

# Editorial

Friday, Feb. 14, 2018

## Hope floats

Finally! a year that had witnessed a plethora of unique and amazing, and numerous not so pleasant surprises is coming to an inevitable end. People the world over, as is in the State are eagerly anticipating the sunset to wait out the fag end of the day and start the revelry and celebrate the successful closure of a period in one's life, but perhaps more for the sheer luck of surviving yet another precious year in this unpredictable and volatile society of ours.

Whatever the reason, it would be an understatement to state that people everywhere is hoping in their hearts of better things to come, and wishing dear and near ones for good fortune and a better future has come to signify a great deal lot than just the thought, for it actually tells without actually mentioning the fact that we all still care and thought of the welfare of others, and that the spirit of festivity and celebration enthused all to warm up to beautiful and positive thoughts, save for a very few souls who are either beyond earthly desires or beyond redemption.

This is the time when hope spring forth and reinvigorate our lives. It gives us a renewed vigour and desire to better ourselves. This is the gist of our future. We have a lot to wish and hope for, and indeed it is this hope that has and will sustain us in our life. Yet hope without the pursuit will only relegate it to a daydream, a waste of time. We have seen and experienced instances of excess, of violation and unwarranted aggression. Violence and fear has been driving factor that has made us scurry for safety and become cynical of the promises made by those who are at the helm of affairs, the very people who were entrusted to provide safety and progress for the people who chose them. The people of Manipur may feel cheated and betrayed, as they should, but hope is eternal, and as long as we have it in our hearts and work to realize it, nothing can stop us from achieving the things we hoped for. We need to be proactive and not wait for the tall promises to be delivered.

It is now time to make things happen, and for that we have to get involved, make ourselves heard and be counted. It has been our collective endeavor here at Imphaltimes to provide the facts, real and undistorted, for the people to draw up an informed decision and opinion. There has been many challenges on the way, and we also know that there will be bigger ones which might slow us down, but we will not stop, nor will we bog down or bow to pressure because that would be betraying our own beliefs and hopes. As Albert Einstein famously suggested: Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow. The important thing is not to stop questioning.

Perhaps, Franklin D. Roosevelt sums up the feelings of every one of us when he said "We have always held to the hope, the belief, the conviction that there is a better life, a better world, beyond the horizon". Wishing everyone a happy and better future from Imphaltimes.

# Luingaini and Naga Integration movement in Manipur

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### Abstract

"Lui-Ngai-Ni", a unique festival Nagas in Manipur observed since 1988 was coined by amalgamating the initials 'Lui' from the Tangkhul festival, 'Lura'; 'Ngai' and 'Ni' respectively from the ending of the Romgei festival 'Gaan Ngai' and the MaoMaram/Poumai festival, 'Chithuni'. Lui-Ngai-Ni represents only the three biggest communities in the present Naga fold, that also in head-tail-tail order, the head represented by Tangkhul, as usual in other life-world of the Manipur Nagas. Lui-Ngai-Ni, in public notice, remains a political festival, observed only at the district headquarters where Naga Communities based lobby groups used its festive ambience to further their political machinations like severing of ties with state government, separate administration, or even hate campaign during the yesteryears ethnic conflict days etc. In this year 2016 also TR Zeliang, the Chief Minister of Nagaland took part in it going overboard explicitly with the agenda of Nag integration politics. Social-gatherings, songs, colorful dances, glittering fashion shows and rejoicing continually passes on to be the highlight of the Lui-Ngai-Ni. Even then, the festival in this present layouts no tribute to those who are now in heavenly abode or in their twilight years being in advancing old age, but in their prime time 30 years before or so, have contributed all what they have, their head, heart and hard labor in assembling Lui-Ngai-Ni so that the Manipur Nagas of the present generation joins the comity of nations with a common festival which will be the 'national festival' as it has not been filtered down to and no community at the present Naga fold observes it at the village level. The festival doesn't in anyway help in concretizing the Naga identity which is still at the abstract level. With only three communities being represented in the etymology of Lui-Ngai-Ni, the issue of exclusion and inclusion is very much there. Correspondingly, it doesn't seem to serve any purpose in boosting the morale and strengthening the bond of Naga solidarity. Therefore, our fellow native brethren, the Manipur Nagas as people with unique history needs to review and scrutinize whether the present form of Lui-Ngai-Ni requires redefinition, reconfiguration or a reinvention of altogether new festival, with all the qualities of uniqueness so that all the tribes in the colorful Naga identity will not feel left out and collectively share and cherish an encompassing and inclusive feeling.

A representation submitted to the Manipur Chief Minister for reinstating 'Gaan Ngai' as State Holiday by Zeliangrong Union Clubs Association Manipur Valley (ZUCAMV) on 31<sup>st</sup> February 2002 allegedly stated 'Lui-Ngai-Ni' as 'artificial state sponsored festival'. The declaration of 'Lui-Ngai-Ni' as state general holiday during the Chief Ministership of Rishang Keishing in 1988, himself from Tangkhul community and his remaining in active politics as senior most Congress leader at the time of dropping Gaan Ngai from the holiday list perhaps prompted ZUCAMV to make such statement. The endeavor for the invention of common festival of the 'Nagas' in Manipur started in the mid 1980s. Nagas being the most colorful people have been characterized by diversity. Some who now identify themselves as Nagas were classified by the earlier British colonial administrator as belonging to the Chin-Kuki-Mizo (CHKIM). If that is the case then can we say 'Naga' is more of a political creed than a socio-cultural identity. Hobbsawn and et al in *Invention of Tradition* says (reprint, 2002) 'traditions' which appear or claimed to be old are often quite recent in its origin and sometimes invented. This contention seems equally valid in the case of Lui-ngai-ni. An introductory statement by Secretary, Organising Committee, in the *Souvenir*, Naga Lui-Ngai-Ni, the 15<sup>th</sup> February, 1988, Imphal says: "of late, the Naga groups have emerged from their isolated doll-states and asserted their identity as one race in the comity of the Indian Nation which has been accepted by the Government of India. The Nagas do not have a common festival which could be called as the 'national festival'." This statement reflects the quest for concretizing the identity of the Manipur Nagas, which they perhaps felt it inevitably necessary to satisfy the political needs of the present generation. Considering the need for a common festival of their own, Naga scholars, leaders and social workers considered to organize a seminar, to find out ways and means whereby a common festival of the Nagas could be formulated.

Proceedings of the Seminar on the 'Manipur Naga Festivals' held on 10<sup>th</sup> of May, 1986 at GM. Hall, Imphal resolved that the Nagas in Manipur should have a common festival day in a year. Names suggested in the Recommendation Committee of the seminar are:  
Naga Seedling Day  
Naga Cultural Awakening/Revival Day  
Naga Festival Day  
Naga Farