counter claimed by Satan.'

As an addiction counsellor I see this every time I try to help a drug or alcohol addict. When a counsellor is interacting with an addict, they are actually examining a problem that has built up for probably ten, fifteen or twenty years already, even more, and actually deliberately denied for about five years prior to the conversation.

The story starts with the would-be addict learning to avoid or refusing to do things properly because of selfishness, fear, resentment or pride. It often is that he or she refuses to get up early to study, get ready to go to school, and do home assignments. The child learns to use lies and

***A Naga Speaks***

deceit to continue avoiding difficult things and get used to, or addicted to escapist tactics. He/She is very often helped immensely by the fact that the parents' values, life style and treatment of each other are no reason for him/her to do otherwise.

This results in conflicts and unhappiness in him/her, which gradually becomes a painful burden to live with. If selfishness is not faced and rejected, it quickly grows into a monstrous dictator, and its power to 'satisfy' instantly is so strong that the addict begins to think I can never win the battle against the monster. And yet the deep dissatisfaction that always accompanies our surrender to selfishness is so disturbing, the victim turns to drugs and alcohol to solve his/her problem.

The problem instantly disappears but, sadly, it returns after a few hours as soon as the power of the substance has gone. The helpless slavery to the momentary relief given by the substance, or the refusal to go far enough to do what needs to be done for life to keep rising to mature levels becomes a neurotic disorder. I find Jung calling the things we need to do properly to grow properly 'legitimate suffering' most instructive.

If we look at our problems we discover that they are the decisive points of God's contact with us. Nothing less than that! That being so, as I believe it is, we can be sure Satan too is there with equal zeal to take over what God uses to communicate with us to guide us to become the persons we are meant to be. C S Lewis saw it this way, 'Every square inch of the universe, every split second, has been claimed by God and counter-claimed by Satan.'



### **Knowing the consequences of our lives**

Appeared in *Katalyst*, Vol. I, 1<sup>st</sup> Issue, Page 4. February/March 2002

*I* shall long remember the walk on August 13<sup>th</sup>. It was through the huge landslides that had blocked the highway completely from the Jalukie Bridge to the Chathe Bridge outside Patkai Christian College. The heavy rain that started on the 11<sup>th</sup> and continued till the 13<sup>th</sup> had caused the mud and rock slides all along the Pakala Pahar stretch. The much-travelled familiar beautiful highway suddenly became menacingly dangerous. The sense of insecurity and risk was palpable. It was heightened by the muddy waters of the swollen river below swirling violently against its rocky banks and the still oozing hillside above the road that seemed very near to

*A Naga Speaks*

collapsing again bringing down tons of trees, bamboo clumps and fearsome boulders.

My trousers rolled halfway up my thighs were repeatedly muddied because whenever I missed rocks, tree and bamboo stems I was way down in thick mud, like many fellow travellers. At various stages when the walking slowed down for various reasons and I found my line of travellers was stuck directly under devastated, loose hill slopes, I did not want to think of what could happen if the rain became heavier just then. I desperately wished I had stayed back for the day. When the perilous walk was over I thanked God and my nephew who carried my bags for me. Without his help I would not have attempted the walk.

People talked about the rapid denuding of the forest cover along the ridge above during the past year triggering off the uncontrollable slides. When there were moments when the walk in the misty, dark, drizzle strongly recalled some of those despairing scenes in the *Jurassic Park* movie, one felt God was definitely trying to say something to us who live in Kohima and Dimapur. One does not dare to think there was no meaning or purpose in the whole disaster.

My guess of what God was saying was this: 'Why not stop and be still and listen to me before it is too late? This is a huge, costly "street drama" I have staged here to catch the attention of the citizens of Nagaland's political and commercial capitals. The truth at the heart of this metaphor is - in your smugness and complacency you may not know or care for what you are doing to nature's ecosystem. But the destructive consequences are inescapable. They will harm you and your children in more ways than you can imagine. Will you stop, look, and reflect, to understand what you are doing also to yourselves, your families, your people and the future generations, the spiritual ecosystem? What I said through Isaiah I am saying to you also, "Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live."'

When the sense of a wrong is accompanied by a clear sense of God speaking out of it, the sense of His guidance and the hope it generates is immensely powerful. We begin to sense that it is possible to hear His voice and to begin to cooperate with Him through simple obedience. A new vista opens up calling us to discard cynicism and dare the unknown. I was stirred by the vivid experience of His guidance, a chance to say again, 'Yes, God, and thank you so much that your thoughts and ways are so different from ours. So change me, and guide and use me to serve your purposes.'

*A Naga Speaks*



Some readers will ask, what has all this got to do with Entrepreneurs Associates anyway? The link is clear. For I believe EA is the implementation and initial triumph of a God-given thought. I decided to send the experience narrated above for the coming newsletter, as requested.

We all agree what God is most interested in is the building of His kingdom on earth. The prayer Jesus taught his disciples made this abundantly clear although we seem to treat it rather casually. Perhaps because we are more interested in what we want Him to do for us than in what He wants us to do with Him? What in reality is His kingdom? We do not need to waste our time blaming anyone for the thoughtlessness that seems to be too prevalent, which postpones the kingdom to the next world. But the result is we seem to end up creating hell on earth!

Do we think God is not waiting to be given His chance to get into business and economic development ventures, construction and building and other contracts, etc... to demonstrate His 'compassionate, capable, just' society on earth? The philosophy and commitment with which EA has been launched is to build such a society for our people. I believe it is right because transforming people's motives first is its passion. I add my prayers and best wishes for its initiators.

### **Your Christmas gift to Nagaland?**

**W**hat is Christmas? Is it not God becoming man to fight for man with man the battle between good and evil, right and wrong? And is it not because human beings are hungry above all for the bread of life, and thirsty for the living water, for peace, all of which are the fruits of the truth triumphing over evil, that mankind is so joyous for the birth of the child who stood up to evil for them? In other words, the real explanation of the beauty and power of Christmas is in our gratitude for what Christ won for us sinners at Gethsemane and Calvary, resulting in the triumph of Easter?

Christmas is definitely a fantastic festival loved by all mankind. But if Joseph and Mary, the Wise Men, and all the other characters in the story of Christmas had not faithfully obeyed God at every step, Christmas would not have happened.

The red Christmas stars at night, the carols in the air, and a host of

***A Naga Speaks***



other things of the season have made us feel the magic of Christmas once more. But the reality that will not allow us to be happy and looms before us like a frightening iceberg is our society's helplessness to cope with the fast growing mentality in our society that has produced the menace of extortioners of all kinds. The question is, has not this epidemic of extortion and other ways of stealing become so uncontrollable because the rest of us who are not extortioners have helped to destroy the sense of right and wrong and shame by the methods we have adopted to get what we want?

What is the best gift you and I can give to Nagaland at this Christmas time? I venture to suggest that it is your and my simple decision to discover and accept God's plan for us and obey Him passionately and truthfully to fulfil that plan. What God tells me to do and be may at first seem too irrelevant for the pressing social, economic and political problems that everyone is worried about right now. But if I start to learn to do things His way, not my way, in big or small things, I certainly start to change.

My change will not only mean my society will have one less rascal weakening her, but also that God will have one more person He will be able to use to change and heal our wounded society. This decision if persisted in will turn out to be nothing less than the building of the kingdom of God on earth right now by you and me. There is nothing more adventurous and satisfying than learning to play my part in building this kingdom.

Recently I had a vivid and deeply reassuring experience of how God can guide me clearly if I let him. Not an earth-shaking event, you will say. But it demonstrates an explosive potential.

I was the first passenger on a Shillong-Guwahati taxi. The second passenger arrived and sat next to me. I concluded he was a young Tibetan, Sikkimese, or Arunachali at the beginning of his business career. The third passenger came to the front seat. He was probably a retired Bengali businessman or high official. The fellow next to me said to No. 3, 'Let us go now. I have a friend to pick up on the way. Let us all pay extra and cover the cost for the fifth passenger.' They quickly agreed and the taxi started. I was not included in the agreement.

The fourth passenger was a young lady, perhaps wife of No.2. I discovered 2 and 4 were Nagas when they started to talk. I protested to 2 that I had not been consulted. The reply was, 'It will be okay, the extra is not too much.' I said, 'It's not ok.' My anger increased but I detected a distinct unwillingness in me to be unpleasant with someone undeniably attractive involved in the situation. I hated creating a scene. I disliked myself for the

reason of my hesitation.

I decided not to think and started to work on a crossword puzzle. I fell asleep. When I woke up later my anger had deepened. I said to myself, 'I tell others to be guided by God. What has God to say to me right now? I am unhappy and angry. God, tell me what you want me to do. I am listening for your guidance.'

The following thought came, 'You should say to him he was wrong to have ignored you. You should refuse to pay the extra Rs. 30. Be ready to fight even physically, without bothering about the scene that may be created.' The thought brought clarity and I felt better. But I was still not at peace. I realised I was on my way to attend a workshop on 'Peace Building and Conflict Resolution' sponsored by Council of Baptist Churches in North East India. I asked if God could possibly have more to say to me. Yes, he had more! He wanted me to go all out!

I tapped on my neighbour's shoulder and told him, 'You should have said sorry for not including me at the start. I have become bitter and I am beginning to hate you but Nagaland has too much hate already. I should not increase the poison. Also I am going to a Christian seminar on how to build peace. So I am getting honest with you and nailing my hate on the Cross instead of keeping it to let it divide us, and harm both of us. I am sorry for the hate that has started and I am rejecting it by being open and straight with you.'

He listened and said, 'I am sorry. I shall pay the extra for you.' Soon after we reached Guwahati. I paid my share of the extra saying I was happy I had reached my destination at the right time. As we parted he said, 'Uncle, no one has talked to me like this before about my mistakes. I treated you wrongly but I did not want to admit it. Please forgive me. What I have learnt today will help me in my life. Thank you for helping me.' We shook hands and he expressed best wishes for the workshop I was going to!

I went to the seminar feeling that I had done the right thing and God had guided me clearly. I had also learnt conflict resolution and peace are the fruits of our rejection of selfishness and pride and honest obedience to God's guidance. One of the persons I am praying for this Christmas is passenger No. 2 wherever he may be. I almost made him an enemy by giving him my worst instead of my best – stones not fish.

That day I learned that the building of the kingdom of God starts the moment we give our best to God and others, just as hell also starts the

moment we start to give our worst, or less than our best? Christmas is really about building the kind of society here, which reflects what heaven must be like.

Why not start to give your best this Christmas season and learn to keep it up!?



# Education

*Education versus acquired deficiencies*

The Teaching Profession Is A Mission	562
Value Education	569
Quality Enhancement In Higher Education	578
Renewing Our Foundation	582
People And Institutions	588
Discovering Inner Guidance Of The Still Small Voice	593

## **The Teaching Profession is a Mission**

All Nagaland School Teachers' Association General Conference, Kohima.

12 and 13 December 2000

*I*n Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and the other natural sciences, most of us who have not studied them, are likely to be ignorant of the facts of the subjects because they are about an impersonal universe. But in the humanities, of which education is a part because it is about life, we know or are aware of most things however incomplete. I think we are here to examine the things we know about life and to identify those aspects that should be our priorities in order to concentrate on them. So what we will be discussing together will be things you and I are aware of from our own experiences and reflections.

I have found the subject difficult to develop because I had to make sure what I say does not turn out to be a cheap exhortation of the kind teachers get all the time. That would be so unfair to you. But I have found it to be more difficult to go into the philosophical issues in education which the subject requires because of my own inadequate grasp of the subject. I hope I have at least raised some questions of common concern, which we will have to answer.

An ancient Chinese teacher said, 'A really good question is never fully answered.' The subject today is about teachers teaching students from their childhood stage right through to university degrees. It sounds deceptively simple but after trying to work out what to say to you today I have found education is like a huge majestic forest full of resources, but where you can easily get lost. It would be correct to call education God's forest of life in which He expects us to find our way through to His destiny and calling for each one of us. Therefore, we can say, education linked to so many issues of life is a truly good question. Let us not be surprised if at the end of this meeting we have not answered it satisfactorily!

The teaching profession is undoubtedly the one profession that is most directly linked to nation building. Is it not true that two special welcoming groups, parents and teachers, so to speak, receive all new arrivals on this planet? For the first most sensitive, formative years from conception through to the ages of 20 to 25, in homes and schools and colleges, they are briefed and taught by these two groups about life, and how to think and act as they continue their journey into the world? If this

*A Naga Speaks*

is true, as I believe it is, then the teaching profession is most certainly not a picnic but a mission with extraordinary meaning and awesome responsibilities.

Parents and teachers decide the quality of the raw material with which we build our society and nation. For parents their nurturing and teaching of their children is a labour of love. If for teachers their teaching is a mission with this extra motivation of love, then the stage is set for truly great things to happen. The English woman novelist George Elliot said, 'Those who trust us educate us'. And trust is a by-product of love.

When I mention nation building, I have in mind the broadest, highest meaning, not the exclusivist, very often racist, nationalist concept that I am often tempted to be a part of. I have in mind the kind of nation building that enables the fullest growth of the best qualities in human beings. Nation building is more important and more captivating than we realise. We assume we know it because we have heard it so often at election times and in general exhortations by all sorts of VIPs and others. But a careful examination will reveal that it is the highest responsibility entrusted to each person on earth.

And if it is correctly and fully performed, you are doing nothing less than building the Kingdom of God on earth, as it must be in heaven. And if it is selfishly carried out to suit our private agendas, we are creating Satan's hell on earth, for others and ourselves. If in our churches we grasp the truth that God's kingdom and Satan's kingdom are built by us right here on earth, by our co-operation with God or Satan, then life and religion will become much more adventurous with immediate meaning, opportunities and dangers.

God and Satan both share the same view that they want us to co-operate with them in building their kingdoms right here on earth. Our help is not needed in the next world! I have tried to emphasise that the teaching profession is a super mission because it looks after the laboratory where nations are nurtured and civilisations start to grow through the thoughts and lives of men and women.

I was greatly privileged to be part of the first Education Commission of Nagaland. It was my good fortune to try to do something about a subject for which I have deep convictions, with people who could draw from their life-long experiences and high professional qualifications.

The Commission report has highlighted many shortcomings in

our current system which all of you wrestle with daily. Some of you here on behalf of your Association, gave your views and suggestions to the Commission. All will agree, unless the recommended reforms are achieved we are headed for a future of all-round deterioration and chaos. The State Government confronts a truly formidable task for which it is not prepared. The easiest thing to say is that somebody in the Education Department, many teachers, successive Ministers and MLAs have created the problems we now have to solve.

It is true some selfish shortsighted men and women connected with education have inflicted shocking damages on our society. They owe it to our society, themselves and God to admit their folly and if possible make restitution.

It is equally true some dedicated individuals with the highest integrity have performed their duties without compromise to bring us as far as we have. But it is truer to say all of us in our foolishness, common lack of experience and varying degrees of selfishness have created the problems. We have now to get on with what needs to be done.

The situation is baffling because it has become one where it seems we cannot bear either our vices or mistakes or their cure. The needed cures are going to require too many people to come out of their entrenched comfort zones. But there simply is no question of our continuing any further without radical changes and high commitment to sustain new innovations and better ways of doing things.

The Commission's report confirms what we have all known, namely, that the human element is at the core of the challenge and task. The students, their family members, the teachers, political leaders and administrators of education make up the human element. This is not to suggest that the other problems like the textbooks, infrastructure of roads, communication, buildings, and so on, are less important.

About two years ago, Professor Amartya Sen of Cambridge University won the Nobel Prize for Economics. One of the points he strongly developed was that literacy and education and health are the decisive factors for answering the poverty and all-round backwardness of nations. His thinking on the causes of poverty and economic development has begun to influence national economic policies globally.

Literacy, education and health seem to be like the plentiful but absolutely vital things of life like water, air and soil. The gradual

deterioration in the qualities of these things in nature does not affect us instantly as an act of violence or an accident does where the pain is immediate and shocking.

But we know how frightening and overwhelming our problems become when the gradual collapse in the qualities of our environment, water, air and soil, is not stopped or reversed. In the case of ecological damage we know that processes of pollution or damages are often irreversible and beyond repair. In the social, economic and political problems that have rapidly accumulated to extremely dangerous levels, we see the results of our casual, irresponsible attitudes towards education standards and health conditions of millions of people.

No government in the world can ignore the special focus Amartya Sen has given on education as the key to solving global poverty. So the size of the responsibility of our teachers and administrators of education is truly immense.

Like the people of Papua New Guinea, in every field of life, we too have to learn and achieve in a very short time what advanced old societies have achieved over thousands of years in controlled, steady stages.

How do we respond adequately to the challenges in order to survive and go forward with others when we are so weak and ill-prepared in so many aspects to achieve in a short time what others have achieved over centuries? We have to learn to think objectively and truthfully and be fully responsible for our healthy growth and progress. Let us remember, we have to make choices in a situation where we have little experience to guide us and factors out of our control are exerting dangerous pressures.

For example, the fast demographic changes due to influx of illegal immigrants who are prepared to do anything to get established in our fertile open spaces, while we are not ready to do the things they do without hesitation leaving thousands of our youth unemployed and angry with self-hatred for their inability to do what is required of them.

We are fearful, confused and panicky. So it is a decisive moment in our people's journey and struggle when we need to stop to evolve the right thinking and direction.

There is the story of an Army Colonel inspecting his sector of the battlefield. He came across a gunner in a trench firing away his powerful gun with great gusto but giving little attention to his target area. The Colonel asked, 'Are you hitting the target on the enemy's side?' The gunner



replied, 'I don't know, sir, but I can tell you they are going off from here with a hell of a bang!' Judging by the language, the story must be from the US Army!

All of us teachers, preachers, politicians, public leaders and youth leaders, we are all saying things that are going off with a hell of a bang. But are we hitting our targets? We have to understand our target. But don't misunderstand me when I say that what is more important is a gunner who knows what he is shooting at and why? This is not said with a judgmental attitude because I am clear we are all trying to do many urgent things in a very short time that others have slowly learned to do properly with plenty of time at their disposal and other advantages. We need to understand that we share common shortcomings and help one another with compassion to learn to do our best to meet our challenges together.

I find I do the most stupid meaningless things that are wasteful and destructive when I do not know how to handle the mounting pressures of life. I choose the easiest, the most tempting way to solve my problems. My society does the same thing. We all become addicts of one kind or another whether we turn to drugs, alcohol, sex, gambling, TV/video and other diversions to escape boredom and facing difficult questions, or to extortion or corrupt methods to satisfy our boundless greed for pleasure, power and success. Addiction simply means solving problems of life instantly, illegally, unethically.

This is the result of mental, spiritual, moral, philosophical bankruptcy. Bankruptcy means emptiness due to absence of something that should be there. Our society underground and overground, which means all of us, is showing this all-round bankruptcy. This is not because we are worse than others, but because we are struggling desperately to handle rapid changes with our traditional experiences and attitudes which have become too inadequate.

In the Naga struggle for freedom, our people have been told from the beginning that all that is required of them is to be loyal to the cause and the national fighters. The fighters will bring sovereignty and that would solve all our problems. Today the elimination of other factions is openly encouraged to demonstrate loyalty!

In the overground state political process, at election times, the people are told to vote and then forget all and leave all to leaders. Our people have been given too little to do, overground, and underground, that would enrich their own lives and make their nation grow. This is a good

### *A Naga Speaks*

definition of spiritual and political bankruptcy.

Lulled thus into irresponsibility and casualness from both sides of Naga politics, Nagas have become a waiting, expecting, demanding, complaining people who do not think they have to solve their own problems. So we have naturally become an unleadable and ungovernable people waiting to be served. And we have come to think that leaders exploit the greed and helplessness of the people for their own cheap success and instant gratification. It is 'practical' normal politics. The result is that our politics is of the kind devoid of bold and imaginative statesmanship needed for our very complicated crisis.

Our highly potential society, greatly destabilised and distracted by uncontrolled, hidden addictive tendencies, is our target. For teachers this needy society is sitting in front of you in your classrooms in the shapes of thousands of children. They may be naughty, restless, curious, sad, fearful, dull, brilliant. But they are all there day after day waiting for you to reshape our society of tomorrow by understanding what is in their eyes and minds and souls and giving your best to the demanding, fulfilling task.

Here, where teachers meet society through its children, nation building or its destruction takes place. It is destruction of nation, if you and I, as teachers, merely see the children as a collection of heads with brains to be taught facts, information and know how to solve practical problems and, for the service rendered, there is a salary at the end of the month. Or it is nation building if we see the children as human beings needing a satisfying meaning in life which will enable them to live and give to their society with courage, faith, generosity, compassion, understanding and selflessness, because in addition to their brains and muscles, they have hearts, minds and souls as well.

At this point the subject of our enquiry is narrowed down to the individual teachers, you and me, who like the gunner, have to know the target and how to shoot it.

What is so extraordinarily interesting is that God visits you and me because He sees you and me as people he can use to build his kingdom, a just, compassionate and clean society that functions properly. He visits you and me in the morning and wants to know why we are not available in our classrooms, offices and places of service, duty and action, or why we are not happy. He wants us to be happy and satisfied because we are doing something that is our calling and big enough to demand the best from us.

Permit me to say something personal here. Because I believe God is such a God, I take seriously listening to him and obeying him truthfully. It is said, 'When man listens, God speaks. When man obeys, God acts; and when men and women change, nations change.'

I believe I made the most important decision in my life while in College. It was to set time aside early in the morning to listen to God and to write down the thoughts that come to me.

This was how I started to deal with my selfishness. I felt foolish and mad at times. But I found that when we listen to God, he corrects and directs us at the same time. The correction is painful and costly. The direction is challenging and hope-giving. Together they change us and God starts to use us to change others and our society.

When I listen, and simply obey God's guidance and wisdom, not mine, I become happy, free and clear-headed. My life is committed to remake our society and the world on the basis of God changing and guiding me every day. This does not mean I am better than anyone in any way. This simply means, I accept to do what needs to be done trusting fully that 'Where he guides, He provides for all my needs.'

I shall end with a story, which you may also know. The majestic cathedrals in European cities have stood for centuries as glorious proclamations of the faith and philosophy of life that inspired and built Western civilisation. The pointed spires and steeples rising from magnificently built structures at the base reach up to heaven symbolising the people worshipping God and asking him to protect, bless and guide their society and nation. The cathedrals took years to build, sometimes generations as no part of it could be carelessly or cheaply built with materials of questionable quality. The best resources of the community were enlisted to build them - material, spiritual, mental and artistic and aesthetic.

A visitor came from a far country once to a place in a city where a beautiful cathedral was being built. The visitor asked the first man on the site 'What are you doing here?' The man who looked bored said, 'I am a mason earning my daily wage to support my family.'

The second man he asked said, as he had nothing better to do he was doing anything as a manual labourer. The third man said he was supplying timber. He too was restless and uninterested in anybody. So it went on till he came to a cheerful man sitting on a pile of stones. He was

breaking the stones with a hammer. When asked what he was doing why he was so cheerful, he replied, 'I am helping to build a cathedral where the people will worship God.'

The visitor here met a man who knew what he was doing and loved what he knew. Oliver Wendell Holmes said, 'Every profession is great that is greatly pursued'. The teaching profession, if greatly pursued, is a great profession and mission.



### Value education

State-Level Education Seminar, Kohima. 24 September 1997

*'The wingless kiwi, national bird of New Zealand, gradually lost its wings because it became unnecessary for it to fly to escape from predators or to look for food.'* - Evolutionary Science.

Given the present condition of our society, the decision of the organisers to discuss this subject, 'Value Education', is clearly a cry of protest against what has become unacceptable, and for normality in meeting and tackling the challenges of life just as others do, without asking for easier, unethical ways, or for 'tribal concessions'.

It is also a decision to do what needs to be done that, if properly done, will affect not just the department of education but our entire society. What is more important than protest is that there is thought and commitment to see the task through. This is obviously in the men and women in the department who have mounted this seminar. I salute their conviction and initiative and thank them for inviting me to take part in their search.

The task being contemplated is truly daunting because if it is to be accomplished, no area of our society, indeed no aspect of the challenges impacting us today from the world, can be left out of our purview, because the values on which to build our society have to reckon fully with the total reality of the challenges now and in the coming decades.

Although we may disagree with communism's philosophy of man-centred revolution, the correctness of the statements by the two Marxist theoreticians cannot be disputed. They certainly sum up in a few words the widest setting in which value education for our children has to be

designed today. I clearly recall being made to feel extremely uncomfortable by Trotsky's stark declaration about being born in the wrong century if we seek a life of ease. When I read it shortly after leaving university. The discomfort helped to bring clarity in due course.

I was left in no doubt at all that even an obscure Naga youth like me whose natural inclination was always to stay within my comfort zone of the known and the familiar could not ignore the implications of this revolutionary analysis. The analysis is thoroughly valid for the new century just starting.

To design a programme of value education that would be appropriate for our society we need to understand the society we have today. Until quite recently our people were used to severe shortages and limitations in every area of life, of financial and material resources, of opportunities for making a living and progressing in life. Our attitude towards wealth and its creation was healthy and natural, meaning like anyone else we had to work hard.

But all this changed swiftly when in response to the declaration by Nagas of their political goal, Delhi made vast sums of money available for the development of the new Nagaland State which was created to serve Delhi's idea of the problem. What was poured in was too much too suddenly, and what has resulted from the impact of Delhi's solution to the problem is something I don't need to elaborate.

It has destroyed more than it has solved, and what it has solved has bred more complicated problems. Delhi's carrot and stick policy has gone haywire because Nagas have become massively addicted to the carrot and forced Delhi to become a co-dependent, or the enabler who plays a key part in the continuation of the addiction. This dilemma of co-dependency is also faced by many parents and family members of addicts.

The kiwi bird in New Zealand lost its wings gradually in response to its environment in which wings were redundant because there were no dangerous predators. We too have started to lose important faculties vital for our growth, in response to our changed situation where money, Delhi's carrots, became abundantly available suddenly.

Politicians appeared and said, 'Vote for us and all shall be added unto you.' Nagas discovered to their amazement that it was true. Whatever happened later on, certainly during elections, plenty of free feeding and drinking were available, even free cash, for more effective inducement.

Many quickly concluded that we no longer needed to think or work hard to exist as a people.

Thus, while we acquired deficiencies of mind and spirit, our baser tendencies such as greed and pride automatically became stronger. Not surprisingly, we have become, by and large, a waiting, expecting, demanding, bored and stagnant, corrupt and violent people who quickly use excuses and blame, have no patience for processes or the use of imagination, initiative and creativity to solve our own problems. Alas, unlike the peaceful, shy kiwi, we are violently aggressive and cunning to get more of what we want, and utterly without inhibitions. But I propose that this remaining quality of the ability to fight and speak out can be the quality from which our recovery will start.

So I believe that Value Education in Nagaland has to focus on is what might be called the Kiwi syndrome, ADS (Acquired Deficiency Syndrome), or ASIDS (Acquired Spiritual and Intelligence Deficiency Syndrome). I have stressed the acquired nature of our deficiencies and shortcomings so that they may be targeted and solved.

Our crisis has many parallels with the crisis of the native aborigines of the Americas and Australia. In the case of the American natives and the Maoris of New Zealand, they have exhaustively analysed their own acquired deficiencies similar to ours – legacies of their tragic histories. Moving from putting all the blame on others for their own failures as in the past, they have fully accepted where they too had responded incorrectly. As a result their recovery today is dramatic and startling.

I saw the beginnings of this when I was privileged to attend a conference called by Native Indian Youth of the Sarcee Nation in Calgary. The theme was striking and deliberate - *Native Conscience Re-Strengthening*. A number of tribes from across Canada were represented at this conference. Towards the end, the senior-most person present was called upon to give her views, 'in keeping with our tradition of respecting our elders', as the chairman said. She was the wife of Chief Crowchild of the Sarcees and a direct descendant of the great Chief Sitting Bull.

Daisy Crowchild strode up to the microphone. Her face immobile and dignified looking as if out of an ancient scene on the prairies, she said, 'I have sat here and listened the whole day to your complaints. All of you guys have become so clever at blaming and accusing others all the time. But, you have ignored all the riches of nature we have in Canada compared to so many in the world who are so poor. I hate forked tongues, as our

***A Naga Speaks***

ancestors used to say. People with forked tongues don't tell the simple truth. When they say one thing with one tongue, they are trying to confuse with the other tongue. I also know all the terrible crimes the white people have committed on us Native Indians. Okay, blame them.

'But when are we going to wake up and start to help ourselves by changing our own terrible wrongs – the hopeless drunkenness of Natives who break up their families and who die young, and our awful laziness, our dependency on white people for everything. At the end of this conference all of us will walk into a white man's food store and buy frozen vegetables, frozen meat, frozen bottles of beer, whisky and coke, and go home to cook and eat. And many will get drunk and smash things up after that. Yeah, when are you going to start growing even some potatoes and green peas? It's about time, sons.'

She went back to her seat. There was total silence. She had taken less than two minutes. But by her straightforward words, she changed the tone and level of the whole conference. Such breakthroughs in thought and attitude in numerous groups have enabled the present renewal of the Natives to become a reality resulting in the graph indicators about the community rising in all fields of life.

A Native Indian Chief in the 19th Century, when the worst defeats of his people took place and all seemed lost, made a prophecy that ever since seemed to haunt them as a cruel but intriguing vision. He said that the day the eagle lands on the moon his people will begin their rise again. The eagle is symbol of the power of the Great Spirit according to Native Americans. And the moon, a special home of the Great Spirit.

On 20 July 1969, Apollo 11 landed on the moon. The lunar module was called 'Eagle' and the first message received at NASA headquarters was, 'The Eagle has landed.' This was flashed worldwide by TV. To Ground Control it simply meant that the machine had reached its destination. It was no ordinary piece of news. But to the Native Americans already driven up the wall for their last vanishing chances of survival, the news was a psychological and spiritual bombshell when they began to grasp the symbolic power of the message from the moon.

It came at the right moment for them, when a shift had taken place in their own mode of thought. It has restored their self confidence and faith in their own future as a part of the human family in such a way that 'crazywater', their bitter name for alcohol, has finally lost its terrible hold on their people, and they of Great Turtle Island, as they call their North

### *A Naga Speaks*



American continental home, are rising again.

To enable a people to confront the challenges of life effectively is surely the central purpose and task of education. And the role of Value Education is to enable education to fulfil its function fully.

I believe the first need is for the policy framers and the textbook writers to have a conceptual or philosophical clarity about the task of education and formulate that in the simplest possible manner, I would like to try to contribute some suggestions, as from a layman towards developing this concept. An educationist wrote in the *Times of India* in October last year. 'Without an inspiring idea or vision of society, the education system stumbles from one gimmick to the next.'

The second need surely is the emergence of a team or network of utterly dedicated men and women across Nagaland whose passion is nation building and who are in the field of education because of this mastering love. They will be people 'who know what they are after and love what they know'. Mastering love and passion are advisedly used here because nothing less will penetrate the cynicism, despair and fear that have overtaken our thinking and our attitudes, and for very real reasons. But those of us who respond to the task can rely on the conclusion British historian Arnold Toynbee made after studying the entire history of mankind. He said it is always 'a creative minority' that decides the direction of societies and civilisations.

A part of this second need is, that those dedicated to Value Education will naturally have to be people who speak from their own experience of having applied in their own lives the values and ideas they want for the students and society. Mahatma Gandhi used to say, 'My life is my message.' The power of his ideas came from his 'experiments with truth'. Because they were from his experiments, people trusted what he said. He always said, 'If I can do it there is no reason of why anyone else cannot.' Hope was stirred alive within them and people said, 'If he can do it, I can also do it.' I have always liked the words of George Eliot, the English writer. 'They who trust us educate us.'

I believe the main challenge at the heart of our crisis today is the all-round growth of our people. The good news is that thousands upon thousands of tree seedlings have been planted by Nagas in the past few years and the trees are growing. The bad news is that Nagas are not growing!



We cannot say growth is not taking place in Nagaland. But the things that are growing rapidly frighten us – political parties and factions, traditional corruption within offices, and outside, extortioners and free lance exploiters of all sorts, the number of drop-outs and cheaters in exams, alcohol and drug addicts, HIV and AIDS sufferers, the number of widows and orphans of political executions, shallow religiosity and spiritual bankruptcy. The list can go on.

What this massive fall in society's health indicates is that the things that are meant to grow in us human beings are not growing. I am referring to mental growth, spiritual growth and character growth. It is a curious truth that economic growth of nations is achieved only through real growth in people in their mind, spirit and character. The collapse of the USSR has confirmed this. We are talking about discipline, hard work, dependability, and the ability to respond to changing challenges with competence and flexibility.

Now please bear with me as I try to illustrate this analysis of growth by using what I call the hand model. On a fully opened hand, the first three fingers represent mental, spiritual and character growth. The fourth finger represents economic growth. The thumb pointing up is for our political status and aspirations. Nations like Rwanda, Somalia and Cambodia are fully independent nations. They are members of the UN. So they have achieved all there is to be achieved in the dimension of growth represented by the thumb. But their peoples are in miserable conditions because in the dimensions of growth represented by the four fingers their achievements are abysmally low. The urgent lesson for us is - concentrate our very best attention now on the four fingers so that if and when we achieve the status we aspire for we may not be like Rwanda and the other examples of disaster.

How do we start from the condition we are in today of widespread unawareness of the nature of our acquired deficiencies and the sense that we are each responsible for overcoming them? I find from my own experience of dealing with these blocks in myself that the battle must be reduced to manageable sizes, and my mind convinced that victory is indispensable and possible, and it is the only worthwhile thing to do in life.

As Friederick Nietzsche said, 'If we know the *why* of life, nothing can stop us from finding the *how* of life.' I believe inculcating in our children's minds, starting at the family and pre-primary level, the following majestic facts from nature and qualities of life will make a difference.

### *A Naga Speaks*

1. **Processes and Persistence:** Everything in nature and the entire universe starts from nothing and grows to greater sizes, dimensions and qualities. 0/Zero is the beginning fact of mathematics. The huge banyan tree that in due course can become like a little forest starts from a seed that is virtually invisible, so light and fragile that only a tiny fraction of the millions of seeds germinate. Once it has germinated its growth is virtually unstoppable.

The mightiest heavenly bodies begin from space dust and after billions of years become galactic phenomena. Nothing is instant in life except instant coffee or the instant kick from narcotics. Everything we see is the result of a beautiful, systematic, intricate process. If children can be helped to see and accept, and love, this operative principle as natural and wonderful, they are likely to respond to what is said to them, written in textbooks, or given to them as assignments, with less resistance if not outright pleasure. It is a fact that economic development, political freedom and independence, even salvation are all steady, faithful processes which if we abuse to suit ourselves we suffer the consequences.

2. **Responsibility:** If irresponsibility has become the chief characteristic deficiency of our society, answering it has to start at the beginning of schooling. We tend to leave the matter to be dealt with by pastors and religious teachers and by visiting VIPS at public functions. In any case in church sermons and VIP exhortation, everyone manages to feel that someone else is the troublemaker! Meanwhile society is slowly killed by the irresponsibility of everyone. Taking responsibility should be understood as the secret of happiness and irresponsibility the sure road to frustration and boredom.
3. **Excellence and perfection:** Search for excellence and learning to do things properly and perfectly is surely the essence of the type of education that builds civilisations. Excellence is not something you do in a special way when after you have achieved positions of influence and fame and high education. It is a decision and commitment not to tolerate the second best, go for the best, in whatever you do. It is also to give your best to every person you come across or do things with. It is to care deeply that what you do, and how you do it, gives faith and hope to others instead of the opposite. Christ said, 'Be ye perfect as your father in heaven is perfect.' He also said we are to give fish and bread to one another, not serpents or scorpions or stones.

*A Naga Speaks*

This simple decision, you will find, cuts across more areas of life than you may think. And if you make the additional decision to be open and vulnerable to accept graciously what your family members and your colleagues will tell you when you have not done or given your best, your fight for excellence goes beyond self-perfection to setting standards for your society.

I often look back to two occasions when I learnt some simple but lasting lessons on doing things properly.

Once in Bombay I undertook to send out some news reports about the work of MRA to some people. An English friend I was working with saw the envelopes ready for posting. He picked out one on which the address was shabbily written out, and the postage stamps stuck at crazy angles. He said with a twinkle in his eyes, 'May I be honest with you? I really don't think any thoughtful person will read your great report inside after seeing the messy envelope!' He then helped me to redo all the envelopes perfectly.

A few years later I was at the American Conference Centre of MRA in Michigan. A Swedish student and I were responsible, as part of our training, for cyclostyling and distributing the daily press releases from the conference for the 1000 delegates and newspapers and press agencies outside. One day one of the secretaries called my friend and me into the office and told us we had done a shabby job of the cyclostyling of the conference report the previous day.

In those days there were no computers! The news sheets had ink smudges at the margins, She indicated the shoddy workmanship obscuring the important points shared by the speakers and all the hard work all of us had put in to produce the report. We were asked to redo the whole job and produce something the Centre and we could be proud of. I had to admit I was the culprit. It was like a knife going through me because of my pride and ego.

I thanked her but as I went out I felt quite mad to be corrected by a lady like that! I did take the matter to God to find out what He had to say. The thought came that she had plenty of more interesting things to do than to be bothered by my mistake. But she cared enough and took the trouble to convey what she felt. She could not have liked raising the matter with me. I should be grateful to her for pointing out my error.

I realised that with the secretary and the English friend in Bombay, my

bad workmanship was trenchantly tackled but they cared for me to become a greater person, liberated from pride and selfishness. I have dwelt at some length on these personal stories because I do believe that pursuit of standards of excellence is central to education of a people and the battle for it is won or lost in decisions and acceptances in the lives of individuals before it is understood and established in a society.

I must congratulate our newspapers in Nagaland for the start they have made in setting standards of excellence. The spelling, punctuation and grammatical mistakes are much much fewer today. One wishes Nagaland University would recognise the harm done to the cause of excellence and quality in education by the frequent mistakes in its advertisements published in the papers. Bruce Barton said, 'Some time when I consider what tremendous consequences come from the little things, I am tempted to think there are no little things.'

4. **Ends and Means, Good and Evil:** No people, no nation, no society can become stable and just by ignoring the reality of the eternal battle between good and evil. And that if the means and methods adopted to achieve any goal are compromised or polluted, the weakening of a society starts. Even before the goal is achieved and after its achievement destruction starts. I'll quote Berry Gordy, a former President of a business corporation in the US, 'One of the most important problems is that of happiness after success. Many people might say, "Hey Baby, give me the success, and I'll worry about the happiness afterwards!"'

Unfortunately, it does not happen that way. Unless you consider happiness before you consider success, then the manner in which you achieved your success will be something that will destroy you later. Many people in their rise to success, are so busy rushing to the top, stepping on their competitors, stepping on their enemies and, saddest of all, stepping on their friends and loved ones that when they get to the top, they look around and discover they are lonely and unhappy. They ask me, 'Where did I go wrong?' My answer has always been 'Probably at the beginning!' suggested Gandhi - the champion.

5. **Silence and Observation:** The Japanese say, 'Discipline and self-restraint are the children of silence.' This indicates the source of their strength and achievements.
6. **Creating a Caring Society:** This concept has to be embedded at the heart of our consciousness if we are to become a people who can be

proud of themselves. The educational process to achieve this has to start at the beginning of schooling.

I have tried to share some thoughts on the subject given to me. The real work will be done by the researchers, the textbook writers and the artists who can convey the ideas in simple vivid expressions and images that children will enjoy.

I think it was Turgenev, the Russian writer, who said his dream was for Russia to have a primary school in every village with a teacher who loved children and their families, He added then there would be no need to worry about universities and higher institutions of learning.



### **Quality enhancement in higher education**

Value-added education through inculcating a value system in students.

Japfü Hotel, Kohima. 14 June 2012

*I*t is a high privilege, but a challenging one, to be asked to say something to a gathering of College Principals. It is certainly risky if the subject given for discussion is one they wrestle with everyday and know all aspects of it. The last page of the printed programme we are following today declares the Vision, Mission, and Value Framework of the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC). It deserves our close study.

The points made are specific, focussed and compelling so that you want to be a part of the massive effort of the mission to fulfill the stated vision which is 'to make quality the defining element of higher education in India through a combination of self and external quality-evaluation, promotion and sustenance initiatives.' And if I may say so, the groundwork already being done that one is aware of, makes you feel Nagaland too is rising to meet the challenge. It is going to call for extraordinary dedication, sustained discipline for excellence and far seeing visioning from all in the field of education.

By way of introducing myself, and the angle I shall take in my talk this morning, permit me to say a few words about my field of work called Initiatives of Change, formerly, Moral Re-Armament, MRA. The aim and simplest job description of IofC is: 'Remaking the world, starting with change in myself and being willing to change every day as God guides and

with His help.’

The first part of the description is likely to be dismissed right away as mad and hopelessly utopian. But the urgent need for the second part in any plan or project on earth today is indisputable. And I can say changing yourself in order to help change the situation you are in, by obeying God’s guidance becomes ‘normal living’ and irresistible, if you keep at it, because you discover it is the right and intelligent thing to do in our fascinating but dangerous world.

In Nagaland and North East India my work has been mainly in counselling for recovering and rehabilitating drug and alcohol addicts, and in the search for reconciliation and healing through promoting honest conversations and transparency across the divides of tribes and factions. Frankly, I don’t have instances of success in the usual sense to mention. But what I am going to share this morning is drawn from what I am learning from my work in the area of my commitment and involvement.

The subject given to me is explained in these words by NAAC: ‘Although skill development is crucial to the success of students in the job-market, skills are of less value in the absence of appropriate value systems. Higher education institutions (HEIs) have to shoulder the responsibility of inculcating the desirable value systems among the students. In a country like India, with cultural pluralities and diversities, it is essential that students imbibe the appropriate values commensurate with social, cultural, economic and environmental realities, at the local, national and universal levels.

Whatever the pluralities and diversities that exist in the country there is always scope for debate on values like truth and righteousness apart from other values emphasised in the various policy documents of the country. The seeds of values sown in the early stages of education, mostly aimed at cooperation and mutual understanding, have to be re-treated and re-emphasised at the higher educational institutions, through appropriate learning experiences and opportunities. The NAAC assessment therefore examines how these essential and desirable values are being inculcated in the students by the HEIs.’

The need to bring the core values of truth and righteousness into the nation building process is clearly stated and understood. The need is not disputed. But while thinking of how to develop this discussion this morning I was reminded of something a foreign correspondent wrote in his last article from Delhi before he left India. He referred to a striking

signboard put up at a very chaotic traffic from Delhi which said, 'Lane driving is sane driving.'

He said there was no connection between the noble advice and the most insane driving that he had to survive every time he passed through the junction. But to him the signboard was a perfect metaphor for modern India, a nation committed to be guided by ideals and values she declares to be essential for her total well-being, but most of which are yet to be demonstrated in her society.

Policymakers, we the parents of the students, the principals, the teachers, lecturers, and professors are all convinced the students starting life need to live according to moral, ethical principles. The young people watch what is happening in their families and in their society and they are confused. Many of them become rebels; many destroyed by their failure to be responsible themselves, going beyond blaming and using excuses.

Theoretically speaking, it should be possible to inculcate values like truth, righteousness, and tolerance in the students at all institutions. But in reality it does not work out most of the time, as we all know from our experiences of being at the receiving end of the exercise of the inculcation of values!

I often think of what a mother from Kerala narrated at one of our programmes. Her husband, a medical doctor, was constantly worried their two sons would turn to drugs. He often told them about the dangers of drug addiction. He himself smoked and took tablets to ease his tension. He did not want his sons to see him. So he smoked in the bathroom. His moment of truth came one morning when his four year-old son tapped on the bathroom door and said, 'Daddy you forgot your matchbox!' The mother told the seminar, 'For many children the only scripture they may read is you.'

Sir Edmund Burke, the great British MP and political scientist in the 18<sup>th</sup> century said, 'Mankind learns only at the feet of examples.' Is this not the issue we have to face and learn to address whatever the price of change for us in the way we actually think and live? On Burke's point on learning at the feet of examples, trying to inculcate a value system in students across India wherever it is being attempted must be a horrendous dilemma indeed for the teachers as well as for the students, when the exact opposite values are very frequently protected and guarded by the expensively established central authorities.



The latest masterpiece by Gurcharan Das, the author and playwright, is the widely acclaimed book, *The Difficulty of Being Good*. It is a very thorough study of the difficult but crucial responsibility for the preservation of the moral wellbeing that gives everyone the opportunity to grow properly. He draws brilliantly from the stories of the great epic, the Mahabharata, to analyse the parallel dilemmas that confront citizens and leaders in modern society.

In the second chapter he mentions what happened in the process that ended in Pratibha Patil becoming the President of India. She was the Congress party candidate. There were serious corruption charges that were widely reported in the press. The licence of the Cooperative Bank, she started in Maharashtra, had been cancelled by the Reserve Bank of India. Her bank had given 'illegal loans' to her relatives that exceeded the Bank's share capital. It had also given a loan to her sugar mill, which was never repaid. The Bank waived these loans, and this drove it into liquidation. Six of the top ten defaulters in Pratibha Patil's Bank were linked to her relatives. All this was revealed by the State Government's liquidator of her bank.

Gurcharan Das writes, 'In July 2007, the nation had a Bhishma-like person of unquestioned integrity in Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. But he remained largely silent... In passing, he called it "mudslinging" by the opposition, and the nation believed him. In any case the Congress had the votes and Pratibha Patil replaced the most upright and popular President in Indian history. After that the charges were never investigated.'

Here you see clearly the difficulty of being good, and the equally baffling difficulty faced by those who try to inculcate a value system in educational institutions, when the examples of blatant manipulation at the highest level to protect vested interests of the high and mighty are so widely seen by the whole country.

The consensus on why Pratibha Patil was made the President was that it had everything to do with the strategy of keeping the Bofors scandal at a safe distance from the ruling family in Delhi. And the consensus on why the BJP, vociferous in its condemnation of the scandal before coming to power remained silent over it when it came to power, is that the Party too had too many skeletons in cupboard. The same thing can be said of all the political parties of Incredible India!

The difficulties to be faced in inculcating a value-based system are innumerable. What has to be put in place first is the moral wellbeing



that ensures sound growth on all the fronts. Otherwise it has no chance of surviving and playing its important part.

Therefore, as people who understand the importance of moral and ethical values for the survival and sound growth of nations, we have to conduct a determined parallel battle to keep raising men and women who accept to do what needs to be done the right way in whatever they do in society on the basis of whether it is really right.

The steady increase of the ranks of such men and women will in due course put in place a system of values, which will become the foundation for our society's growth. As the increase in number of such people is always very slow, the temptation to give in to this line is extremely strong, that 'If everyone else is doing it, it is ok even if it wrong.'

I propose to conclude with the stories of two remarkable Asians because what they did is relevant to our subject of inculcating of values in people.

The first one is a Chinese from Taiwan, Liu Ren Jou, a dear and respected friend I have had the privilege of knowing for some years. He was a mathematics teacher by profession and is a philosopher by nature. As a Chinese he grew up aware of all the traumas of history his people had experienced – inflicted on them by outside powers, as well as by their own cruel rulers. From his childhood years his deep concern was how to heal the wounds of his ancient people so that the contribution of the Chinese would make to the world, will take mankind forward instead of backwards. So he was always a thoughtful young man ready to experiment with ideas that will make things better.

In the first high school he taught, at one exam he caught three students cheating in his maths exam. The tradition in the school was that students who were punished had to stand outside under the sun in the courtyard fully seen by everyone for the whole duration of their class with them pulling on their ears. So he got them out to stand as required. Then he went out and stood with them pulling his own ears telling them he too had cheated when he was in high school. The experience changed his life and became the basis of his work to bring change to China.

The other story is of Sogo, the man who became the Governor of the National Railways of Japan. At the end of the Second World War, Japan was a completely humiliated nation. Sogo, like all Japanese young men after the war, was bitter and in despair. He became a bureaucrat in the national

railways of Japan. He worked hard and rose rapidly becoming Governor of the entire National Railways in the 1950's. He saw that the Railways could play a key part in the revival of Japan's economy. At an international conference in Europe, he received the mental breakthrough he was looking for.

It came from an American statesman, Dr Frank Buchman, the initiator of what was then called Moral Re-Armament. He found in this American, no judgment of his people or all the suffering Japan had inflicted on her Asian neighbours and beyond. To a group of leaders from Japanese industry Buchman said, 'Japan is meant to be the lighthouse of Asia.' He also challenged them to demonstrate integrity and selflessness in their personal lives to inspire trust and hope.

For Sogo, this was something he did not expect to hear from the world at the point of time when Japan was licking her wounds, guilty and bitter. He suddenly felt Japan could and should build the fastest train in the world - the Shinkansen. It meant rousing the imagination of all the engineers and managers of the Japanese National Railways and the Government. That was how the famous bullet train of Japan was built first from Tokyo to Yokohama and then to the rest of Japan.

It was said technological successes such as the Shinkansen, Sony, and Mitsubishi Corporations in the post-war years gave the impetus the Japanese nation needed most at that time. The impact of the achievement on Japanese industry was enormous. Japan's rise to economic superpower started. The rest is history.

Buchman conveyed something that echoed in a highly educated Sogo and motivated him anew. He found a fresh perspective on his own crisis and the national crisis in despair. This newfound insight motivated a bureaucrat into action; and the spirit and practical achievement he gave to his nation played a significant part in transforming post-war Japan. The story widens our understanding of the meaning of inculcating values.

I want to end my talk by making a suggestion. We tend to complain that we have no role models in our society to inspire our young people. It is said, 'Those who trust us educate us.' But why shouldn't each one of us simply decide that we will be the role model our families, our society, our bureaucracy need? Not because we are better than others or we know how, but because it has to be done? The moment we decide to do it we will find it can be done.

But if you and I are willing to listen to the guidance of God and accept the changes required in our lives, we start to learn to be role models! It is not our virtues that teach people, but our transparency about our failures and mistakes from which we have learnt lessons, and our commitment to our calling.

Mahatma Gandhi said, 'Things of fundamental importance to a people cannot be secured by reason alone. They have to be purchased with their suffering.'



### **Renewing our foundation**

Clark Theological College Thanksgiving Day. 10 November 2011

**T**he thought and care that has obviously gone into the creation of this historic college, the resources sought for and given for it, speak powerfully of the conviction, sacrifice and commitment of its pioneers and those who have sustained it up to this day, especially the teachers and the administrators.

My mother passed away when she was 106. I came home once to take part in a seminar in Kohima when she was in her late 90s. While preparing my talk I asked her, 'Mother you are one of the oldest persons in Kohima now. What according to you is the most serious weakness of our people today?'

After a while she said, 'God cannot be holding the hands of all the people in the world at the same time to guide them. But he has put an amazing human mind and heart inside each one of us for a very special purpose. He means us to use them whenever we are in need of His wisdom and guidance. Our most serious weakness is we are not using our mind and heart to know how to live each day because we are living without thinking. Our problems are not getting solved, and they are increasing, because we are living as we like without using what God has given us... If we will live and do things as God shows us, this world I am sure too can become quite like what heaven must be like.'

I realised I had given very little importance to the priceless conclusions and evaluations my old mother was living with, obviously because I thought I knew best.

***A Naga Speaks***

Our colleges and universities are meant to be seats of learning to ensure all-round growth for our society. But, impacted by unprecedented pressures of existence, our colleges are becoming anything but seats of proper learning and sound growth in our youth who will be the ones to produce the society they and their children will need.

Is it not obvious our theological colleges and seminaries have now to play their fullest role, that is, mental, spiritual, philosophical and character development of our people for the sound social, cultural and economic growth of our society? It seems most of the university colleges are now being forced by society to consider this to be not part of their role and responsibility.

The perception now seems to be that the universities and their colleges are meant to only produce graduates with degrees to get jobs, or who should be given jobs, not for the service to society during the months but for the salaries at the end of the months.

We do face a frightening crisis of mental and spiritual bankruptcy that is rendering our society irresponsible, directionless and impossible to develop. So we give heartfelt thanks for CTC for all that it has done, and the expanding role it is clearly called to play to help shape the thinking and meaning of life needed to steer our society forward to be the just, creative society it is meant to be for the fullest flowering of our people.

The Clark Centre for Peace Research and Action went out a few days ago with their latest dramatic production to reach the people out there beyond the bounds of the campus here. I regretted I could not come to see what they were staging when the troupe was in Kohima. I believe it was pioneering something institutions like this must do with urgency to identify the things going wrong and the price each one of us has to pay to answer them. Such thought-through initiatives help to demonstrate that 'wrong is wrong, even if everyone is doing it, and right is right, even if no one is doing it', and it is possible to reject wrong and do what is right. This gives clarity and hope, something desperately needed at this time.

I venture here to go into what I believe God does say to us when we do use the listening, thinking and understanding equipment, installed by Him inside every human being. It is certainly a 'wonderfully and fearfully made' communication device, as we all know. For sure He does not indulge in polite pleasantries about weather, health and all the other things that are so safe to be polite about.

A study of the Bible and history shows clearly that if we turn to God, not with our needs and demands only, but to also give Him a chance to tell us what He wants us to be and to do, what God says to us is always linked to the most pressing needs and problems of our society and our world.

What He tells may at first sound too insignificant, not directly connected to the central problems of society. But He always, it seems, starts with the deepest, honest reasons for our unhappiness. I believe it is an illuminating truth that God meets us at the point where His clear call to us, and the devil's temptation pulling us away from it are clashing fiercely. I am going to refer to two great events. One happened recently, the other in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

This morning I had the privilege of showing a CD of the national apology speech Prime Minister Kevin Rudd delivered from the floor of the Australian Parliament, to the Aboriginal people of Australia. His apology, the first official act of his Government after the Labour Party won the election, was for all the crimes the white people of Australia had committed on the first inhabitants of the continent including attempts at suppressing them to extinction. He made special mention of the *Lost Generation* survivors.

The British colonised the Australian continent in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries declaring it *terra nullius*, uninhabited earth. This led to treating the first inhabitants of the land as sub-human, and adoption of policies aimed at eventual racial genocide. Of course, the unhappiness coming from the guilt in the conscience of many individuals was where the battle to totally reverse the attitude and the policy started.

About two centuries later the battle resulted in acts of Parliament that restored vast tracts of land back to the various tribes, and the right of the children of all First Nation people of Australia to be taught in their own mother tongues, making it the obligation of the State to implement the laws. The climax of the battle in legal and political terms was the apology speech from the floor of the national Parliament by Kevin Rudd. Watched in amazement by the whole world, Australia as a nation experienced the happiness and satisfaction of going deep and far enough to the roots of a wrong that had become an evil by being condoned for generations.

The discovery and colonisation of the Americas in the 15<sup>th</sup> century soon led to the start of the slave trade in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The trade was legalised in Britain by Royal Charters and an act of Parliament in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. By the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Britain became the leading slave trading

power. It was justified and defended as essential for the security and steady development of the Britain and her Empire. Indeed it had become the economic backbone of Britain. It also provided the field of action and training that gradually developed the Royal Navy to become the greatest navy in the world.

It was estimated that ships from Liverpool and Bristol alone collected and carried more than 3 million African slaves to the West Indies and the Americas. But rejection of the rationalised justifications of the trade on grounds of economic prosperity and national security that had been ruthlessly upheld by the rich and powerful for generations, started in the conscience and soul of many individuals. The Quakers were the first to totally condemn and reject slavery and its trade. It was followed by the revival movement led by the Wesley brothers. John Wesley called it 'the execrable sum of all villainy'.

The depth of the inner battle raging across Britain was revealed in conversions that took place in erstwhile supporters such as John Newton. He was a slave ship captain who became a priest. From his tiny parish church in an obscure part of London he played a significant role to strengthen the movement for abolition. He wrote *Amazing Grace*. His greatest contribution was probably the help he gave William Wilberforce to become a committed Christian.

British historian G M Trevelyan assessed this triumph of abolition as 'one of the turning events in the history of the world.' According to him the timing was amazing as far as Africa was concerned, 'It was only just in time. If slavery had not been abolished before the greater commercial exploitation of the Tropics began, Africa would have been turned by the world's capitalists into a slave farm so enormous that it must eventually have corrupted and destroyed Europe herself, as surely as the world conquest under conditions of slavery destroyed the Roman Empire.'

Down the years individual Australians became aware of God requiring them to take on the task of their society and nation putting things right with the Aboriginal people. Those who understood it were unhappy, fearful and poor in spirit contemplating the price they were called to pay. Hadn't God done the same thing with Wilberforce and his fellow fighters earlier to end the slave trade and slavery in the British Empire? In both instances of great changes being achieved it was at the points of deepest discernment and personal spiritual needs that God came to individuals with His calling and vision.

That has been true in my own inner journey of trying to follow what I understood in my heart and conscience. I was the shyest, most backward student in my class in Madras Christian College in 1955. I had read only editorials of *The Assam Tribune*, *The Statesman*, *Reader's Digest* articles and some simple high school level English poems and essays before coming to do English Honours! In my class were budding scholars who could already discuss Shakespeare, Milton, and any of the others with ease.

Despite my diffidence I was captivated by the idea of 'Remaking the world, starting with yourself' that I encountered when I met people of Initiatives of Change. The first part I could push aside as crazy but to ignore the second part was dishonest. I could not deny that the two were complementary parts.

I realised God used my little step of obedience to be honest about myself, and misuse of money to help my father alter his care of my mother. I sensed I was being led to something I should not treat casually. As I look back I have no doubt God came to me at the moment of my greatest insecurity, and poverty and rebellion of spirit as I faced His calling and the temptation of the Adversary. My unhappiness was coming from my inclination to accept the easier option.

I too have found giving God sufficient time early in the morning is decisively important. I suggest that there are two Nagalands, but most are familiar with only one of them. The Nagaland before 6 am is totally different from the Nagaland that takes over our lives and our senses after 6 am.

We need to discover this and get the two Nagalands to help each other. Getting to know the Nagaland between 4 and 6 am, even earlier, will transform your life, to start with! If He visits you also in the mornings as Job of old says He does, you are a VIP. Do not treat Him and yourself casually.



## People and Institutions

First Annual Lecture, Sazolie College, Jotsoma, Nagaland. 18 May 2013

Sazolie College is becoming known for its innovative ideas. You started the first yearly Inter-Collegiate Debate programme. The increase in participation from the colleges is a measure of the contribution it is

*A Naga Speaks*

making. Now you are launching the very creative idea of establishing an Annual Lectures series as part of the College's educational programme, something new in Nagaland, as far as I know. This lecture series is another gift from you to our society, as every year you will be bringing someone who will engage the thinking of those who will attend the lecture on an important current issue.

I chose the title of my talk for this occasion keeping in mind the totality of our crisis, which you will agree we have to respond to properly. I think it is made up of:

1. Our need for identity, security and dignity, which explains why the Nagas launched their political struggle defending their history as understood by them.
2. Our need for social economic transformation, which has revealed how much we need to change to match the challenges involved.
3. Our need for healthy, just, fear-free, inspiring inter-tribe relationships that will enable us to work together to achieve what is right and best for all instead of what we are today.
4. Our need to be mentally, spiritually, morally, economically and politically prepared to respond correctly to the formidable challenges coming from the wider geo-political region of Asia of which we are a tiny but important part.

Jean Monnet made the following observation in his *Memoires*:  
 'Nothing is possible without people.  
 Nothing is lasting without institutions.  
 The institutions can, if they are well built,  
 accumulate and transmit the wisdom to successive generations.'

I wonder what strikes you in this authoritative assertion by someone who knew what conceptualising and building institutions means?

Jean Monnet (1888-1979) was a French economist, the statesman whose thinking and vision played the key part in the rebuilding of Western Europe from the ruins of World War II. He is regarded as the chief architect of European unity and one of the founding fathers of what became the European Union.

Monnet died in 1979 when he was 90. He was 26 when WWI broke out in Europe and 51 when WWII broke out. He was a brilliant far-seeing, realistic thinker. He was called to play highly influential roles in advising



some of the top leaders of the two bloodiest wars in history, both occurring in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Drawing from his extensive involvements in dealing with all that had gone wrong within and between nations, which had produced the terrible global wars, Monnet produced ideas and plans that realistically addressed the complicated problems which made possible the rebuilding of Europe. Looking back on his life's work with other European statesmen, he made the summing up given above.

To Monnet, the presence or the absence of wisdom in people, the strength or weakness of the institutions that serve nations were the key issues. And the remedy he calls for is simple, comprehensive and extremely challenging. But we cannot deny it is do-able because he brings it down to what each individual can do if she or he decides to be responsible, accepting the adventure involved. And deep down there is in people a hunger to be responsible, meaningful and adventurous if they are convinced.

There is no time here to say much on the sensational economic miracle of Western Europe after WWII because of what Monnet did with his team of leaders. It will suffice to mention the formation of the Authority comprising France and Germany to jointly control the production of coal and steel so that these vital strategic raw materials would no longer be monopolised and misused for military purposes by either of them. This was considered to be a highly imaginative idea. It helped to revive industrial growth in Western Europe.

The next outcome of this process was the Common Market, which eventually led to the coming into being of the European Union, which was an unprecedented experiment in constructive international cooperation.

These new institutions that had been thus started facilitated the implementation of the ideas for peace and recovery, Europe's most urgent needs at the time. But at that time the most significant breakthrough was achieved in the healing of the centuries-old wounds and vengeful hates between France and Germany. According to Edward Luttwak, the highly respected military strategist, this breakthrough played a major part in the successful outcome of the economic and political schemes for building Western Europe.

His analysis was published in 1994 in *Religion, the Missing Dimension in Statecraft* by the Centre for Strategic and International

Studies, the top think tank in Washington DC. I should add here that the systematic work done by the international team of MRA, now Initiatives of Change, led by its leader, Frank Buchman, across France and Germany from 1947 to the mid-50s in healing and reconciling the two nations that resulted in the historic change, is fully studied and confirmed in the book mentioned.

Let us take a very brief look at what institutions have done to Britain. Britain is regarded as the mother of the parliamentary form of government, the most widely copied judicial system of administration of justice and law and order and so on. Britain has ceased to be a world imperial power, but London continues to be the centre of so many international economic political and social enterprises. The reason is the dependability and integrity of the institutions that keep British society functioning according to established norms and regulations that have developed over centuries.

The centuries-old process that produced the UK the world knows and respects today started with the Magna Carta in 1215. King John granted the Great Charter recognising the rights and privileges of the barons, church and freemen. The Charter curbed the autocratic excesses of the king who up to that time believed in the divine right of kings to rule the kingdom allowing no restrictions to limit their power.

The resolute refusal of the protesting nobles to yield their principled stand enabled England to develop a system of government that opened the door to gradual changes that kept on renewing the political and social health of the nation, and England became a pioneering example for balanced growth through the strength of well-established institutions.

Describing the unhealed distrusts and fears between nations in Europe that produced the First and then the Second World War, W H Auden the English poet wrote:

*In the nightmare of the dark  
All the dogs of Europe bark,  
And the living nations wait,  
Each sequestered in its hate.*

Very harsh and grim, but can we say this does not describe the relationships between the Naga tribes as we are beginning to see today? We need to understand what eventually happens if people get sequestered in their hates and resentments without helping one another to change

### ***A Naga Speaks***

through honest conversations and grow together.

I should mention here, in this connection, that a few months back in a poll survey taken by the leading historians of the wars in British history, the Battle of Kohima was judged to be the most significant of all the battles in British history. That is saying a lot! This reveals the strategic geo-political importance of our homeland and its neighbouring region.

Continuing on this point let us also know about the latest book by Bertil Lintner, the Bangkok based Swedish journalist and author called *Great Gain East: India, China and the Struggle for Asia's Most Volatile Frontier*. He says in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the most important contest for strategic geo-political control was created by Russia's determination to find an opening in the Indian Ocean through Iran, Afghanistan, Western India (now Pakistan) and the Arabian Sea. The British ruling from Delhi prevented this.

Today according to Lintner, the equivalent strategic contest is being caused by China's determination to find a way into the Indian Ocean through the homelands of the ethnic tribes of Northern and Western Myanmar and North East India, and the Bay of Bengal. We Nagas are very much a part of the region he calls 'Asia's most volatile frontier'. His book starts with a dramatic account of how a Naga guerilla group walked all the way to South-Eastern China in the '80s.

The question we ask when we become aware of the totality of our crisis is: 'How are we to live in such a time? What should be our response to the challenges confronting us?' Our first need is to understand and accept the challenges of the crisis, and decide to learn how to respond. We should also know crises are part of our Creator's plan for our growth and development and we must welcome them instead of denying them or running away from them in fear.

In deference to Trotsky's famed quote, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century there were still places where people could relax and be indulgent. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century with upheavals and massive dislocations out of control we realise Trotsky was seeing very far. A good deal of our confusion and crisis of mental and spiritual bankruptcy is coming from our neurotic obsession with our unexamined dreams and ambitions, failing to respond correctly to the unstoppable changing realities.

## Discovering inner guidance of the still small voice

### Learning to Respond to Challenges of Change

Science College, Jotsoma. 23 March 2016.

I know I am in a very special place this morning where some very special young people are being nurtured for our future. We are all justly proud of the reputation of this institution, which is the priceless achievement of a group of some deeply committed teachers, Nagas and non-Nagas from various parts of India who think and care alike for quality education. I am told the secret of their effectiveness has been simply their capacity to work hard.

Every year a steady stream of students leave Science College and other colleges to become the educated Nagas whose thinking, living and performance will play the major part in deciding whether our society will go forward with hope because of them or become unmanageably destructive due to despair and cynicism.

Today we are seeing this process of some of you on your way to joining this decisive group we have to call the elite Nagas. There is a verse in scripture somewhere, which says, 'To whom much is given, much is expected.' As I am speaking to such a group to whom much has been given by God, their parents and our society, I have decided to share a few points from my own journey.

Soon after leaving Madras Christian College in 1957 I read a sentence by Leon Trotsky in Russia: 'If any one born in this century should think he has come to relax he should realise he has come in the wrong century.'

Vladimir Lenin launched the Communist Bolshevik Revolution that ended the Russian monarchy and Empire that had lasted for centuries. His revolution established the Soviet Union, which was to profoundly change the modern world. Trotsky, the brilliant Marxist theoretician, was Lenin's closest comrade. What Trotsky said shook me to my roots as a young man trying to figure out the meaning and purpose of his life. I was angry and insecure because I was interested only in my success so that I might relax and enjoy life undisturbed. I can say it started the process of discovering what I was to live for and how, or what Christianity is for me and accepting to live it out.

The truth of what Trotsky said about the century was proved by

*A Naga Speaks*

the revolutions of the right and of the left, worldwide, the First and Second World Wars, the ending of the Imperial Empires of the Western nations and the birth of new nations in Asia, Africa and elsewhere, followed by the outbreak of violence and bloodshed in the newly independent nations on a scale never seen before in history.

Today in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century we are watching on TV the unbelievable movements of refugees across the world as the results of the collapses of societies and destruction of cities and towns in the Middle East and elsewhere. And we see that Trotsky correctly read the signs of the times and the reasons.

You add to this wider global picture the upheavals that may well occur on the Indian sub-continent because of the socio-economic and political changes taking place in India and Asia, then the reality becomes more pressing. And when we realise that all these upheavals are taking place on our planet whose sensitive ecosystem is being violently damaged by Climate Change, it becomes clear that relaxation of the kind the likes of me crave for is certainly out of the question!

What I want to share on this occasion is my belief rooted in my own humble experiences that a Higher Wisdom is there and it can change and guide us, and use us to meet the needs of our immediate situations if we will allow it to do so. As I look back I believe some people I was led to, or who were led to me by God at that time helped me to discover how to respond to my crisis.

My crisis was what I was really meant to do with my life that was right for me and that would be relevant to the crisis of my people. I was not satisfied with the options I saw before me. Do I just do what everyone is doing because I am just an ordinary person and therefore of no significance in any way? My crisis was completely hellish to me.

Winston Churchill said, 'If you are going through hell, keep going!' This wisdom I found to be true. The most foolish thing to do when you are going through a hellish crisis is to say, 'To hell with all this, damn it all.' and settle down in hell with excuses and blaming of others for doing so.

We Nagas have gone through almost a century of irreversible changing, imperceptible at first but gradually building up to a fierce struggle by the middle of the century by all Nagas to assert their identity warranted by the facts of their fragile history. The result has been very rough and brutal uprooting and dislocation of the lives of people in all

villages across the Naga homeland. Many have lost their lives. I believe the Naga struggle, which has hurt just about every family, was right and it has achieved what is most important for our future growth.

And that Naga identity and nationality courageously proclaimed and sacrificially defended by all Naga tribes is a priceless reality, which is now being recognised by India and the world. We need to mind that we are not a member of the United Nations as a republic because our status is disputed by India because the British were compelled to leave their empire in South Asia without sorting it out. Membership of this elite club of nations is not the only right final definition of peoplehood and nationhood.

I want to say to you the present generation that you can justly be proud of and grateful for what your grandparents and parents have achieved for our people. We don't have the time this morning to go into this. I'll only say you need to understand you have been given a legacy of a solid foundation for you to build the future of our people on.

Having said that, the struggle, like the overground State government of Nagaland, has become too destructive to itself and the people for whom it was launched. This common destructiveness is explained by the fact that we have made mistakes, knowingly or unknowingly, but we have not taken our mistakes seriously enough. Because we have denied them, justified them or ignored them, we have rendered ourselves destructive. This is something we need to understand and learn to make our mistakes what binds us together through transparency about them.

The time has come to examine ourselves objectively. What is true for an individual life is true also for a struggle by many people. The Naga struggle needs to be examined regularly so that it responds correctly to the changing times. Bankruptcy and destructiveness is inevitable if it is not examined truthfully. This is to be expected. It does not mean the struggle is wrong. It just means we human beings impose our shortcomings onto the struggle thereby making it destructive.

We must know ourselves. We must know that we are a very young people who have just started our journey. And learn to change our wrong ways and keep growing properly.

The issue of guidance in each of us... if I ask you how many have mobile phones, I am sure we will find that all of you have one. Think of this that there is a similar listening device inside each one of us, which we are meant to use properly for its ordained purpose. The still small voice inside

coming to our conscience, heart and soul from God, our Creator.

When I first listened to what was going on inside me, the very first thought that came to me was, 'You are a very selfish man...' As I believe it was from God I consider myself an authority on the subject! We have to issue a Quit Notice to selfishness if we are to grow. It has paralysed our society completely. I decided to deal with my selfishness and the change in my life has convinced me that change is doable. I shall end with this very well known wisdom:

*Sow a thought, reap an act.*

*Sow an act, reap a habit,*

*Sow a habit, reap a character.*

*Sow a character and reap a destiny.*



## Remembering Inspiring Figures

*In times of loss we become more aware of realities of life*

50 <sup>th</sup> Death Anniversary Of T Sakhrie	598
Chairman Isak Chisi Swu	599
Ramyo Zimik	602
Khriesanisa Seyietsu	603
Kevilevor Phizo	608
Lokhrienyü Kuosa – Remembering a Remarkable Man	609
What killed Chiben Patton?	612
A young man from Kutur village	613



## 50<sup>th</sup> death anniversary of T. Sakhrie

Memorial service, after unveiling of the monument at Terhotsiese, Khonoma.  
18 November 2006.

So much of the history of our people as well as the thoughts and questions that have tormented and baffled many individuals and families for years are coming together on this historic occasion that I am most conscious of my own inadequacy to be a speaker here today. Though profoundly touched by the invitation to say something, the undeserved responsibility humbles me because, needless for me to say, to do justice to the occasion in any measure is way beyond me. However, in trying to share my thoughts, I feel supported within by the undoubted rightness and urgent meaning of the occasion, which I certainly share with all of you.

It seems yesterday and today are history's milestones to tomorrow. They reveal the roadmap God expects us to understand and follow faithfully so that we may grow properly, individually and as a society. We should remember that the same roadmap moulds all nations and civilisations.

Yesterday has already happened. All of yesterday is now unchangeable fact or data of history. The main lesson of history seems to be that tomorrow is creative or destructive depending on how we respond today to the facts of yesterday's wrongs and mistakes. History is thus made and it is made no other way. What kind of a tomorrow our children will have is the all-important issue before us.

Today on this spot, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Theyiechiithie Sakhrie's death in tragic circumstances is being memorialised. The dignity, solemnity and sincerely shared grief and regret are clearly felt by all of us. The importance and significance of our coming together and seeing one another here cannot be overestimated. But perhaps the more important meeting taking place today is the one at the level of our thoughts and feelings where God sees and knows each one of us and our relationships with one another. I believe what He is seeing is precious to Him, and He will bless the faith and trust in him with which we have come to build mutual goodwill to cherish one another.

If God is with us and seeing us down to our deepest thoughts and feelings, as I believe that is the case, then surely equally present and participating with us are all who have in one way or other been part of the

*A Naga Speaks*

story of the Naga struggle, and died in diverse ways and places. We need not doubt that what we are doing here today has their fullest approval. Indeed we can say that it is something they have longed for us to rise up to for a long time. This must be so if heaven is the sort of place we believe it is.

Today's commemoration service marks a decisive point in a process of healing that has started in Khonoma. It is also a journey from a complete and prolonged tragedy moving step by step in honest conversation towards a common vision and goal that beckon us. Looking at the distance covered led by Him all involved in the journey say gratefully, 'Ebenezer' - the Lord has helped and provided so far.

In Isaiah (55) God tells the prophet, 'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.' We understand only too well this is true. But the glory of human beings is that our souls made by Him are satisfied only by His ways and thoughts. And sooner or later human beings always fight to rise above their thoughts and ways to superior thoughts and ways and that is where we start to build His kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

We give thanks, for this occasion today represents the attempt by both sides of the tragedy to follow God's ways and thoughts as shown by Him, despite the human feelings and compulsions to follow their own ways and thoughts.

A lot of human connections and honest, costly conversations have taken place during the past few years to make possible today's commemoration. We humbly thank those who have asked for forgiveness by reaching out across the painful divides that have existed for decades, and we extend the same gratitude to those who have graciously accepted the apology and helped to restore the damaged relationship between them. We do not at all regard lightly the steps taken by all concerned to follow God's light and obey His guidance.

### **Chairman Isak Chishi Swu**

Angami Peoples' Organisation's Public Farewell, Kohima. 1 July 2016.

*The responsibility APO has given me to speak on this occasion today has touched me as much as it has challenged me. It has touched*

*A Naga Speaks*

me as I am given the opportunity to personally mourn the passing of my closest college class friend when we were setting out on our respective journeys through life. We discussed and asked intense questions. And we eventually went on to answer them with the fullest commitment of our lives. Our paths in life took us in different directions. But I was always conscious that whenever we met, the deep friendship of our college years had never dimmed. I have always valued this in Isak.

But I am challenged in even greater measure because, though I am keenly conscious of my limitations, today I am giving expression to Angami recognition of and respect for the sacrifice of a Naga leader who went all-out to proclaim and defend the political cause of our people as understood by him.

On this occasion I am conscious of what I know other tribes have felt about our tendency to value our sacrifices and contributions more than we value those of others. This seems to be almost a propensity in many of us, which others see and feel so clearly and we do not. We are beginning to recognize it. I should add that I have said this not on behalf of APO, but out of my own conviction that we need the help of others to see where we need to be different.

As Chairman Isak Swu played his political leadership role, he held on with evangelical fervour and zeal to his Christian faith, which he had inherited from his pioneering father. Many have stressed this quality in their tributes to him.

I believe it can be said to his credit that Isak Swu never let go Christ's imperishable injunction – 'To give unto Caesar what belonged to Caesar and to God what belonged to God.' In the leadership he sought to give, there can be no doubt about the place he gave to this command, from above the battlefield of politics and life. I believe it will turn out that it made a crucial difference in our crisis, and it will be remembered with gratitude as his special contribution. Nagas will pray that the legacy of his commitment to his faith will be brought to bear on the tough issues still to be resolved in the common journey ahead of all of us.

No matter what has gone wrong thus far that has fragmented us and weakened us, we have a common foundation, which is our priceless asset. And that is the struggle for our aspirations to be a people and a nation. The extremely high price paid by our national workers across the board, for the past seven decades, to defend our story and position has gifted us the struggle we have today. Let us not underestimate what the

*A Naga Speaks*

struggle from the start to today has achieved for the Naga people. It is the foundation on which the present generation will be able to build their future.

What was obviously Isak Swu's deepest concern and vision as he breathed his last has been well expressed by Chairman of Government of People's Republic of Nagaland - GPRN/NSCN Gen. Neokpao Konyak: 'Whether we are prepared to build on a legacy of peace and reconciliation strongly advocated by our leader Isak Chishi Swu, or whether we will again be tempted to pursue a tempestuous route of self-destruction in the name of freedom ... As we prepare to take this legacy forward, I hope and pray that his absence from our midst shall result in a rebirth of Naga consciousness, a sprouting of fresh thinking, a shower of unmeasured unity within our family.'

I have been announced in the programme as giving 'Solidarity Speech'. On this historic and precious moment, as we bid farewell to Chairman Isak Swu, I want to fervently call for the forging of a solidarity that will be sustainable and productive because we will decide to 'go beyond seeing only where others have hurt us, and be ready to see where we too may have provoked them to hurt us, so that forgiving and being forgiven will become possible.' This was the powerful pledge the Presidents of the different Naga tribes jointly read out at the launching of the Naga National Reconciliation Process in Kohima on 20 December 2001.

If we Nagas will be wise enough to rise to this level of truthfulness, responsibility and realism, reconciliation and unity that the departed leader repeatedly called for will be achieved as a matter of course. If we will not, we will continue to go down the road to 'self destruction in the name of freedom,' because 'Hurts not transformed are always transferred'.

Kohima was a very small town when Isak Swu came to study in the Government High School. He made lasting friendships with individuals and families here who value him and his family. There is poignancy and grief in the thought that this will be his last earthly passage through the Kohima he grew up in.

Isak, through this public occasion, Angami people of *Ara Kezievi* bid you our respectful farewell. Be assured Nagas will rise to meet the need for change that will enable Nagas as a people to win together what you yearned for.

The urgent question is which leader, party, group or tribe will show truthfulness.

***A Naga Speaks***

**Ramyo Zimik**

7 March 1999

*I*n times of loss and grief we become more aware of realities of life than at other times. This holds true for peoples and nations.

As we bid farewell to Ramyo Zimik, our sorrow turns our thoughts to where we are in our history today. Ramyo was one who gave his life, his considerable talents and his sacred honour for his deepest beliefs for his people, spurning opportunities for material success in life, which he could have easily achieved. As a revolutionary, he will want us to be realistic in facing our weakness so that we may change them.

One of the realities that must be causing deep concern in all Nagas is surely the thoughtless wounds we have inflicted on one another and which threaten to destroy us.

By our unrestrained greed, our indifference and hatred of one another, and our abject surrender to the deadening grip of fear and despair, we have all contributed to cause the festering wounds on our body politics. No one can pretend to be blameless or prefect.

Before it is too late, we must stop being too sure others are always to blame for our dangerous condition today and refuse to deal honestly and radically with the ways in which we too are equally or in some measure responsible.

Nagas are now known for their ability to pray passionately to God for what they want. We are deeply religious and we seem to think that we have a special link with Him. Who knows? Maybe it is true! But if we can begin to ask and love passionately what God may want us to do for Him, we will experience spiritual growth and liberation. We will be happier. And God will then be able to use our maturity to change and solve some of the terrible problems we face.

Wisdom and true patriotism demand that we now raise our thinking and debates from the level of *Who is Right* and *Who is Wrong* to *What is Right* for all Nagas. At the level of who's right and who's wrong, our side is usually right and the other side wrong. However, at the higher level of *What is Right*, we learn to rise together to what God wants done in our society and the world through each one of us. At God's majestic level there are no victors or victims but equal, humble partners for the highest victory for all.

***A Naga Speaks***

If we can, with God's grace, accept this growth in our thinking, we will find the unity that comes from achieving together something greater than ourselves, our clans and our tribes.

Our factional divisions, valid though they may all be to their respective group, will then become luxuries we cannot really afford for a people numerically so small. Let us face it; our suicidal divisions must end for the sake of our frustrated, long-suffering people. They long for and deserve a more inspiring present and a hope-giving future.

If we will rise to the occasion, we will redeem the high price our national workers have paid for us. Some of them are well known. Some are unsung heroes known only in their villages or region. But the sacrifice of each is sacred for nation building. And if, in compassion and understanding, we will shed tears for one another, it will become needless to shed one another's blood. For truly every Naga is important and needed to create the Nagaland for our children.

I must not fail to mention the presence especially of Manao Zimik, Ramyo's 99-year old father, the grand patriarch of a most remarkable family. He has added greater solemnity and moving power to the occasion by his presence. We mourn the passing of his son with him and express our deepest sympathies to him and his family for the great loss and pray to God to console him.



### **Khriesanisa Seyietsu**

Others much more qualified and experienced than me, because of their direct involvement in the heroic actions of the Naga struggle with Khriesanisa will be paying their tributes to him for what he did for our people at a most difficult period in our story. Khriesanisa the man and the statesman of great dignity, personal integrity, unquestionable honour and commitment will be evaluated by those who stood shoulder to shoulder with him to proclaim and defend the position Nagas had chosen. Also time is severely rationed today.

So, accepting the undeserved privilege given to me to say something today, I am going straight into what I believe is uppermost in all our minds as we sit here today. And I am sure that is the Naga struggle, the central, most powerful experience of the Naga people over the past half a century.

### ***A Naga Speaks***

It is said, 'Our hopes are seldom realised, but it is our pursuit of them that changes history' (Aristotle). Nagas have pursued their hopes, which have not been realised as they have wanted when the Naga struggle started. It brought the best out of the Nagas as they rose to a huge challenge. Today it seems to be bringing the worst out of all of us and the consequences are shocking us.

As a Naga I ask why? What has become of our struggle? And what are we to do today with it? Are we to forget it after all that we have said and done and suffered and do something else? Is that ever possible at all for a people who have struggled as we have done? These are heart-breaking questions for Nagas who have loved their struggle so passionately and paid such a heavy price for it. I am not suggesting our earlier leaders and fighters were better human beings.

We have found that if the struggle of a people is not constantly examined and its foundations are not dependable it becomes unpursuable and intolerably destructive, as ours has started to become.

I believe we should find out what has gone wrong in our struggle and why, and search for the truth together that will heal and unite us instead of cheaply and irresponsibly heap blame on one another.

I think we will get the perspective and understanding we need if we think of two parallel realities or processes in nature. I would like to suggest we compare the larger Naga story to a river and our struggle within it to a fruit tree.

A river from the beginning to the point where it flows into the sea is the same river. Here I believe is an important parallel truth for the life and story of a people, nation that we must examine and understand. It will give us the right idea and philosophy of life, which will enable us to respond to our crisis correctly.

Then let us consider the tree idea. The Naga struggle was like a sacred tree that Nagas planted many years ago. The sapling was healthy and it grew rapidly with all Nagas nurturing it, inspired by what it promised for them. The tree started to bear some fruit.

Nagas discovered that for its proper growth, the tree required patience, very high quality mutual goodwill, trust and cooperation among its owners and the gardeners. It was also very sensitive to the quality of the water and nutrients given for its growth.

The tree we expected so much from started to produce unhealthy

poisonous fruits when the owners (the people) became too busy with their own lives and paid little attention elsewhere, the gardeners (the national workers) started to fight over who should be in charge of the tree! They get so obsessed in the fight that the tree is sick and dying. What kind of water and nutrients they are using to feed the Naga tree is another question for which we have no time to go into?

One very important lesson from the river imagery is that global changes way beyond our control are shaping us which we are compelled to respond to resulting in changes in our plans which we cannot prevent. We are a part of a world where all mankind are required to accept changes for all to survive and progress together. Of course most of the time it is the smaller, weaker ones who pay the highest price for adjustment. This is a very difficult reality.

The lessons for us from the fruit tree are:

1. The fruit tree requires proper care and feeding with the right kind of water and nutrients.
2. If the tree is not healthy the quality of the fruit cannot be good.
3. We the Nagas have to understand that in our struggle for our political aspirations, we have been more interested in the fruits we want to enjoy than in nurturing, caring for the health of the fruit tree making the garden a pleasant place. If and when we know our own sovereignty, will Nagas run it differently than we running the state today? This is something, not just the leaders but all of us the ordinary citizens have to ask ourselves truthfully.

If we consider the lessons from the river and the fruit tree, there is really no need to blame and antagonise one another and dividing ourselves into meaningless fragments.

Down the years, all our leaders of all factions and parties have contributed to damaging the Naga fruit tree, although all have blamed others for the poor health and performance of the tree. And in the name of protecting the tree and its future fruits, some factions have even forced our people to pay all kinds of taxes. We are told some of them have built palatial residences and bought cars, which they would not be able to afford if they had not misused the money collected arbitrarily. Whether they have paid for their building materials or their cars is not really known for sure. Are we then surprised tree is sick and dying un-nurtured?

I believe the truth is all Nagas except for three or four leaders

***A Naga Speaks***



who decisively acted to create the state of Nagaland passionately loved everything the NNC proclaimed and fought for. But over the years we have seen the Naga river uncontrollably getting changed in size, volume and its content with the passage of time and world developments. Both factors are completely out of our hands.

Let us look at the most difficult issue, namely, sovereignty. I, like all of you I am sure, love sovereignty. It is our right, which we can defend legally, historically and politically. But what has it done to us? I am not saying we should throw away sovereignty. Who am I to say it? But I am saying we should not let our fears for it destroy us.

The problem started quite early in the Naga story.

When what became called the 'cooperation' option came up first as an interim option/ possibility in order to give ourselves some room to breathe. Those associated with the proposal were condemned outright resulting in tragic loss of lives and the beginning of our fatal divisions. We could not discuss sovereignty. It was understandable at that time. But all the same that was the issue.

Then the move to create the state came which resulted in the state of Nagaland, decisively helped by central intelligence, as records show. Sovereignty was the issue. Except for a very few, all who opted for the state, were lovers of sovereignty. Looking back today it is becoming clear, that if those who opted for the state had restrained themselves and practiced self-limitation, they would not have caused the vengeful hatred and bitterness in their people because their position was fully legitimate for consideration.

Then the first ceasefire, the Revolutionary Government, the Shillong Accord, all the way down to today. Sovereignty has always been the issue.

There is no time to go into more details here. I shall only venture to say as an ordinary Naga citizen that Phizo's family to openly condemn the Shillong Accord and to reply to the three letters from Isak, Muivah and Khaplang, as it has been stated, were tragic errors. One reason obviously was he found it too difficult at that time to call for an objective discussion on sovereignty with his colleagues and comrades. I can fully understand the extreme difficulty he faced with the state Government all-out to obey Delhi to demolish him and his comrades and the movement they had created for their people.

I fully understand the frustration, distrust and bitterness his silence caused in many of his colleagues and other Nagas. It has proved

to be very costly. But I do not believe he wanted to betray Sovereignty to gain something for himself. I do not in my heart doubt his integrity on that score. I only share his pain with him. If the FGN will simply acknowledge this plain failure it may open the way for others also to accept their own failures.

Today NSCN (IM) seems to be negotiating for something that is not Sovereignty after they had eliminated many opponents accusing them of selling out Sovereignty, claiming that they alone were the patriots who will bring it. The vast majority of Nagas are clearly indicating today that if they and the other factions can sit down and honestly work out a settlement the people will support it, provided it is honourable for Nagas and that will not betray the sacrifice of the many who have died for it. That Nagas can get India to agree to such a settlement seems clear.

Only the failure of our leaders to frankly work out a common consensus is what is holding up progress in that direction. Why they do not want to do is understandable but Nagas are most concerned that due to their division caused by accumulated hurts over the years whatever Nagas have achieved may be lost.

As for the NSCN (K) and FGN, they are ceaselessly attacking NSCN (IM) for going for something less than Sovereignty. But Nagas do not seriously believe that they can achieve their sovereignty on their own. The urgent need right now is therefore for our Naga leaders to come together with God's grace and for the sake of their people to start to listen to one another, fully knowing that no one is completely blameless and no group can bring about a settlement without the trust and support of others and the Naga people.

I shall now end first by quoting something that the German Christian martyr, Bonhoeffer who was killed by Hitler for his stand said, 'Refusal to listen to each other is the beginning of spiritual death, perhaps even physical death too... He who no longer listens to his brother and sister will soon no longer listen to God either.'

The second, 'Hopes and dreams are necessary tools to the survival instinct. With the acceptance of new truths, hopes and dreams become subject to rewriting according to the needs of the new reality.'



*A Naga Speaks*

## Kevilevor Phizo

Kohima 28 April 2013

*Death is the strongest proof of life. Death is not a full stop, it is only a comma.*

Our attempt to understand life and death makes it clear that life is the greater, more important part of our Creator's plan for us human beings His creatures because it is when we are alive that He walks and talks with us to change, heal and guide us for His purposes on earth. Death is not suggested to be unimportant. But when our life ends in death, God takes over completely. Jesus clarified this point about life and death when He said on the cross, 'It is finished. Oh Lord, into your hands I commend my spirit!' – his last words.

He takes care of our spirit for us after we die. In a time like this, we look back at life. Despite differences in life, one fact respected by all about Kevilevor, is that he accepted fully the responsibility his life and our history entrusted to him. He lived and toiled to fulfil it, doing nothing else for himself.

We, his loved ones and those close to him, are deeply moved and humbled by the outpouring of understanding, solidarity and compassion all of you gathered here from near and far have shown to welcome our much-loved family member back to his home and the people he loved with all his heart, but could not return to during his lifetime. The same generosity of spirit was equally evident in the public welcome given at the Dimapur Airport yesterday. As we bid a warm, generous farewell to Kevilevor here today, I recall with solemn gratitude and affection all the other Nagas, leaders and very ordinary citizens across the Naga homeland who have sacrificed so much for the aspirations of our people.

I have been given the privilege to give the vote of thanks. It is a difficult and humbling task because when so much has been done and given so generously, selflessly and lovingly by so many, how can one say anything to match the giving? Time will not permit me to cite all I should thank. I shall however mention the people of Kohima Village who, as usual, on such occasions, have carried and done so much, the different Naga Tribal Hohos here and in Dimapur who rallied together to help and the different churches of all denominations of Kohima who provided vigil here right through the night.

For the rest, you will understand if I single out the Convenor of the

*A Naga Speaks*

Funeral Committee, Mr Sovenyi Nyekha and the Members of the Committee to express heartfelt thanks and appreciation for all they did themselves. They also enlisted countless others to make this farewell to Kevilevor such an inclusive and encouraging event. I believe it has done more than we understand right now.

I believe the spirit of God generating goodwill and trust has been at work in all who have made this public occasion possible, here among our leaders and others in Nagaland, in New Delhi and in London.

In closing, I feel I must mention the heavy downpour of rain that fell on Kohima, just as the long convoy of mourners-on-wheels bringing Kevilevor, approached his home city. The deluge that had seemed menacing amazingly stopped and the sun reappeared on a washed and refreshed Kohima and garlanded her with a rainbow that will not be soon forgotten. Was this extraordinarily beautiful gift of the rainbow just a display of nature?

Or is it a promise of hope for the future at this time when we are overwhelmed by our difficulties that all of us are aware of? I ask this in all humility. Could it be that the God of history of which ours is a small part, is in His own way speaking to us that a moment has come when we must with complete openness reach out to one another for His wisdom to guide us and take us forward.

He has done his part to open human hearts. If we will do our part by inspiring one another to acknowledge that we have all made mistakes in our attempt to do the most difficult thing in life – to forge and build our people into a nation. Almighty God will do what we cannot do and take us forward. Nothing is beyond Him. God grant that we do not fail to understand what He is trying to communicate to us.

### **Lokhrienyü Kuosa – Remembering a remarkable man**

*B*orn in Sechü village in 1954, Lokhrienyü 'Khrienyü' passed away most unexpectedly on last Tuesday, May the 14th. Listening to the tributes paid to him by a cross-section of colleagues, friends, relations and others, at his funeral held at Sechü-Zubza Village Council Hall, I said to myself, 'Our town and our Western Angami community has lost a very important person when we are needing him so much.' Then I realised I had intuitively

*A Naga Speaks*

described him as a VIP!

If a VIP means only the external things of pelf, power and pomp we have come to associate with the three-letter abbreviation, then our Khrienyü was not a VIP. It can safely be said it certainly never ever crossed his mind. He thought of himself as merely a VOC, a very ordinary chap, and humbly proud and thankful to be one of the category of whom Abraham Lincoln once observed, 'God must love the common people. He made so many of them.'

But if practising what you know to be right is important and worthy of emulation, and if your life generates hope, friendship and goodwill in your community because the integrity demonstrated is known to be genuine, then Khrienyü was indeed a VIP.

I had the privilege of getting to know him only very recently. Soon after my family moved into our new home in Sechü-Zubza, Khrienyü came to call on us. Introducing himself and warmly welcoming us to the community he said, 'I am a teacher in the Government High School just above your house. I am happy you have also come here to this beautiful place of ours we love. I believe if we do things rightly and we are ready to work hard and desire the best for one another we will build a happy, healthy town here for our children to grow up in. That is what I want to help to build with God's help.' Something in his kind, clear, purposeful eyes and thoughtful words spoke to me, and my wife. We found we had sensed the same thing from his brief courtesy call. A man who knew what he was living for and loving it and enlisting others.

From conversations later in our home or whenever we called at his home we discovered his passion was learning to use one's basic resources especially of time, energy, land and other inherited assets, to become productive, self-reliant, self-respecting persons. Most who spoke at the funeral mentioned his blunt forthrightness matched by lack of malice and ill will, and love of work rooted in a clear awareness of what will happen to our society if Nagas will take the present availability of easy money for granted and live casually and foolishly. He often told people: 'There is no shame in manual work of any kind. We should dig and sweat to feed ourselves. But it is disgraceful and shameless to ask or demand from others to give what they have earned from their toiling.'

Our Pastor recalled how Khrienyü once asked a young friend he was trying to help to calculate how many bricks he would be able to buy to build their home if he were to save instead of chewing betel. 'You are

*A Naga Speaks*

actually chewing expensive bricks!' he was told. One imaginative innovation for the all-round development of his family was family fellowship and worship being held early in the morning instead of at night. This scheme got the family united.

As I returned home from the funeral and the beautiful site on his much loved farmstead he and his family had started to develop I regretted I came to know too late he had been unwell. The pain was from my own failure as a friend. But the inspiration I received from the funeral service has stayed with me as a deep reaffirmation. 'It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness.' This Chinese adage explains the affirmation. There was always something like candle lighting up Khrienyu's face because he was afire with ideas, which he was implementing.

I have no doubt that it was for fighting souls like Khrienyu that the following song was written by a Christian group in England during World War II which they sang to express their solidarity with their fallen comrades.

*In proud recollection, with humble affection,  
We name these our brothers who have battled by our side;  
To give was their spirit, that all may inherit,  
The life and the faith for which they fought and died.*

*No cold earth contains them  
No sky can retain them;  
Who free as the morning shed a light for others' feet;  
In life God who guided, has richly provided,  
And rich in their dying they showed death's defeat.  
Their death and their giving,  
Are tests of our living,  
Like trumpets they summon us to shake off every fear;  
Their courage beside us, the same God to guide us;  
We fight for the kingdom that they held so dear.*

**A Naga Speaks**

## What killed Chiben Patton?

Reflections of an aggrieved Naga father

From all accounts Chiben was a promising young man of the type our society cannot afford to lose so easily. Yet we have lost him. He had thought out how he would use his life to help build a better future. He accepted as normal paying the steady price of selflessness and discipline that his chosen purpose of life required of him. From the moving tributes of his peers, his Principal and his loved ones, the portrait that emerges is of one who tried to walk his talk because he cared deeply, and not just talked fine things.

What is it that God is trying to tell us from this tragedy that has stirred and outraged all of us?

Who killed him is of course the first question. It is vitally important that this is known so that the ends of justice are met. This is essential for the healing of the grievous wound to his family and for the health of his family and for the health of our society. His family's Christ-like offer of forgiveness is both commendable and a much needed clarification. But this does not cancel out the issue of justice, as Khyomo Lotha most helpfully and firmly stated in his funeral oration on behalf of his tribe's Hoho.

The equally important question is what killed Chiben? This is where we the living, if we really care, can do something to redeem the loss his dying represents.

Chiben's life was callously and brutally snuffed out because his killers wanted his van. As simple as that. His death forces us, or it should, to get so angry that we shout '*Enough, and No More!*' to the very high price our society has paid for making normal, or even fashionable, the use of dishonest and dirty methods to satisfy our greed and ambition at the expense of others.

To enrich and advance ourselves instantly, we get used to killing our own conscience, and the rights, happiness, chances, hopes and shares that are due to others also. In no time killing their bodies to get what we want does not bother us any longer. This is how corruption creates the permissive condition in which violence is born. Both are the wild children of the lie that says, 'I can use any method and means to get what I want.'

The very top names in the land associated with the scandals in Delhi have always gone free because they are fully protected by the Z

*A Naga Speaks*

category Black Cats of position and inherited privileges. They are above the laws of the land they insist on ruling in feudal style. The shame-less lootings with impunity that have gone on in the protected political and bureaucratic offices in Kohima have produced too many obscene examples of instant affluence without exertion. Is there no connection between the powerful role models exhibited in Delhi and Kohima and the philosophy of life that has grown at the grassroots that killed Chiben the other day?

And have not the prolonged abuses of power and position in offices produced the ultimate monster of corruption – the *Tyrannosaurus Rex* of Extortion? All of us who adopt questionable methods to solve our problems, have we not helped to genetically engineer this terrible dinosaur now breeding fast and creating havoc in our Naga *Jurassic Park*? Is extortion not simply a more daring, less sophisticated form of corruption?

Evil starts when I choose to do what I know is wrong. It becomes processed, active evil when I justify my choice. Because I do not allow myself, others, or God to deal with it, soul surgery is impossible. The evil I have thus nurtured becomes my deadly contribution to my society.

Indisputably a core of evil, like a malignant tumour, has formed at the heart of our society. Diverse varieties of cancerous growths are breaking out in all areas of our society spreading from this primary malignancy.

Let us remember, evil is indivisible as it is a condition rooted in morality and ethics like goodness, peace and war. It is indivisible in the sense that when I allow evil to win in my life, it inevitably strengthens evil in others and in society. Goodness too is indivisible in the same way. This is why Solzhenitsyn said that whatever the cost our stand must be, we must not allow the lie to come into society through us.

If we will rise to this challenge and stop our compromises, Chiben will have helped to give us a moral and spiritual legacy and we will be able to say he has not died in vain. This is the ultimate message from the wretched murder on September 14.



## A young man from Kutur Village

*Nagaland Post 13 March 2000*

**W**e have shot another of our young men. Are they so cheap? Expendable fodder for competing factions? Or callously brutalised so that they will do deeds for agendas that should not exact such sacrifices from our youth?

James Yimchunger, as reported, was executed with his eyes blindfolded, and his hands tied behind. At a lonely spot below Kohima's Leprosy Colony, unseen and unmourned, another Naga was exterminated by another Naga.

Is this the way to become a people and a nation? If God wants us to struggle to become a people, we have to find from Him how we are to do it. We cannot survive the thinking and way of struggling we have followed.

This Yimchunger lad came from his remote village in Tuensang District to play his part with fellow Nagas to help build a better future for our people. I do not know him, or precisely why he had to die so miserably. But I know only a handful from his tribe are in Kohima and Dimapur. What did James think of Kohima and us the so-called 'advanced' tribes? It is so difficult to imagine his last thought as he sank to the dust soaked with his blood. What happens to a family whose members cannot or will not stop destroying themselves? The issue at stake is the survival of our young Naga family.

Who actually killed James is not known. As we mourn for him with his family and people, we feel utterly inadequate and 'poor in spirit' because we realise something more complicated than bullets is killing the likes of James and our society. As we think of the killer, (how can we not?), our poverty of spirit is felt more deeply. For we have to admit that our common bankruptcy of mind, heart and spirit has played the major part in the rise of so many of the gunmen of our society.

Will we in our extremity decide to answer this all-important crisis of bankruptcy? Do we doubt that this indeed is where the real Naga struggle is now and to ignore it is to invite disaster by failing to shift with the new paradigms? This holds true for the State also. In fact what we have made of the State proved that if a people's priorities are inadequate their politics and economies are futile ventures.

Yet, if we are truly poor in spirit and obedient, God will find the opening He needs to come in and we will not labour in vain.

***A Naga Speaks***

## To the Editor...

*....it becomes impossible even for God to break through*

Who Stole My Food?	616
Is It The Cuckoo's Farewell Song?	617
Turmoil In Tibet	618
Freud And Jung	620
On The June 8 Peace Rallies	621
Will History Repeat Itself?	622
Inspiring Leaders Need Of The Hour	625
Some Light On Rev Michael Scott	626

## Who stole my food?

**A**propos the article 'Who Stole My Food?' by Patricia Mukhim in *The Shillong Times* of May 5 strongly suggests again that hell is not really a far away place in some next world. We help to build it by the way we think and treat one another according to a do-it-yourself formula that never fails to work! If this assertion is true then hell building is a passion that's flourishing out of control right here on earth.

Didn't Christ say the kingdom of God on earth starts the moment we give our best, instead of our worst to one another; bread instead of stone, fish instead of snake; and that hell on earth too starts when we do the opposite?

The article was about the on-going horrendous abuses of the Public Distribution System and other schemes wherein the special assistance provided by Delhi to lessen the suffering of those below poverty line (BPL) and those not too far above the line is shamelessly diverted by those who are way above the line.

Obviously Patricia cannot be the pin-up girl of those who see in her forthright, no-holds-barred articles uncomfortable descriptions of their own ruthless ways of achieving instant gratification at the expense of others. More likely she is regarded as one of the unyielding proverbial 'ants in the pants of the nation'? Strictly maintaining her professional integrity she risks saying it in a manner that leaves no room for doubt as she fights not just for the rights of the exploited but also for the souls of the exploiters so that effective and fair governance may become a reality.

To evaluate the likes of her correctly for the rare assets they are for building a just and caring society, consider this: 'Civilisation has produced one idea more powerful than any other and that is the notion that people can govern themselves. And it created a theory of information called journalism to sustain that idea. The two rise and fall together' (Bill Kovach, Chairman of the Committee of Concerned Journalists in the United States of America).

Recently, CNN did a programme on what happened in Rwanda a decade ago when within a hundred days over 800,000 people, mostly Tutsis, were brutally murdered by the majority Hutus. The UN failed miserably because it just did not give clearance and support for its peacekeepers to act. A woman who lost all her family and saw the killings

*A Naga Speaks*

told an interviewer, 'God was not there.' She said they cried to God in utter helplessness but he did not answer.

Remember the survivors of Hitler's holocaust who said the same thing? Then we have 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani', the very last words Christ uttered on the Cross, 'My God, My God, why have you abandoned me?' according to Matthew's gospel.

We have something here that must not be treated casually. Does God stay away from some situations that are too dangerous or complicated? Or our cooperation with Satan becomes so total and established that God sees the only way we will get the needed conviction of sin (old fashioned?) is by realising afterward the enormity of the cost of our wickedness on others? Or in some situations does it become impossible even for God to break through? Is God the one who fails?

Is it possible that for countless millions and their children struggling desperately Below Poverty Line, what the Rwandan woman felt and said is what they frequently feel and mutter but we do not hear because we are too obsessed with all the things we want?

As for Christ's last words are they not the measure of how far God had to go to answer evil and give us Easter? Is not the meaning of Easter going far enough?

Good governance is the exciting challenge and opportunity because it will create a society that works. Its economic viability was clearly stated by Gandhiji: 'There is enough in the world for everyone's need, but not for everyone's greed. If we care enough and share enough everyone will have enough.'

### **Is it the cuckoo's farewell song?**

*Nagaland Post. 13 April 2007*

**'The Strange Visitor'** (*Nagaland Post* 10 April 2007) by Thepfulhouvi Angami (Avi) about the visit of a wondering cuckoo to Toulazhu woods on the edge of Kohima village has done an immeasurable amount of good to me.

How appropriate that it happened on Good Friday! The description of the bird's call at dawn that day took me back to Wordsworth's

***A Naga Speaks***

memorable lines on his own tryst with an English cuckoo some 150 years ago. Perhaps 'The strange visitor just called to say I love you.' Avi deserves our thanks for his labour of love for the good of all of us.

Could it be that the endangered bird came to stab awake our conscience and imagination so that we may not say goodbye to our capacity to think and feel and realise that there is more to 'our wonderful world' than instant gratification by things that never satisfy? Perhaps knowing from the inherited terrorising experiences of its own species the extreme dangers of coming near to Nagas armed with airguns, rifles and shotguns, the cuckoo wisely chose to land on our Naga naturalist's safe wood to fulfil its perilous mission of warnings, and appealing for wisdom, compassion and pity that animals expect from human beings?

What does it profit a Naga if with money from Delhi he can buy lethal weapons to shoot all the birds and animals to satisfy his gluttony and vanity yet will come to hate himself for destroying the beauty and mystery of our planet, our common sanctuary?

From 'the tale of visionary hours' which Avi obviously also experienced as Wordsworth did that sunny English day, the outraged naturalist effectively brought us face to face with what happened recently when a certain most honourable Naga Minister used his own Weapon of Mass Destruction to give the hapless fishes of the majestic Doyang river a nightmare equalling those of Nagasaki and Hiroshima.

Are we so thoughtless, self-centred and pleased with ourselves that we will not heed what our vanishing birds and animals, our plants, trees, streams and wetlands are silently telling us? The magic of Wordsworth's Cuckoo transformed the earth 'into a fairy place that is fit for thee'. Alas, our depredations are rendering our Nagaland into something that is destroying our peace of mind and security.

It seems 'the planet's most ferocious animal' is always the most stupid also if he will not think beyond what he wants for himself?

### **Turmoil in Tibet**

*The Shillong Times. 23 March 2008*

Your March 18th editorial 'Turmoil in Tibet' said, 'India will

***A Naga Speaks***

do well to wait and watch.' Yes, what else, the possibilities are so perilous? India's position is not envied by anyone. One doesn't know how it could be said differently, but permit me to say, a newspaper in North East India so close to the epicentres of turmoil tearing Tibet and Burma apart has to say something more at this time for the sake of all concerned.

The writer also said 'Outside forces may be at work'. Yes, most likely. All crisis situations attract outside forces to themselves like magnets do to iron filings. Remember what India too did in East Pakistan to help it to become Bangladesh, and later in helping LTTE to emerge from the training camps along the Tamil Nadu coast to become what it is today. The rest is unanticipated painful history, the wounds ignored and the lessons unexamined.

As for the suggestion that Tibetans are incapable of feeling, thinking and acting for themselves and so others from outside must have instigated them to protest so courageously as they have done, it is unfortunate. It must be insulting to them as the Tibetans are acting after years of coping with humiliation. It trivialises what the Tibetan diaspora has gone through.

The world marvels at the Dalai Lama and Aung San Suu Kyi, incorruptible inheritors of Gautama Buddha's spiritual legacy and the most loved and trusted Gandhians today. Like candles in the darkness they burn, defiantly, refusing to adopt wrong methods and means to achieve their peoples' goals because they know no one wins if wrong methods are used to solve problems.

'What is wrong is wrong even if everyone is doing it. What is right is right even if no one is doing it', seems to express their credo. His Holiness and Mme Suu Kyi, our great neighbours by the way, are the latest examples of what the best in India's spiritual software has helped to produce in recent history, Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu, Vaclav Havel of the Czechs, Solzhenitsyn and Sakharov of the USSR, to name the main ones.

Options for action by India and China are severely limited given the regional and global equations. Could it be that the extremity of the crisis is going to result in opinion and policy shapers of India and China reaching out boldly and imaginatively to one another to begin to collaborate on what is happening to Asia's time-tested values of soul and conscience? Both have much to contribute to such a joint search as the subject has exercised both civilisations for centuries, if that is the way to put it.

There is no doubt that deep concern arising from human soul and conscience is growing in India, China, and all across Asia today over trans-border issues of security, justice, human dignity, peace and development. If Track-2, unofficial dialogues and honest conversations are attempted or pursued better over the issues causing common worry and unhappiness, unexpected connections and solutions may be found. Joint explorations may produce more than we think!

If the ancient teaching to do one's duty and leave the result in God's hands is still true, the *satyagraha* that Aung San Suu Kyi and the Dalai Lama have persisted in with such purity and integrity must be leading us to fresh ways of helping one another that is inspired, right and good for all. The only workable future lies in evolving such a vision together and fighting for it.



### Freud and Jung

*North East Herald, Kohima. 3 April 2002*

Allow me to comment on your second editorial – ‘A Freudian Problem?’ on March 22<sup>nd</sup>. You mentioned a conversation between Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. When Freud said whenever he slept in hotels he dreamt of prostitutes. Jung asked why he did not do something about it. Freud was thoroughly shocked and said he was a married man. If the conversation ended there the clear impression is that Jung's advice to Freud to deal with his neurotic problem revealed by the dream was to go straight to a prostitute every time he dreamt of one. But was this what Jung meant?

Didn't the conversation go further? Or has your writer taken liberties to entertain us? We know Jung was relentless in his attempt to get to the hell-like bottom of neurosis, the source of so many of the problems psychoanalysts have to deal with. So wasn't it much likely that what Jung meant was that Freud should go deep enough to the bottom of his neurosis to dissolve it?

Telling a man to go to a prostitute every time he dreams or thinks of one is like telling an addict to go to alcohol or the drug of his choice every time he thinks of them. Jung taught that sacrificial obedience to reality, or doing what needed to be done, was to find liberation from neurosis. He said, ‘Neurosis is always a substitute for legitimate suffering.’

*A Naga Speaks*

Would this man who cared so deeply to find a cure to neurosis have told Freud, his mentor and colleague, to continue in his neurotic condition thereby violating one of his own key contributions to psychoanalysis and psychiatry?

Jung's prescription of accepting legitimate suffering to cure neurosis was the same as taking up one's Cross - and carrying it joyfully and faithfully - to be liberated from destructive habits and control of evil.

We were told Jung's teaching marked the beginning of science turning to spiritual dimension for healing and liberation of the human mind and spirit. Jung was too serious a scientist on the subject of neurosis to be casual or facetious about it.

I am not being self-righteous towards prostitutes. What heart-breaking questions must go through them all the time? We men must deal with our purposelessness and meaninglessness so that we don't treat prostitutes as lifeless objects like drugs or alcohol - substitutes for legitimate suffering. By doing so we add to the dehumanisation of our society, starting with ourselves and the prostitutes we exploit.

Have I misunderstood your writer?

### **On the June 8 Peace Rallies**

*Nagaland Post, Dimapur.*

*P*ace rallies will be held in all cities and towns of the seven states of the North East on June 8 as decided by the Chief Ministers on May 12.

The easiest and cheapest thing to do is to be cynical and negative. But that will only increase our sterility and barrenness of spirit and imagination. That is precisely what we do not need at the moment. The call represents the collective voice of our leaders to their people to building peace. Peace and stability are so desperately needed now any attempts for it must be valued and nurtured. The call must be appreciated for what it is and fully co-operated with.

But if the rallies are not to weaken but strengthen the cause of peace, we must honestly face the questions and reactions that have been stirred in us by the decision to hold the rallies.

The rallies can contribute greatly towards building peace if we will

*A Naga Speaks*



use them to collectively accept the truth that we all shout for peace but our thinking and living are often such that peace is impossible, only a pipe dream and a slogan. We smugly talk of 'Give peace a Chance!', complacently ignoring the reality that unless we first give God his chance to win over our self-seeking agendas and motives and the way we do things at home, in our offices overground, and *Oking* hideouts underground, to expect peace to come is like expecting snowballs in hell, as I think Americans would say!

The rallies are ideal opportunities to clarify together the fundamental connections between our private lives and public peace. Then all who genuinely care for peace to win can go to start to build, as their homework, the infrastructure of peace in our society.

The homework can be to honestly write down the things in my life and work I am not happy about because they have caused bitterness, despair and desire for revenge and retaliation in others, within and outside my family. Our children do their school homework this way – by serious concentration and writing down the result.

Our homework for peace too should be equally serious and practical.

### Will history repeat itself?

*T*he announcement about the new Nagaland House coming up in Calcutta must surely make all who have been to the one in Delhi ask the same question. Will the fraud of the Delhi House be repeated on the people of Nagaland in the new multi-storey structure that is about to be built in Calcutta on Shakespeare Sarani? Will history repeat itself?

Entering the building from Aurangzeb Road, the Delhi Nagaland House does not fail to impress you. The white marble steps and the black marble plaque on the building were to be expected in a prestigious residential area in the capital. But once past the entrance the pretence at quality is over. And the feeling of shoddiness about the workmanship and the sub-standard material used elsewhere, is depressing. If you get the chance, go to the bathrooms and examine the walls, the window, the door and other fittings. You will realise the fraud is crude and insulting.

Whoever managed to deceive the Nagas to such an extent and got away with it had luck on their side and clearly substantial official collusion

*A Naga Speaks*

as well. But let us not have a repeat performance of such cynical contempt of a people in the Nagaland House in Calcutta.

Nagas have often smugly and even fatuously boasted that theirs is a Christian State. One can only exclaim with Robert Burns, 'Ah that some Power would give us the gift to see ourselves as others see us!'

Anyway, having had the thickness of skin to make the boast, let our Ministers, officials and engineers involved in the project see it, on our behalf, as a rare opportunity to show to ourselves and the 'non-believers' what Christ-like incorruptibility can do in administration. At the least, the non-Christian contractors, suppliers, engineers and architects will be challenged to practice their own faiths, as they should. They are bound to become interested in Christ because of His followers! As for the non-Nagas involved in the project, is it too much to expect them to see the enterprise as a precious opportunity to show the Nagas what the 'mainstream' people of India can give and do?

What is needed is a clear perception of the chaos ahead together with a vision of what God can still do to avert it if men are obedient. Instead of being a monument to the greed of a few and the dismay of the rest, Nagaland House in Calcutta could be an inspiration for generations to come. It won't cost more.

It is pertinent to pose a question here concerning all our State-constructed public buildings. *Katcha*, skullduggery, greed and callous indifference, are the words that spring to mind rather than engineering competence and architectural beauty when we look at our *shorkari* buildings. What are we getting in return from all the lakhs spent for scholarships? In the name of development the PWD has littered the State with contract-built bungalows, offices and school buildings that have been put up without reference to such basic mathematical concepts as right angles, straight lines and symmetry. Give us buildings that give enough evidence that we are beginning to apply our education.

What is possible and must be attempted for the sake of our own souls and self-respect is to somehow 'launder' the money, as the Americans say. Wash or sterilise it. This we can do by a general adoption of a few measures:

- a. All State employees, from the Ministers down to the *chowkidars*, giving a full day's work for a full day's wage.
- b. A voluntary, blanket rejection of bribery or easy money of any kind by

*A Naga Speaks*

all of us - officials and non-officials.

- c. Total refusal by contractors and suppliers to use or supply sub-standard materials for Government projects, hospitals and schools.
- d. Decision by Ministers and high officials not to receive cuts and shares from dishonest deals made by businessmen in Dimapur, Jorhat, Guwahati, Calcutta, Delhi or even Kohima.
- e. Every Naga learning to work hard with discipline and a sense of purpose. It could be to create a people who will be able to preserve their identity and help others to do likewise because of their incorruptibility and breadth of vision.

Many may not care enough to give these suggestions even a thought. But there may be some who will, and they can make the difference. Remember the instance in the Old Testament where God was willing to give very special concessions in the number of straight men required to enable a city to save itself? 'A kind of tribal concession can come into play'.

After this first step it will become clear and simple how to put things right in a manner that will lead to 'the peace that passeth all understanding'. This idea of individuals doing their homework is wonderfully like weaving. Each one of us is meant to weave our lives faithfully according to the clear corrections and directions of our Creator, the Master Weaver. The finished product shows design, colour and attractiveness like our beautiful Naga shawls. So can be your and my contribution to the peace and growth we all want for our people!

If 50 individuals in the state, Nagas and non-Nagas, will be adventurous and responsible enough to go this far, the rallies will have started a reformation. If the 50 were to include some Ministers, Kilonisers, MLAs, Tatars, civil servants of the state and of the Naga struggle, VDB and Village Council members, students union and other union leaders, contractors, addicts, religious leaders, etc... Nagaland will be shaken by the tremors of a revolution! Of course, our society's hunger for peace and integrity is so great now it may be much more than 50!

Why shouldn't Nagaland pioneer such a change through this rally? Is anything less worthwhile?

Peace is not just a beautiful idea, which is given to us from somewhere because we shout for it. It means people becoming radically different in their thinking and living. The arithmetic of peace and development is clear and simple. My life and yours are addition and

*A Naga Speaks*

multiplication or subtraction and division for peace and development.

Diversion of funds or corruption inside offices, which for many justifies extortion outside and the daily killing all share a moral and ethical connectedness that is squeezing our society to death. The arithmetic of ethics and character stated above decides our liberation or slavery.

### **Inspiring leaders - Need of the hour**

*The Shillong Times 27 December 2007*

**A**propos the write-up by Toki Blah 'Nongthawain vs. Nongmihkhmat: the issue for 2008 elections' (ST, Dec 19), the author with his usual elegance and forthrightness has outlined what the elections must produce for the next five years in terms of leadership calibre and governance if the dire needs on all fronts are to be met, especially of the neglected poor. 'The Assembly must legislate.

We are talking about the life and death of our children and the future generations', he declares, revealing the compassion and sense of urgency that obviously drive him and his colleagues in the newly-created Society for Informed Conscious and Responsible Existence (I CARE) of which he is the first president.

I am inspired by what I have come to know of I Care. The name deliberately spells out the crucial qualities of mind and character the Society's members must demonstrate in their lives to be effective voices for change. I am determined to do something to get a similar group come into being in Nagaland also. Our shortcomings in Nagaland are more severe than what Mr Blah has pointed out in Meghalaya.

We need to learn to rectify them by people who care and whose life will inspire trust and hope, to start with. Only a very few become MLAs and that's how it should be. But we could do with many more people than we have who, will stir up discussions and create effective public opinion on issues, thereby compelling the legislators also to be informed, conscious and responsible enough to act rightly.

## Some light on Rev Michael Scott

*The Shillong Times* 20 August 1998

Your editorial 'A Religious War' (*ST*, Aug. 13) on the Hindutva, the Christians and Christian missionaries, is helpful. But the reference to 'the controversial role of the Reverend Michael Scott in Nagaland' conveys an impression that is popular but is incorrect and misleading. It is blatantly unfair to the missionaries in general.

Michael Scott was a formidable voice against apartheid in South Africa. It was through his involvement in the global campaign against the racist Pretoria regime of the day that he became a comrade of Pandit Nehru and his UN ambassador Krishna Menon.

A nephew of A Z Phizo teaching at a medical school in Chicago read a strong speech by Scott to a UN audience in New York attacking white rule in South Africa. I myself read the speech as a copy of it was sent to me also. The Professor wrote to Scott congratulating him and appealing to him to take up the case of the Nagas also. Thus the link between the Nagas and Scott started. Scott and fellow liberal activists helped Phizo to come to London.

When the Nagaland Peace Mission was formed to prepare for the first ceasefire between Delhi and the Nagas in the early 60s, Nagas asked Scott to be a member of it with B P Chaliha and Jayaprakash Narayan.

Scott immediately responded. On reaching Calcutta he phoned Nehru in Delhi and informed him he was on his way to Kohima to join the Peace Mission at the invitation of the Nagas. Nehru obviously could not tell Scott not to enter Nagaland. The Anglican human rights warhorse would have asked why not. Scott was eventually ordered by Delhi to get out of Nagaland as he started to raise questions that Delhi couldn't countenance. One of Nehru's South African chickens had come home to roost in Nagaland.

The points to be clarified:

- (a) Scott was a liberation theology political activist, not a missionary of the Gospel;
- (b) The Church did not invite Scott to Nagaland; and
- (c) Scott was able to enter Nagaland only because of his close association with Nehru and Krishna Menon. No ordinary missionary would

*A Naga Speaks*

have been allowed to get anywhere near Nagaland at the time. The last foreign missionary left Nagaland in 1954.

Scott was able to come in simply because he was Nehru's friend. Remember Ottavio Quattrochi, close friend of Sonia and Rajiv, was able to do as he liked in Delhi. The Home Ministry made sure he left India before they had to start pursuing him over Bofors!

It is ironic that India has inherited from Nehru the Fabian socialist strain of feudalism that has refused to disappear. The dormant hunger for royalty in the Indian masses may be the reason.



## Media Interviews

*We are not secessionists*

PROXIMITY AND DISTANCE Q&A	629
<i>The Pioneer</i> interview	631

### ***Proximity and Distance***

*Niketu Iralu, who describes himself as a social educationist, has been closely associated with the Naga 'struggle' for many years. Iralu, a founder-member of the Naga Peoples' Movement for Human Rights has undertaken a 'Journey of Conscience' to Indian cities.*

**W***hy talk of secession in the first place?*

We are not secessionists. Our elders made known our position before India became independent. We are not trying to secede from a union we agreed to be part of. We are a neighbour of India, admittedly a tiny one, but with a definite idea about ourselves, which we concluded long ago. India calls our struggle insurgency. But we say it is a fight for our history, dignity and human rights. There has been a denial of legitimacy and of facts of the Naga struggle, which has provided determination on the part of the Nagas to defend the honour and dignity of their stand. The price they have paid for doing so constitutes the heart of what the government and media call Naga insurgency. We are all for India as a strong neighbour, a country that is so great and ancient. We thank God for you. We are not fighting with you. We are only fighting for our position.

*Could you elucidate that position?*

When the Simon Commission came to Kohima in 1929 to assess public opinion on creating measures for reforms, the Nagas replied in writing that they want the right to decide their future on the basis of their pre-British status. The Akbar Hydari-Naga pact of 1947 which was drawn up at the initiative of India, and which Nagas considered accepting on this basis of certain clarifications, came to an ignoble end when the Indian Government declared it had nothing to do with it. The distrust that resulted then has influenced Naga attitude towards Delhi ever since. Sensing that any ambiguity would result in serious complications, the Naga National Council declared Naga independence on 14 August 1947, establishing a fact of no small importance to them, namely that their struggle is not one of secession from India. India's 'tryst with destiny' started the next day.

*Is it a people's struggle or a struggle led by insurgent groups?*

It is very good for India to find out whose struggle it is. Nagas have made it abundantly clear in 1947, 1951 and in 1961. The Indian Government and people in the media have projected the image that 'these' tribal people cannot think for themselves and the foreign missionaries

### ***A Naga Speaks***



have put these political ideas into their minds. This is insulting to the Asian intelligence and very feudal.

*Don't you think secession will upset the geo-political equilibrium in the region?*

We fully understand and appreciate Delhi's over-riding concern for the territorial integrity of the India the British on their departure bequeathed to them; we realise this is an issue no nation can treat lightly, least of all India with her multi-racial, cultural and ethnic composition. But the Naga case deserves the simple recognition on grounds of its unique antecedents. However, Delhi has adopted the unwise principle of giving a dog a bad name and shooting it.

*You talk about a strong yearning for your rights to freedom, respect, equality and justice. But, these are already guaranteed under a special Act of the Constitution. The Centre pumps in the funds needed for development of the region. Why not use the funds and think of prosperity?*

Yes, it is there, but we do not want it. Delhi's response to the Naga struggle has been a crude combination of all-out suppression and pacification with gifts. The gifts took the Nagas by surprise, as they were not expected. We have become addicted to the gifts and have dragged Delhi into a relationship of messy co-addiction with us. You cannot quieten us every time with *laddoos* and *rasgullas*.

*Insurgency has spread its tentacles in Nagaland ever since Phizo gave the call for independence a long time back. What has insurgency achieved?*

Absolutely nothing in terms of freedom. Or maybe we have achieved rampant corruption, lawlessness, addiction and extortion. We have interacted with only the Indian government all these years. We have discovered that the political setup cannot say anything new to us without the support of the Indian people who after all have the final say on issues such as ours. Whenever we go to the Indian government, they send us back saying, 'We have had enough of you, go away.' That is why the NPMHR has decided to take this 'journey of conscience' where we will talk to the people of India. We will convince them what we want and then talk it out. We believe that in doing so, our relationship will be mended, and an acceptable way will be found towards resolving the conflicts between us and India.

*Any specific reason why you chose Mahatma Gandhi's death anniversary to launch this journey?*

Gandhiji understood us. He did not underestimate what he sensed

***A Naga Speaks***

in what our leaders said to him. He understood our history. We established a human relationship with India through him. He taught us this.

*But Gandhiji also taught non-violence.*

Certainly. The Conscience Journey means that it is not only a journey to the Indian people. It is also a journey into our own conscience. We are hopelessly divided at this moment. We will reunite ourselves. I am optimistic we will renew and reform ourselves. We will repair the moral fibre that has been damaged.

*NSCM (IM) leader, Thuingaleng Muivah was a party to the ceasefire agreement with the Centre. Now, he has been held in Thailand for travelling from Karachi on a fake passport. How do you expect the Centre to take him seriously when he has unlawfully gone to a rival country?*

It is an unhappy development altogether. But the widespread feeling among Naga people is he was held on a tip off by the Indian government. They suspect India's hand in his arrest. I admit like other Naga leaders, Muivah has also made mistakes. We will tell him where he is wrong but he is our leader representing us at the peace talks. Nagas feel India wants to weed him out of the talks by getting their leader arrested. Dirty games like this do not take the peace talks anywhere. Our sense of honour is at the heart of the problem. If that honour is belittled, denied or suppressed, then the process will be flawed; talks will have no meaning and the fruit will be poisonous. North East India will become ungovernable.

### **'Frozen hearts produce dangerous politics'**

*THE PIONEER. 5 August 2001*

*How do you describe the present Naga peace initiative?*

We are stuck in a logjam, largely of our own making. No amount of complaining about Delhi will help. Delhi will do many things. Let's face it. Governments will do all sorts of things. We should not be surprised. But we have to deal with our logjam, that is, the inter-tribal or inter-factional rivalry or distrust, which has not been addressed. They were there originally even before the Naga struggle started. But that was just human frailty. However, with the complications of our political struggle, it became very destructive because, I believe, who will control the struggle became

***A Naga Speaks***

the strongest issue. The situation got bad to worse which led to the 1964 ceasefire and the collapsing of talks, because of rising hostility, especially between the Angamis and the Semas.

Semas got fed up with the way the Angamis were handling things and the Angamis did not trust anyone to handle the Naga struggle during Phizo's time. Phizo's commitment and dedication was total and no one doubted it. The completeness of his sacrifice stirred the Nagas and galvanised them. But the Semas felt they were deliberately marginalised and not trusted. They were treated as dangerous rivals to be thwarted. How can a struggle continue with that kind of distrust underneath?

The feeling got stronger, leading to the formation of the Revolutionary Government by the Semas – overground and underground. The Angamis felt that was a deliberate ploy to destroy the NNC, which was seen as a creation of the Angamis, to a large extent, to consolidate their own position. I am sure, if I were in their position, I would have felt as they did. All these have to be discussed – the ugly truths about ourselves, which we find so difficult to address. The so-called struggle for the Naga people and the talks with Delhi brought nothing. Because when you've frozen hearts against one another, how can good politics come out? That's where the logjam is.

I believe the situation got complicated because Phizo went away to London. He became isolated and ill-informed about the way things were happening about the rising leadership. And he got more and more suspicious because of the news fed to him. I think he should have come back from London. He should have realised that the West is not going to help by risking losing the Indian market. He should have returned saying, 'I have come back to talk to the Indian people and my people, not the Government of India.' He would have been taken straight to Tihar Jail perhaps. But then, a different kind of politics would have emerged – clean and legitimate.

And when the Shillong Accord was signed, there was a refusal on the part of those who signed it to make a clear, simple statement on the agreement: that it was signed under duress and therefore, in the changed circumstances it was unacceptable. They refused to be transparent because they did not want to be accused of failure and surrender. The NSCN leadership went all out using that stick to beat them. They killed too many people to consolidate their control. When you start to kill people in the context of the Naga crisis, you are not only killing individuals but also

hurting and alienating tribe after tribe.

Isak and Muivah chose not to point out that surrendered fighters of the Revolutionary Government actually guided Indian security forces to the hideouts of their former comrades to flush out and kill them. This hastened the Shillong Accord disaster. Today, that is why, I believe, if IM goes to the negotiating table they must first win the trust of other tribes. Everyone made mistakes; no one has clean hands in the present crisis. And if there are honest efforts to discuss our mistakes we can find a consensus to reach a settlement.

*Do you see any new thinking between the 1964 ceasefire and the present one?*

The good thing about the current ceasefire is that it has made the Nagas talk to one another again. That is a positive step. But we have to address what has gone wrong. All leaders, all tribes, all factions have made serious mistakes. The IM Chairman, Isak Swu, has made a very significant beginning by apologising for the excesses of their cadres. No Naga leader has made that kind of apology. Now, if they could go further and let the inter-tribal conflict be addressed by calling upon the Naga people to do it, the Naga public would have responded. But instead, they kept on saying, 'We have won the ceasefire and therefore, we alone will talk to India.'

That is where things stopped going forward. They have to unfreeze the hearts of all the Naga people again. Frozen hearts produce very dangerous politics. But the ceasefire has achieved a lot.

*NSCN (IM) still seems averse to unification of all Naga factions. Don't you think it is a real hindrance to the peace process?*

Yes. Their (IM's) conditions for unification are: One, the Naga National Council (Adinno) should declare publically their rejection of the Shillong Accord by admitting their failure to do so earlier. I believe here, the IM group is right, politically. But this demand is coming from a group whose excesses and methods have antagonised and dismayed too many Nagas so that their moral authority to make the political demand is seriously questioned. I believe, those who signed the Accord and their supporters should admit their allegedly concealed acts to defeat, even eliminate Isak, Muivah and their supporters, which provoked the latter too greatly. Justifying their mistakes and protecting their reputation became more important than the unity and struggle of the Nagas. And the IM group should admit that their reaction has damaged our society too excessively.

Two, the Khaplang group should admit and stop their alleged

collaboration with Delhi. Of course, the NSCN (K) also accused the IM group of similar collaboration in various ways. We do not know what the truth is. What is really needed is to go to the root of both resentments that have produced the murderous politics of the past years.

Three, the NNC (Merhupfü) should recognise the IM group and stop calling themselves as the true NNC. This group rejected the Shillong Accord and so they are politically 'clean'. They can become an important bridge to all the groups.

*How significant is the ceasefire between the Government of India and the NSCN (K)?*

Naga Hoho and most Naga bodies have welcomed Delhi's ceasefire with NSCN (K). Whatever the motivation we welcome the ceasefire being widened. But as I said, unless we deal with the frozen core in our relationships, everything will go wrong. It is up to us Nagas how to go about it. We cannot blame Delhi always.

*Several NE States, opposing extended ceasefire with the NSCN (IM), fear this will eventually form a basis for greater Nagalim. How do you address that?*

Here we face a common dilemma. The fears of our neighbouring states are real. If we were in their situation, we too would feel and react like them, ignoring the element of natural justice in the idea of the Nagas. I believe if the Nagas are not claiming any area outside their ancestral land then their claim has natural justice.

Of course, the people in the areas concerned should be given the freedom of choice. Having said this, I do not underestimate the disgust our neighbours must feel now about us. We talk with pride of half a century of struggle for our aspirations, our sacrifices. To our neighbours, it may be fifty years of nuisance, of destabilisation spreading into their States.

I believe the Nagas did the right thing in stating that our struggle was dictated by our history. It has come to mean so much to us. But we have to now be equally concerned for the needs and aspirations of our neighbours also.

*How do you think we can overcome the logjam and move forward into the substantive issues?*

In the North East, as inside the Naga areas, we are negotiating a dangerous minefield full of buried mine-bombs. In such a sensitive situation we can only take one right step at a time. That is the right and safe way to proceed for finding a settlement that will be acceptable to all of us.

***A Naga Speaks***

The process can be slow, but we must appreciate it.

Of course we still do not know what exactly transpired in the talks in Amsterdam, which produced L K Advani's statement. But as far as I could make out, Muivah's explanation was: 'We are prepared to understand the extreme difficulties of Delhi.' He went on to indicate that a settlement that will work must not ignore the needs of our neighbours.

Chief Minister S C Jamir's response was: 'Let us not forget that the ceasefire and peace process still continues, even if the coverage is to be only inside the Nagaland State.' He appealed for a 'holistic approach and thinking' to find a settlement that will ensure stability, peace and development.

Naga Hoho President, M Vero has said: 'We strongly protest the reduction in the area of ceasefire coverage. But the ceasefire must continue and the peace process must not be abandoned.'

I believe they are all indicating a line of constructive statesmanship, which must win.



## Inescapable Truths

The Power Of 'I Too Am Wrong'	637
What Is Evil And How Does It Start?	640
What Tempts Us? What Calls Us?	642
What Are You Living For? Discovering...	643
Saying Sorry	646
Using Hate And Violence For Healing?	650
God At Work In History	653
Daring To Take A Stand	659
Not Going Far Enough	661
Hell And Heaven And Our Society	664

## The Power Of 'I Too Am Wrong'

2008

Recently my wife and I took part in a journey that could also be called a pilgrimage. It was a journey for reflection, evaluation and renewal of commitment. We traveled with 16 others from various nations, from the middle of June to the first week of July. The action was organised by Initiatives of Change (IofC) with which we also work.

I was invited to also take part in an international conference organised by Liverpool Hope University as part of the City's celebration as the European Capital of Culture for 2008. The event took place just before our journey was to start in Northwest England. So, happily, my airfares to and fro were paid by the University.

Soon after graduating from a Lutheran theological seminary, Frank Buchman was given the task of managing an orphanage in a low-income area of Philadelphia in USA. It became a success. He gave a proposal to the Board of Directors to make some improvements and other changes. The Board did not agree and money was not sanctioned. Buchman became bitter. He lost interest in his work and his health too started to deteriorate. His doctor told him nothing was wrong with him physically. He was urged to do some traveling and have a cold bath and a hot bath daily to get over the depression afflicting him.

Buchman visited a number of interesting places in Europe. But his unhappiness continued. He said the trouble was 'I took myself wherever I went and I remained the same.' He was 30 and he started to feel his life had become purposeless.

He went to the Keswick Christian Convention Centre to see F B Meyer, a famous Christian preacher he trusted and respected. His intention was to let him know what was going on in his heart and to seek his advice. But Meyer had already left the place. One evening he entered a tiny church where a lady evangelist, Jessie Penn-Lewis, a descendant of William Penn, the Quaker pioneer and founder of Pennsylvania, Frank Buchman's own home State, was preaching. Her subject was the Cross of Christ. Buchman sat at the back and listened with the other 17 people present. What she said got straight to his heart.

In his mind's eyes he began to see the six members of the Board who ran the orphanage in Philadelphia. They stood out like six tombstones.

*A Naga Speaks*



'Then I saw a 7th tombstone and that was me.' The sermon helped him to see 'I too was wrong' because, he said, his resentment had driven God out of his heart and divided him from the six men. He saw why he had lost his effectiveness as a Christian.

He went back to his hotel room and wrote the six men he had blamed for so long, saying to each one:

'I have harboured ill will against you. I too was wrong. Please forgive me.

Yours sincerely,

Frank Buchman.

At the top of each letter he wrote the following lines from the famous hymn by Isaac Watt,

*When I survey the wondrous cross*

*On which the Prince of Glory died.*

*My richest gain I count but loss*

*And pour contempt on all my pride?*

He posted the letters.

Immediately, a young man he had met at the hotel asked him, 'What has happened to you, Frank? You do look different!' They went for a long walk around the famous Lake Derwentwater. He told his friend his experience at the church and the six letters he had written to put things right with the six men. His friend said his hatred of his father for certain things was where he needed to start. He had blamed him for his own poor performance at university and in life in general. He was becoming dependent on alcohol to suppress the deep fear that he would not be able to pull his life together again as he had lived selfishly and dishonestly for so long.

The young man also wrote to his father apologising for where he was wrong and decided to start afresh. When Buchman saw how quickly the simple obedience to what God had whispered to him to do had been used by God to help another person become honest and deal with where he too was wrong. He felt God had shown him how he was to use his life from then on.

This initial experience of obeying the 'still small voice' resulting in change in himself, which could be passed on to others became the starting point of the movement to 'remake the world based on change in people'. It

grew to become the global programme first called The Oxford Group, then Moral Re-Armament, then recently Initiatives of Change.

Our journey was to mark the 100th year of this experience and to re-examine it. We started from Keswick, then we went to Oxford University, Visby in Sweden, Freudenstadt in the Black Forest of Germany and finally to Caux in Switzerland. We spent time praying, and sharing our deepest insights and thoughts from our quiet times among ourselves and with others who met us at locally organised conferences on – The relevance of the ‘I too was/am wrong’ approach in tackling conflicts of today.

We came away with fresh conviction that the honesty in ‘I too was/am wrong’ is still unbeatable to heal divisions, achieve reconciliation and inspire growth.

What has been most important for me from the journey has been my own renewed decision to spend at least an hour every morning to let God say anything to me ‘to correct, inspire and direct’ my life as long as I live. I find this disciplined openness and listening alone shows where I too may be wrong day by day and take action to keep my relationships clean and healthy and usable by God.

I find 5:00 in the morning is the best time to listen to God with pen and notebook to actually write down the thoughts coming to me! 4:30 is even better! You hear the sounds of the Universe itself at that early hour!

And clearly ticking with them are thoughts from God for you and our world as anyone who has tried will confirm. Yes, even in Nagaland. This of course means getting to bed early enough also.

The world-wide impact on conflicts made by the idea described in the story, leading to positive economic, social, political consequences, and what allowing God to change my own life has meant, is a continuing story of many in the world.

*When man listens, God speaks;*

*When man obeys, God acts;*

*When men and women change, nations change.* - Frank Buchman.

## What Is Evil And How Does It Start?

Appeared in *Katalyst*, Pages 8 & 9, Vol I, 4<sup>th</sup> Issue, March - April 2003

Some may think the subject is too morbid and heavy and it is more helpful to talk about pleasant matters. But I find that if we are really hungry for God we have to reject evil drastically. To do that we should know what it is.

From my own humble experiments and battles to understand life and live it, I find evil is the permanent threat we face in life, moment by moment. It is so because good in its total, all-out sense is God's plan for life and we are required to defend it and live it out by defeating evil. So anyone examining life will find that a permanent creative tension confronts us all the time. And the quality of a person's life is decided by how she/he responds to that tension. The same thing can be said of societies and nations.

It is said 'On earth God wrestles with the Devil and the battleground is man.' This transforms the meaning and significance of every individual's life. If God fights His enemy through your life and mine, we are very important in His eyes and the role He expects each one of us to play invests every individual life with immense meaning and value. It therefore means the Devil too is most interested in us because he too fights in each one of us to build his kingdom on earth!

We need to understand how evil is formed in us and learn to fight it if we are to play our part in caring for and changing our society and the world. We all know the reality of evil in the world because of the shocking examples in history. There are so many of them. One of the well-known instances in the Bible is the massacre of the innocents ordered by Herod to make sure Jesus, perceived by him as a future threat, was killed while still an infant child.

Some examples in history stand out. The slave trade and slavery, which formed the backbone of the economies of Britain and other European powers competing to control the vast lands they had conquered. Then one thinks of the cruel exploitations and humiliations perpetrated by imperial powers that produced the revolutions and wars especially of the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The atrocities in those revolutions and wars to avenge the past on all continents were also unspeakably evil.

If we take God and religion seriously we have to identify where we

*A Naga Speaks*

too become a part of the evils in the world? It is so simple at first and yet so difficult to pursue it logically and truthfully. We quickly give it up thinking what we can do is too insignificant. However, if we give it up we end up living a lie right through life.

We are unhappy and empty and unhappy because we are avoiding God's 'legitimate suffering' or calling for us. The Cross then is only a beautiful symbol, which we only worship as an idol but resist to apply in our living. Therefore it is neither the way, the truth nor the life for us as Jesus wants.

Obedience to the still small voice was the dynamics of Gandhi's politics as well as the basis of all his relationships. He fought evil in himself and in others and in structures without hating the persons who committed the evil deeds.

I find that evil is born in my life when I protect my selfishness and pride. At first it is often only a mild, seemingly harmless act of deceit skillfully performed, some call it a 'white lie', to guard or protect what I want for myself. It is not a clear-cut 'Yes', nor is it a simple 'No', as Jesus said it should be. It is intentionally unclear to keep my options open for maximum advantage for exploitation. I tell more lies to guard or support the first lie. I become unhappy, angry, and even aggressive to make sure the truth stays hidden. I hate myself and others hate and distrust me.

M. Scott Peck writes, 'Carl Jung ascribed human evil to the refusal to meet the Shadow - those aspects of ourselves that we do not want to own or recognise and that we continually attempt to sweep under the rug of consciousness.' (*The Different Drum*). Peck adds that evil is 'militant ignorance', meaning aggressive, wilful refusal to face and know certain truths in ourselves because we are afraid of not knowing how to handle what may follow, or we know it and we decide not to pay the price.

The key for me is to be simply honest with those nearest to me. This always means my wife, who after all agreed to marry me in faith. Of course we started our life partnership hiding nothing from each other about our past lives. The point is to continue that openness. It is a much-needed challenge to my character because I hate being transparent, calling a spade a spade, as the old saying puts it, or 'Telling the truth and shaming the Devil.' Hope and faith, the best medicines, are born the moment I am honest.

I realised that if I had decided not to be honest with her my soul

would have been suffocated, the worst thing we can do to ourselves, and I would have allowed evil to start to grow in it. This spiritual law of tackling evil is the most important point to be understood in human resource development and in nation building. Crucifying pride, selfishness and fear is the only way to tackle evil because that way alone God is able to come in and fight the devil. Reconciliation and healing too become possible only through costly transparency.

If we want to help our people to grow, unless we allow God to deliver us from evil, our attempts end in ashes.



### **What Tempts Us? What Calls Us?**

*I* do not quite know what or how to say it, because one finds that one understands the reasons why things are as they are when articulated by someone who knows why. But one can't keep pace with the changing existential realities. This certainly is my crisis. We find that they are all there, so to speak, and they break out at the slightest scratching and threaten to overwhelm us like fearful landslides, if you get what I mean? The realities are all opportunities for our growth. But don't they become awful problems if one doesn't know how to utilise them?

I am speaking from what I have found from my attempts to care for my people in Nagaland. Our society reveals the quality of our responses at all levels. The outcome is what we have with all its heart-breaking failures and wrongs. The quality of the responses comes down to how individuals and institutions are responding to the changing requirements of changes impacting them from the world.

So many communities like us the world over are having to respond to so many crucially important very complicated challenges in an extremely short time. And they are doing a very bad job of it in almost all areas of life. One reason is they have suddenly been forced to handle situations created by developments and events occurring outside their habitats or homelands. They find themselves thoroughly unprepared mentally, culturally, spiritually, and in every other way. It is not that they do not see the solution, it is that they cannot see the problem". (G K C).

This bewildering dilemma, faced by hitherto isolated communities, is very correctly described by Albert Maori Kiki of Papua New Guinea in

*A Naga Speaks*

his autobiography, *10,000 Years In A Lifetime*. I find this terrifying crisis of having to do many things properly in a very short time. In communities like ours there are simply too few whose response to the challenges are anywhere near what can be said to be adequate. Isn't this why we have more problems than solutions?

This being our crisis the only sensible way to live on our planet is to be more aware of what you have been given and therefore what you are expected to give, than what you want for yourself and not think of what you are meant to give?



### **What Are You Living For?**

#### **Discovering Your Calling and Loving it.**

Written for the Sechü-Zubza Baptist Church Magazine, May Issue.

**T**he majestic cathedrals in the major cities of Europe are magnificent expressions of the Christian faith. The tall, massive structures are architectural wonders built with beautifully carved and sculpted stones, marble, mortar and timber, revealing the impact made by Christianity on the peoples and nations of Europe from the time it was brought to the continent by St. Peter and St. Paul. They took many years to be built, some of them taking more than a century. They were built to last, restored and repaired whenever needed, to convey the prayer of the faithful to God, 'Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.'

There is a beautiful story of a traveller from a far country who once toured different cities of Europe to get to know the peoples, their history, their culture and their religion. In one city he came to an open area where a huge digging and quarrying operation was taking place to prepare the foundation for the construction of a structure. He saw workers breaking stones, cutting timber to different sizes, blacksmiths forging iron pieces, and so on.

He came to a man cutting timber. He looked tired, ill tempered and totally engrossed in himself. The traveller asked him what he was doing. The man replied, 'Don't you see? I am wasting my time doing this meaningless job.' He said he was working to earn some money to keep alive. He complained he had to do so much just to fill his hungry stomach. He said nobody cared what he had to endure. He was bitter against the rich

***A Naga Speaks***



and the powerful and many others.

The visitor was sorry because the man was devoid of purpose and so unhappy.

He next came to a man breaking rocks into small pieces. He was giving his full attention to his work. From his body language and general bearing it was clear he was happy and dedicated to what he was doing. He even seemed to be humming a song!

The traveller asked 'What are you doing my friend; you seem to be enjoying your work?' The stone breaker replied, 'Yes I am. I am helping to build the cathedral that is being built on this site where many others are also working.'

He said he was just a very ordinary man whose skill was limited to breaking rocks. But he was privileged to be playing a small part in building the great place of worship for his city and nation. He believed the cathedral would help many people discover God and become better human beings as had happened to him. So, he said, he believed he was helping to build the kingdom of God on earth.

The bitter man, blaming others for his unhappy life. Or the thoughtful, dedicated man, happy and purposeful, who knew what he was doing and was happy. Which one am I? What is the difference?

How do I discover the purpose of my life and my calling?

C S Lewis one of the most important Christian thinkers and writers of the last century said, 'Every square inch of the universe, every split second, is claimed by God and counter-claimed by the Devil.'

Lewis's stark description of the intense clash between God and the Devil to build their rival kingdoms should make us ask what we think about the kingdom of God. *What is it? Where is it? When is it?*

A careful reflection will reveal to us that by the way we think and live we are actually helping God to build the society He wants, right here, right now, as it must be in heaven, or we are helping the Devil to build his hell on earth as it must be in hell. If we look at the society all of us have contributed to build in Nagaland can we doubt the statement made by C S Lewis?

Imagine what will happen if all of us, overground and underground also realised,

1. Nagaland is being virtually pulled apart by God and the Devil to add it



to their territories, and

2. God expects us to build his kingdom here on earth whatever our profession may be and we don't need to worry what is up in heaven after we leave this world if we have played our part with Him here on earth.

If this is our understanding of life on earth, we will see whatever we do in our different professions or fields of work as our contribution to the building of the right society on earth God wants built.

Am I a teacher, a doctor, a nurse, an engineer, a contractor, a businessman, an overground and underground politician, policeman or national worker/soldier, a bureaucrat, peon, village council chairman/member, VDB official, NGO leader, a pastor, a priest, so on and so forth? If I see how I perform in the task assigned to me by my position as my contribution to the building of the just, fair society on earth that God wants, as the stonebreaker saw his role in the building of the cathedral, I have found my calling.

I found long ago that I couldn't be a doctor or an engineer as I wanted to very much, because my brain was not 'mathematics-friendly' at all. Nor could I be an overground or underground leader because of limitations in me in the specific qualities required. I was used to thinking only in terms of what I wanted for myself. So I was depressed and fearful about my life because I saw myself as a failure. I was 'poor in spirit' and thought it was terrible. But the crisis turned me to God, and I started to learn to listen to Him for illumination and discernment.

I came to see that I did have a deep hunger in my soul for justice, for what is right and true, pure and transparent, although in my daily life I was the exact opposite of these things. Just like everybody else no doubt. It became clear to me my calling was to develop these longings in me and to learn to think and fight for them to win in society. I realised that I was ignoring what God had put into me and was resentful and self-piteous because I wanted to possess talents to achieve success for my own glory, pleasure and comfort.

As I listened carefully to see the truth about my unhappiness and resentment, I saw that my problem was selfishness and the absence of a demanding purpose for my life. And to make what the still small voice of God in my conscience and soul tells me to do and to be more important than what I want for myself. I have discovered how powerfully the things



I want for myself guide me. Most of them seem to be harmless and small weaknesses. But how effectively and swiftly they cut God out of my life!

This acceptance of what God has put in me to develop and use to the maximum for the building of the right just society, instead of being bitter because I want something 'better', has changed my life. Instead of being jealous and envious of others, a constant enemy of mine curled up inside me, I find I am rejoicing in what others have and when they do something so much better than I know I will if I were doing them. I do know however that the moment I am not fully cooperating with God using what He has given me to do things with Him, my selfish nature takes over in its original strength! The remedy is the prayer, 'Foul I to the Fountain fly, Wash me Oh Saviour or I die' and get on with the task with His grace reclaimed.

It is amazing how these gigantic battles are so often fought inside me without anyone knowing what is going on! Transparency and simple honesty with my wife who knows me well now is the key I have learned to use. Sometimes I need to go beyond my wife and be honest with others so that trust is restored.

'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' If I acknowledge and accept my poverty of spirit or my unhappiness, and discover what God is showing me to be and to do, He is showing me my role in the building of His kingdom right here on earth.

No project on earth is more fascinating or more worthwhile.

### Saying Sorry

The problems in our families and society are as real as municipal garbage. They come out of our lives, not from some far away mysterious place. They can, and must be solved, recycled or taken care of adequately, or they accumulate and can destroy us.

What percentage of our problems are we tackling and solving? Do our unsolved problems just melt away and harm us no more if they are simply ignored? Or do they pile up and gradually render our society dysfunctional and unmanageable?

In martial arts, we are told, complete attention is given to the

*A Naga Speaks*

opponent facing you so that your response will be correct. You are taught to fully understand and respect the opponent so that you learn to add his/her strength to yours to win the combat. The secret of martial arts is creative, intelligent response.

This article proposes that our problems are our most important reality. They are meaningful for us. They are not to be condemned or ignored. The right response to them will do us the greatest good. The wrong response will do us the greatest harm. Saying sorry whenever required is the most intelligent, creative way of facing and solving relational problems. As our society cannot survive the hate and divisions produced by our defended wrongs and selfishness, learning to say sorry is more important than we think!

*Give a Dog a Bone* is a pantomime play for children by Peter Howard. Its main characters are animals. It ran for many Christmas seasons in London as a children's favourite. As a film it has been seen around the world in a number of languages.

In the musical production, the city of London is being taken over by King Rat whose philosophy of life is 'I want more, more and more!' and 'I couldn't care less!' In any situation whenever a man or woman says, 'I couldn't care less', and blames others, he or she instantly becomes an animal - a cat, a pig, a mule, a bear, and so on.

Mr Space lands in the middle of the crisis from outer space. He brings the opposite philosophy of life, which says, 'I do care!' Whenever those King Rat has made animals, learn to be humble and gracious and say, 'Please', when they need help or something; 'Thank you', when they are helped or they receive something; and 'Sorry', when they have made a mistake or are wrong, they become human beings again!

Mickey Merry, an adolescent boy, is rebelling against his selfish and proud parents. They are forever fighting. He runs away from home with his dog Ringo, heading for London to seek his fortune. He runs into King Rat, a family friend. He calls him Uncle Disgrace. Mickey Merry is bitter and resentful. He blames his parents for his unhappiness. King Rat sees him to be a highly potential propagator of his philosophy. Uncle Disgrace starts to work on him and soon Mickey is in a real crisis.

Mr Space joins the battle to save him. He helps Mickey to admit where he too is wrong and needs to be honest, instead of just blaming his parents. Mr Space suggests they listen in silence to find out where to start.

The alarm clock stolen by Mickey from his parents, and hidden among his clothes bundle, starts to ring, shattering the silence! His attempt to justify the stealing because his parents had failed him does not convince Mr Space or him. He says sorry to his parents. This simple honesty destroys the power of Uncle Disgrace over him. Guided by Mr Space, and aided by his delightful dog, he helps countless former human beings to become human beings again. The lesson is not a small one. No matter how wrong his parents may be he had to acknowledge he too was part of the problem and simply change.

A small group of Germans after retirement from their jobs returned to a village in Byelorussia where they had fought as soldiers in Hitler's army invading the USSR. They came to build a recreation centre for the victims of the radiation disaster from the Chernobyl nuclear plant across the border in Ukraine. Their gift of the centre fully financed from their pensions was their attempt to make restitution for the wrongs they had committed in the village. On the last day of their stay they called the villagers together to say farewell.

One of the German veterans stood up to speak. He struggled for words and finally broke down in tears as he tried to say how sorry he and his comrades were for what they had done during the war. A Byelorussian woman stepped forward and put her arms around the old soldier and said they were forgiven. Some of the post-war young people watching from the audience with suspicion were also moved. They too wept. The veterans returned home healed and peace restored in their hearts. Just gifting the centre would not have sufficed for them nor for their hosts had they not gone far enough and said sorry and asked for forgiveness for what they had done as invaders.

A German theologian who wrote about this moving story of healing said when the old soldier said sorry he became a priest for himself and his people. And the Byelorussian woman did the same thing. She boldly rose above the disgust her people and probably she herself had felt for the rapes, insults and other atrocities the Germans had committed, and reached out and pronounced forgiveness to the penitent soul asking for pardon.

Some of the cruellest and bloodiest killings of history were committed in Europe during the World War II. The genocidal killings of more than six million Jews in the nations occupied by Hitler brought into usage the terrible word 'holocaust' with its devastating meaning. World

War II was the continuation of the massive eruption that started with World War I. The eruption was like a volcano that had built up beneath Europe. The destructive lava spewed out of the historic injustices and wounds, which no one could address adequately and therefore allowed to accumulate.

Hitler's and Mussolini's doctrine of racial dictatorship opened up one line of the eruption that cut right across Europe. Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin and their ferocious hordes driven by Marx's vision and doctrine of class dictatorship, opened up a parallel and far more extensive line of eruption that spread to all continents. The extreme fury and power of the two doctrines came from the fact that they were partial truths, which became highly intoxicating and misleading. In denying or justifying the parts of the doctrines that were untrue the storm troopers of the two campaigns became aggressively evil and cruel. The atrocities were extreme in nature and scale.

But God's sanity and grace reappears unfailingly in human affairs as spring always returns after the grim coldness and severity of winter. As the Bible puts it, after the fire, the thunderstorm, and the earthquake, the still small voice of God comes to show us what to do.

The havoc of Hitler's Germany on Europe and the world was shocking. But Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn points out in his book *Gulag Archipelago* that there were records of more than 64,000 Germans actually acknowledging their guilt and that of their nation and saying sorry. According to him, in proportion to her population, Russia's wrongs to her own people and others call for a far greater number of people to admit their parts and say sorry.

When admission of guilt and responsibility at personal levels reaches the scale where its reality becomes understood and felt by society, reconciliation starts to enter politics and reshape history. It is important to know that saying sorry at the personal level has this ultimate potential of healing society and nations. Every genuine apology has truthfulness at its heart. The power of the truth becomes infectious.

Our divisions and distrusts have paralysed relationships at all levels of our society. Healthy growth has become impossible. Is there any other way except that of transparency and saying sorry to answer our guilt, our wounds and vengeful hates? And is that not our most urgent need?

The starting points are our families and tribes relationships.

Supposing the sons and daughters in our families decide to go beyond the blames and excuses of mere rebellion and accept revolutionary responsibility for themselves, their families and their society?

Supposing we parents will dare to go way back to the points when we know we started to lose our children because we failed to understand their sensitive need for affection and security?

Supposing concerned individuals of each Naga tribe will just sit down and identify where their tribe has done wrong or not done the right thing, and work out how to say sorry and act differently?

Remember, Christ was emphatic that we are to forgive not once, or even seven times, but seventy times seven! He would most likely say the same thing about saying sorry?

He was always for going far enough.



### Using Hate And Violence For Healing?

Some Thoughts for Easter for *Conscience Restoration in Society* - 'CRIS'

Violence has got out of control. The question is can we be responsible and be honest enough to identify its roots/origins in our own lives or let it destroy us while we condemn it and discuss it brilliantly as a problem created by somebody else or some socio-economic political reasons only?

That could be plain irresponsibility and dishonesty.

It is said that 'war is a judgment that overtakes societies when they have been living upon ideas that conflict too violently with the laws governing the Universe... Never think that wars are irrational catastrophes: they happen when wrong ways of thinking and living, bring about intolerable situations.' Is this not true of our situation?

We have a multi-commanded war raging in our midst. The population is helplessly caught in the middle. Can anyone of us say we have not helped to make the thinking and living that has brought about the intolerable situation and the war caused/produced by it?

What must God be trying to say to us about our accumulated armoury of hate? What about violence and the chain of revenge and counter-revenge that starts from it? The Easter weekend is the time when

*A Naga Speaks*

the fundamental question finds the right setting for reflection. The main point about Good Friday and Easter is surely that God does not take half measures to answer man's evil. Death to self is what it means for us, if we take Him seriously.

We all know what it is to hate someone. Some of us have killed others because of hate. So we all know how tough it is to deal with hate formed inside us holding us in its grip.

Supposing we learn to hate the things in ourselves that we hate in others? Then deal with them radically instead of hating others for their wrongs and committing violence on their bodies?

This would be using hate and violence the right way so that healing comes. This is hating the sin, not the sinner. This leads to learning to love the sinner. It is God's way: crucifying our own pride and selfishness and loving others with His love. The wrongs of our society can be tackled only this way. Our obedience opens the way for God to intervene.

This kind of doing violence to ourselves, to our selfishness and other sins is soul surgery. It involves no bloodshed. The scalpel of painful honesty is used in this kind of honesty. 'Let your "yes" be "yes", and your "no", "no". For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.' As Christ so simply said it. Or 'Tell the truth and shame the Devil.' Whoever has tried to stick to Christ's uncompromising discipline of straightness knows that it is the key to real liberation

We Nagas are in danger of becoming known for our courage and honesty in telling the truth about the mistakes and failures of others, but too selfish or cowardly to admit the truth about our own. We become dangerous for the wrong reasons, that is, when challenged to face where we too are wrong. Such a people can never grow up because of emotional immaturity.

Let us look at some examples of dealing with what is wrong in oneself first.

A builder of apartments in Lucerne, Switzerland, decided to start with himself to show what Christianity in business should mean for the health of his nation's democracy. He and his wife decided to maintain one account book only instead of the three they usually kept - one for the directors, one for the employees, and one for the tax authorities. The directors at first doubted their wisdom. But the employees were won by their costly decision for transparency. The honest amount of income taxes

they paid that year came to over Rs. 30 lakhs. They had no money left for their luxuries for that year.

The company faced the risk of collapsing. But word spread through the city that Anliker was an honest taxpayer and therefore he would not use cheap material for his buildings. The demand for his apartments rose sharply. He was able to meet the demands because the workers trusted him and gave their support. His construction company not only became one of the leaders in the business; it also raised the standard of excellence in national life.

Madame Irene Laure was elected to the French Parliament from the city of Marseilles with the highest ever margin of victory. As a leader of the French underground resistance against the German occupation of France, her young son was tortured by the Nazi Gestapo to get her to reveal secrets of the Resistance. Her hate against the Germans deepened and she wanted Germany humiliated and broken. This happened. But after the war she was challenged by the question, 'How can a new Europe of peace and stability be built without healing the wounds between the French and the Germans?' She faced her deep ill will against the Germans and her steely pride which kept her enslaved to her hatred.

At an international conference in 1947 near Geneva on how to heal Europe after the war, Madame Laure publicly apologised to the Germans present for her hatred towards them and called for a united effort to rebuild Europe for the coming generations. The Germans, many of whom had fought to defeat Hitler from inside Germany, accepted responsibility for the nation's mistakes and cruel misdeeds. Madame Laure travelled across Germany with a team. She spoke to the eleven state parliaments of Germany as well as to countless people in factories, churches and universities. She repeated her apology and her appeal to rebuild Europe together.

Robert Schuman, Prime Minister of France and Konrad Adenauer, Chancellor of West Germany, publicly acknowledged the contribution she made to create a new spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation between the two bitterly hostile nations. Historians have concluded that the friendship and trust established between France and Germany gave birth to the creation of the Coal and Steel Union of Western Europe, which eventually led to the European Economic Community. It has been said that the story of Madame Laure's change and its impact on Europe is an example of the truth, 'You change hate and you change history.'

For this writer it meant:

1. Telling the truth to my father the dishonest account I was sending him from college for the money he sent at great sacrifice,
2. Telling my maths teacher that I copied in an exam when I scored a phenomenal 86% although my usual average was between 5-10%
3. Apologising to a Nepali family for wishing harm for them because I hated them for owning a prosperous shop.
4. Deciding to give my life to God to be changed and used by Him for the rest of my life.

Since these beginnings I have fallen many times to diverse temptations. But I have found that if I am drastically honest with those closest to me and those with whom I work, and ready to accept correction from them, God uses my original surrender and acts of obedience to enable me to rise and continue the journey with Him.

One writes these 'personal things' with trepidation lest one is thought to be 'an exhibitionist who thinks he is the only one who is doing the right thing.' The risk is real. But it is taken with the belief that there may be some like me for whom taking 'small' but practical steps of obedience may be the start of their journey to freedom, effectiveness and destiny.

Big doors swing on small hinges. The climate of hopelessness, hate and violence that is making our society unworkable today calls for all of us to ask God where we should start to change our ways and our attitudes so that He is given an opening to come in and begin to answer our chaos.



## God At Work In History

CNBC Conference, Senapati. 21 March 1999

**T**his is a very timely subject for us because it makes us to look at the wider picture of the world and history. We need to know we are a part of the wider picture. Yet we live as if only we exist or that the world should go at our pace!

God put Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden 'to cultivate and take care of it', (Genesis 2:15). One day God came to the garden and, not finding the gardener and his wife, He called out, 'Adam, where are you?' I find this is one of the most fascinating and moving verses in the Bible because

*A Naga Speaks*



the meaning of this calling is that He means us to have an open, strong relationship with Him where He can talk to us as with someone He can trust. He brought all of us into the world to be responsible, dependable, co-workers with him to make the world into what he wants it to be – His kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

It is important to grasp that God does not work alone. He wants us to work with Him. He wants us to build His kingdom with Him. His purpose is that we experience joy and growth in mind, spirit and soul as we build it with Him. Our idea of the kingdom of God is incorrect because we think of it as one already built by God for us to just arrive and enjoy.

Now let us turn to the subject.

‘God at work in history’ is such a huge subject. And my knowledge of history is so inadequate. So I feel like a man looking at a vast deep forest before entering it to explore!

I am told historians generally agree that from the dawn of history up to our century, 21 civilisations have come and gone. After examining the rises and falls of nations, races and empires and civilisations, some historians have said they don’t see any meaning coming out of history except the selfishness, greed, destructiveness and cruelty of the human race. But others who believe there is a spiritual dimension beyond the material dimension of the Universe, say history reveals growth and improvement towards a higher, better point of civilisation.

The Second Law of Thermo-dynamics, which says, everything is deteriorating in nature. The opposite law of the spirit shows the irrepressible power and urge of the spirit that cannot be destroyed. It is the one force in the universe that keeps rising up.

Professor Arnold Toynbee, an Englishman, is one of the most respected historians of this century. In his book, *A Study of History* he examined all the civilisations of history. One very important point he made was that ‘a creative minority’ keeps the human race improving itself and going up despite the rises and falls of nations and civilisations. This minority can some time become extremely small. The growth is in the ideas in the mind and spirit of man.

In Genesis 18 and 19, Abraham pleaded with God to please save Sodom if he could find at least 50 righteous people in the city who did what was right and just. God said yes. He could not find even ten people and the decadent city was destroyed. In this story Lot and his two daughters

survived to be the tiny creative minority to start anew.

God at work in history can be compared to the flow of a spring starting from its source hidden behind rocks. The spring becomes a tiny stream, a brook, then, a river. Sometimes landslides bury the spring and all its beauty and purity are spoilt, or even disappear. But after some time it works its way out and starts to flow again. The river flows into rocky formations that cannot be pushed aside. The river finds its way around the obstacles and continues to flow again. The meandering course of the river adds, as if by design, to the beauty of rivers, valleys and mountains. As it flows on, overcoming extremely difficult obstacles, the river becomes stronger, bigger, increasing its power and potential to support plants, animals and mankind.

In the Old Testament we see God at work in the history of the Israelites and their neighbours with whom they interacted in various ways. We see them struggling through their history. They made terrible mistakes, but they kept struggling. Their triumphs and failures were decided by whether they followed their own human desires and ambitions or obeyed God's vision for them as a people, and also personally in their day-to-day affairs. From their very difficult experiences of failures and victories, the Jews learnt truths that are precious for all of mankind. Their prophets and teachers were philosophers and poets who wrote down what they experienced and thought and learned.

Their philosophy of life emerged from their meditations and reflections on the experiences of their history. Because they were so good at recording what happened to them and what they thought and learnt, they have shared their intellectual, spiritual, philosophical and cultural wealth with the whole world. They are a small nation in terms of population. But their influence on mankind has perhaps been the greatest and strongest of all civilisations. Perhaps it will be true to say that the most significant influence on even Nagas has come from the Jews?

When we come to the New Testament, we see the stream of the Jews breaking out of the narrow confines of Judea through Mount Calvary and the empty tomb of Easter morning to flow mightily across the world.

Within a few centuries the philosophy of life that the Cross germinated, started the Christian era or the Christian civilisation centred in Europe. We are about to enter the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium of this era.

In the study of society a word called 'synthesis' is used. Synthesis is

what is produced as a result of the clash and mixing of ideas, thoughts and cultures. Another word for this is 'cross-fertilisation' of ideas.

The best, the finest products of a culture or civilisation are not totally wiped out by the clash and mixing of civilisations. They get synthesised and thus the best from all civilisations become the common heritage of mankind. Some of the greatest and most significant synthesising of thoughts from different cultures has taken place in the last 2000 years of the Christian era.

I am referring to Hebrew, Zoroastrian, Taoist, Confucianist, Hindu, Buddhist, Christian and Islamic ideas clashing and mixing to produce the modern civilisation that we have inherited today. This common heritage is seen in the universally accepted concepts of law, politics, art, philosophy, science and technology and economics. Here I am making a very broad generalisation about the main strands of thoughts from the past coming together or getting synthesised.

Now because of the rapid progress in science, technology and the revolutionary changes in politics and economics made increasingly unmanageable because of the increase in population, violence, cruelty, and injustice have also increased in terrible ways.

The scale of injustice and cruelty in many situations in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries has been so great mankind has naturally often doubted God to be at work in history. The millions of people who lost their lands, their freedom and dignity to imperialism in Africa, Asia and the Americas from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards to the beginning of this century, began to reject the idea that God was at work on the side of justice and truth.

The conquests and colonisation by the Western nations and Japan, the injustices and inequalities that prevailed under the capitalist economic system, all these sowed the seeds for the century's gigantic ideological conflicts. The conflicts produced the two most destructive wars ever in history. Because they were fought by the global superpowers of the day, the wars were for the first time world wars.

Out of the conflicts also emerged the two mighty twins of materialism of the left and the right. On the left came Marxism and Leninism, which came to be called communism. On the right came fascism of Nazism under Hitler in Germany and the Black Shirts under Benito Mussolini in Italy. Both ideologies categorically rejected God and moral and spiritual values of religion as irrelevant in man's affairs.

The two World Wars that took place in the first half of the 20th century caused unprecedented destruction materially and in psycho-spiritual terms. In the First War an estimated 15 million soldiers and civilians died. In the Second War more than 30 million. Under Hitler alone 6 million Jews were exterminated, the ugliest and most organised act of genocide ever attempted in history. The figure of the number killed or starved to death in the struggle to establish Communism in the USSR, China and other regions of the world goes beyond 70 million. Then the number of people who have died in various ways since the end of the War and the fall of communism, especially through famines and political massacres in Asia, Africa and Latin America is also unbelievably high.

It is not surprising the violent and massive and complicated changes the world has witnessed in this century has made people doubt the existence of a God of truth, goodness and justice, or to think that He is powerless.

In I Kings 19:11-13, we get a picture of God at work in turmoil and chaos. When things go wrong, we human beings naturally conclude there is no God. So often our feelings and moods guide us inadequately. In the verses just read, we learn that God is beyond the political, social, economic earthquakes, thunders and fires. 'After the fire came a gentle whisper', the 'still small voice'. We are so often incapable of knowing how God works in history.

When we look back over the centuries, the times when God intervened shine like burning candles dispelling the darkness of history. I believe God has worked through all the great thinkers, founders of religions, social reformers and statesmen and stateswomen. It will not be possible today to go into the names.

Gandhi is a very fascinating example of the synthesis of the best of seemingly conflicting cultures and beliefs and traditions producing the thinking and character of a reformer, nation-builder and world statesman whose message challenged the best to come out from all mankind. He said, 'My life is my message.' In addition to his strict Vaishnavite Hindu spiritual base, he said what shaped his thinking most came from the Sermon on the Mount and the New Testament, 'Unto This Last' by John Ruskin, and Tolstoy of Russia. As a true revolutionary he was clear about all the wrongs and injustices that had to change. But he was an extraordinary revolutionary because he was guided by God, not his own ambition or desires.

He said 'The only tyrant to whom I bend my knees is the still small

*A Naga Speaks*

voice.' His methods and means we adopt to achieve ends and goals must be equally pure. This majestic doctrine of revolution brought down the mightiest empire ever in history but the British and the Indians became greater friends after that. The non-violent transfer of power in India enabled the British to give up their global empire in Asia and Africa and the Caribbean without violence but with honour and grace.

The victory of the philosophy of non-violence in the global situation of dangerous political conflicts played a decisive part in the victory of the civil rights movement for the rights of the blacks in the US, and in the ending of Communist tyranny under the USSR without violence. 'The gentle whisper' or the still small voice emerged from the earthquakes and fires of racial and ideological conflicts to start to heal the wounds and give hope and faith to mankind again.

This positive, constructive process triumphed again in South Africa. It is the decisive power in the Arab and Israeli crisis and the Irish conflict, although many may dispute this assertion. I think it will be fair to state that people now expect and believe what is right for all should win through transparency, truthfulness and compassion.

Finally we come to our situation. I believe it is a good and priceless legacy that we are struggling and are in a crisis. It means we are trying to be true to what we feel deeply to be important for ourselves as a people. But unless we allow God's wisdom and plan to win, our human plans to fulfil our own ambitions will destroy us. If God is to work in our dangerous situation, and take us forward, each one of us has to decide to let God change us, guide us, and use us.

This means asking God to tell us the things in our lives that make it impossible for him to come in and run our lives. Are they habits, attitudes of hatred or jealousy? Compromises for selfish benefits?

At the beginning we mentioned Toynbee's concept of the creative minority. Let us return to the theme by reflecting on the same point that Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn made in his famous Nobel acceptance speech about the least each one can do is to ensure the lie does not come into the world through us.

Here I want us to understand what I think is a very important point. It is that God requires us to obey Him at two levels. He gives us a great and inspiring vision, which can lift us above the difficulties that tie us down. But equally important is His guidance of correction and direction

that He gives us in our daily lives.

How He guides us is best expressed in Psalms 51, 'Thou desirest truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden parts thou shalt make me know wisdom.' The Old Testament prophets took God seriously. They taught the need to obey God both at the national vision level and at the personal individual level.

Both are equally important because God requires us to respond to Him at both levels.



### Daring To Take A Stand

*L*ast month a young lady of 21 in Delhi decided to obey a clear thought in her heart. She ignored fears and doubts about the consequences. The result was she ignited hope right across India, no doubt beyond as well.

Nisha Sharma, a final-year software engineering student, had prepared everything to get married according to the age-old traditions of her religion. She had shopped extensively to collect dowry items, a car, the latest electrical and electronic household gadgets, jewellery, expensive sarees, and so on, for her prospective in-laws.

The wedding day came. She was dressed in the best sarees and heavily bejewelled, her hands and feet fully painted in deep red *henna* patterns, to go through the elaborate religious ceremonies. At the end of it all, she would emerge a married woman. Into the colourful wedding *mandap* her family had put up, relations and guests started to arrive.

Just then an ugly incident occurred. The greedy prospective mother-in-law demanded additional dowry for her elder son who had married a number of times already, and Rs.12 lakh in cash. When Nisha's bewildered father expressed his inability to meet the demand, the hard-hearted woman slapped him. Nisha 'picked up courage and the telephone' and called the police who instantly arrived. So did the media persons who thronged the humble house of the Sharmas in the Noida township of Delhi. In a matter of hours Nisha 'turned into a heroine while the greedy groom fidgeted behind bars.'

To the TV mikes thrust in front of her and the furiously scribbling reporters she simply said she 'responded to the call of my heart', when she

was asked what had happened. Women's groups, political leaders, proud neighbours have constantly called to congratulate her and express their support to her and her family. Some admirers have proposed marriage.

*India Today* has said, 'If such social reaction to dowry reaches critical mass, the rules of the dowry game will change.' Nisha has managed to save herself from a future of permanent mediocrity, miserable, suppressed suffering and perhaps even bride-burning, murder or suicide and become a significant voice and leader on a crucial issue because she obeyed her heart.

We are each one of us designed 'wonderfully and fearfully' to listen to the call from within us that comes clearly to us at all times and be amazingly and adventurously (and unexpectedly) guided by it. 'Definite, specific, accurate thoughts can come from the mind of God to the minds of men and women,' as Frank Buchman used to say repeatedly. He also said, 'The ordinary person can do extraordinary things if he or she is guided by God.'

Buchman was called 'an all-out personality who took God seriously'. Perhaps his being all-out was the extraordinary thing about this ordinary man. His imaginative initiatives played the key part that enabled healing to come to the historic wounds of hate, fear and revenge between France and Germany which ultimately resulted in the joint statement by Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and President Charles de Gaulle in 1958, 'The long time French-German hostility is finished once and for all', and calling on French and Germans, 'to live in agreement and work side by side' in solving the problems of the world. *The New York Herald Tribune* called it 'a very profound alteration'.

The governments of France and Germany conferred the highest decorations on Buchman for the role he and his fellow workers had played to unite the two nations and thereby laid the foundations for the economic recovery of Western Europe. As he looked back towards the end of his life, Buchman reflected, 'I have been wonderfully led.'

There is something magical in the above two accounts of listening to the call or 'intimations' from within. If we studied it with sufficient attention we see that the magic comes from the fact that it is God at work that we are seeing – if we will only recognise it.

Nisha Sharma was not engaged in a venture of momentous importance. She was just getting married. But the life of each one of us is a



vital part of the churning and ebb and flow of humanity.

Most of the time, because we are so naturally conditioned by the mundane ordinariness of our existence, we fail to see that we are each vital and significant, simply because God made each one in his own image, and our soul inside us is His very breath. And, therefore, we can and do make a difference when we respond to the clear urgings coming from inside. Nisha did and discovered the way to live stretching out before her, every step of which will be an adventure in being truthful. The thing about the way is not so much that it is true, but it has to be walked in obedience.

The urgings from God are unmistakable, definite and strong if we will only stop and listen to them and take them seriously. In trying to obey the urgings we might of course make plenty of mistakes because it is his way, not ours that we are trying to follow. We are meant to keep going, learning from our blunders.

We are talking about the road less travelled. The road that demands the best out of us. The road that is full of the unexpectedness and freshness of God. And if we keep walking on it, it will lead to liberation of lives and all-round development. This is how it is put in Jeremiah 6:16, 'Stand at the commands and look, ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.'



### **Not Going Far Enough**

**N**ot going far enough is killing lives - too many too early. It is paralysing countless families, our society and politics. Are we going to let this satanic strategy destroy us without our fighting it?

My family has lost two young talented, precious members because they refused to go far enough. We the family are also responsible for our grievous loss because we could not go far enough to help them to save themselves. The grim reality is that more members are in the deadly queue of not going far enough. Unless these members realise it is they, and no one else, who have to decide to go far enough to cooperate with God and those who can help them to recover, our family is helplessly watching a slow drama of gradual but sure self-killing.

It sounds awful, but that is exactly what countless Naga families are doing. The nightmare is so depressing we the spectators have to speak out

*A Naga Speaks*



to seek relief, support from one another and ways for solutions. It is our right to do so.

Alcohol and drug addicts become addicts, and continue to be addicts by not going far enough. Their family members help them to continue in their defeat by not going far enough. It is beyond most of us to cope with the endless lies, tricks and excuses addicts used to avoid doing what they should do because of fears.

Addiction is a psycho-spiritual problem of neurosis and our society has not yet acquired an adequate understanding and experience to deal with it correctly. We are creating problems, which are beyond our experience to solve.

Because of our failure to go far enough we have wounded and embittered one another. The result is murderous politics. Can we deny to our vicious divisive and destructive politics is the product of our moral, spiritual and philosophical bankruptcy? Can we build a people into a nation without dealing with tribal prejudices and rivalries and lack of vision for one another? Is not God saying anything to us about these shortcomings and, are we hearing Him?

Moral and spiritual bankruptcy starts and becomes philosophical bankruptcy by not going far enough. Philosophical bankruptcy makes society stagnant, religion superstitious and shallow, dogmatic and fundamentalist. The politics that results from philosophical bankruptcy is inevitably vicious, divisive and destructive.

The Bible condemns not going far enough in no uncertain terms. Jesus used an unforgettable idea to make abundantly clear his view on the subject, namely- to go the extra mile in selflessness, love and truthfulness in our dealings with others. Going the extra mile is Christ-like and divine. It creates trust, hope and healing. It becomes possible to forgive and be forgiven. If we do not go 'The Christly nature stretch of the extra mile,' we call for that which is impossible, to 'forgive and forget'. To those who have been hurt and wounded this is insensitive, cruel and faith-killing.

Christ knew the satanic power of human pride and selfishness to resist to the end 'the still small voice' in us to go far enough. So the well-known statement he made was, 'Not seven times,' but Christ emphatically replied 'seventy times seven!'

Is it not that our soul is starved and our thinking oppressive and uncreative because we have not dared to defy Satan, our pride and our

tribe-centred strategies to go far enough with fellow Nagas as God is requiring of us to create together a society that will work? Right now our thoughts are about the advantage of our own tribe in an eventual political settlement, not the long-term health of our inter-tribe relationships.

Let us understand that if our inter-tribe relationships are not healed, any settlement that comes will create problems far more dangerous than we have experienced so far. What we have experienced already has shocked us. Let us not underestimate what the vengeful hates and suspicions that we have towards one another will produce tomorrow unless we heal them today through drastic honesty with God's help.

The narcissistic self-centeredness of infancy appears to be total. But it is clear it has a deeper core, which is designed by God to grow into the opposite of narcissism, namely, to reach out to others in selflessness, compassion and understanding. But if due to any reason this growing out of narcissism to altruistic selflessness fails to occur in a person, the result is personality disorder, cruelty and lack of feeling for the lives and welfare of others. Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot and other sadistic maniacs are cited as extreme examples.

Is not the same principle clearly at work in the growth of a people who are required individually and collectively to learn to progressively adjust to difficult changes? Our natural instinct for the preservation of our respective tribes has brought us all up to where we are today. Tribalism or tribal narcissism is the other name for this natural instinct. We do not need to condemn this natural instinct that is in us. It has been necessary, a vital part of the design for our survival and growth.

But we are going to needlessly destroy ourselves if we do not now realise that we are all required to leave our tribal childhood behind, and learn to hold one another to the highest by giving our best to one another, and thus give our children the sure foundation they need to build the nation which is the dream Nagas can no longer discard.

This works out to nothing less than inspiring one another to carry the Cross of Christ to build His Kingdom on earth - a society that is just, dynamic and safe for all, where there is enough for every one's needs, but not for every one's greed. If we will be wise and far seeing enough to dare to hold one another to the highest, the instinct to preserve ourselves only will start to serve our wider, common Naga identity.

Reaching out beyond our tribal agendas to create relationships of

trust and caring for one another within the Naga family is the price we have to pay to purchase what is most important to us, namely the reality of our claim that we are a people fit to be a nation.

We have come to a point where we face an unknown future. At a time of insecurity as at this present time, as an individual or as a people we are strongly tempted to be controlled by familiar fears and prejudices from the past. It is safer to stay in our 'comfort zone' of tribal narcissism, and refuse to step out and shake hands with other tribes, risk cooperation, transcending distrust, and choosing trust to create a new future together.

Why is going far enough so important? The answer is: It is only when we go far enough that we come to God, to truthfulness, to the Cross. And it is only there that we meet others whose help we need, and who need our help as fellow sinners, meant by God to inspire one another to grow together.

### **Hell And Heaven And Our Society**

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**T**he simple truth is that when we are not creating heaven on earth we are creating hell for others and ourselves. The reverse is also true. Alas, there doesn't seem to be a 'neutral time' when we are not creating either! So it is clear we cannot ignore the subject of hell and heaven if we care at all about the quality of our society.

Can hell be very different from what many of us are already experiencing in our families, our schools and colleges, our offices and our workplaces, and our politics? Or wherever we live out our lives. Has it made inroads into our churches also through some of the values we actually worship? Should any Nagas arrive in hell, God forbid, will they find the thinking and living there strange or frighteningly similar to the one they already adopted while on earth, overground or underground?

The Lord's Prayer calls for the building of a society 'on earth as it is in heaven'. Satan's prayer surely calls for the opposite, 'as it is in hell'. And judging by the society we have today we have to admit that Satan's prayer, not the Lord's Prayer has been zealously implemented by Nagas! As the majority of Nagas are Christians, have we not shown 'Christian unity' to demonstrate what the Devil wants for the world, despite our notorious

***A Naga Speaks***

inability to work together in other ways?

How has such a thing happened in Christian-majority Nagaland? Is it not because we have subverted the doctrine of grace, faith, forgiveness and salvation so that God is kept out of our lives and we can do, as we like? Our amended doctrine says, 'God, because He is love, has done everything. His Son died on the Cross, so if we can say we believe in him we can do, as we like. Sin is easily dealt with by Christians because of that sacrifice. We can be selfish, dishonest, mean, cruel and vicious to get what we want for ourselves.'

But he forgives everything freely because we are Christians, and our place in paradise is secure. To try to change our wrong ways is self-effort, which shows we have no faith in his grace. Don't many of us think, 'what a wonderful religion! Praise the Lord! It is so easy!' I am not suggesting that our preachers preach such a heretical doctrine. But somehow this human-centred and wrong version of Christianity seems to have won and is fast destroying our traditional concepts of right and wrong, and sense of shame and honour, which came from a deep belief in a Creator who does not tolerate injustice and untruthfulness. The proof of this is in the chaos of our society today.

Rome was not built in a day. Neither is hell or heaven. Like Rome, hell and heaven are also the results of steady growth from seemingly insignificant beginnings. The point is that neither of them grows apart from the choices and actions of human beings. Are we not being misled by the serious error that we experience hell or heaven only after we are dead, whereas both of them start in this life according to the values we choose to follow?

There may be more to hell or heaven than what we human beings are to do or not to do. But it will be safe to state that the main story about either of them is about how exactly each one of us lives each moment each day. And God expects us to be responsible for the way we think and act right now, and not waste our time and energy discussing what may be in the future. What we are or do today decides tomorrow.

Blaise Pascal, French mathematician and theologian, taught that, 'God is in the details!' What a luminous truth is in this brief observation! Just try to examine it and it keeps exploding into greater brightness and you begin to see an unexpected way opening up before you, beckoning you to step out and walk on it. You start to see that the long ignored details, which make or unmake life and society can be changed, and you want to

***A Naga Speaks***

make a fresh start in yourself!

Our society will do well to learn from the humility and realism of recovering addicts who begin and continue in their recovery by faithful obedience to 'the details' they confront 'one day at a time', claiming from God (or the Higher Power) 'courage to change the things I can', accepting with serenity 'the things I cannot change'.

Addiction is another word for hellishness. And chaotic behaviour due to thoughtless living is another word for addiction. A careful examination of our society soon reveals that its chaos and purposelessness are due to the thoughtlessness and irresponsibility of all of us. High levels of addictiveness is then our common trait, not of just the few honest ones recovering at the various counselling and rehabilitation centres in the state.

The main purpose of this reflection on hell and heaven is to draw attention to the hope-giving possibilities that are there for us, and our society if we will start with 'the details' that God is waiting for us to tackle.

Another way of expressing what Christ meant in His formula for creating God's society 'on earth as it is in heaven' was that His society on earth starts the moment we decide to give our very best to one another. The opposite happens, or Satan's social order is built, when we give our worst to one another in every situation of our interaction with others - at home, the classroom, workplaces, the church, and so on. It is a mysterious, spiritual truth that there really are no intermediary stages between our best and our worst. It is either one or the other.

Someone said the great truths of life are unbelievably simple. I believe one of them is this: if every Naga could simply decide to care enough and started to reject giving his worst to our society and instead give his best, the whole crisis condition of Nagaland will experience a jolt of deep liberation. It will mean the end of the using of lies and excuses to justify our present ways of doing the minimum or nothing to get the maximum. Or to hide and defend our mistakes, heedless of the harm done to others. Imagine a firm commitment by every Naga to give his or her best!

It will bring about a dramatic crash in the present levels of corruption, irresponsibility, factional killings due to distrust, divide-and-destroy tactics being pursued by intelligence agencies which harm Nagas and India equally, cheating in examinations, trafficking and addiction to chemicals, and all the other evils of our sick and worn-out society. Boredom will vanish, as there will be so much to be done. The underemployment

of the employed will end, resulting in the lowering of unemployment. Development will be real. It will be like the valley of dry bones coming alive! It is possible and God requires us to make it happen.

We Nagas are used to talking in terms of revolution - social, economic and political. It is good we do so as no nation grows without revolutionary changes. But the revolution we need will actually take place only if all of us can become responsible about 'the details' in the way we perform our duties and in all our relationships. If we think our growth and progress will be achieved more easily, we will inescapably have a succession of vicious dictatorships, whether we are inside or outside India.

To me, it is a fascinating realisation that paradise and heaven are projects that God gives me to develop immediately by co-operating with him, just as it is certainly a frightening truth that I inaugurate hell and achieve damnation right away by my co-operation with the Devil. They are not future realities. Active co-operation is the key issue. And the choice is left to me - and you.









*'Over the years, Niketu has sown the seeds of peace in Nagaland.'*  
*- A Naga Elder -*

Niketu Iralu, 84, has been a peacebuilder extraordinaire for 62 years, since his life was transformed through Initiatives of Change. He is a member of FNR - Forum for Naga Reconciliation.

He brings ease and inspiration to whoever he meets. Through being with him, each person feels encouraged to free themselves of the blocks in their personal life to play a greater role in bringing the ethical and the spiritual as the basis of society's progress.

Niketu Iralu has become a recognised, star conscience voice for the Nagas, for the North East of India and beyond.



He is married to Christine, an Anglo-Indian Australian, for 41 years. They have made their home in Nagaland, 'Kerünyü Kî', the House of Listening, warmly welcoming for individual after individual, group after group.

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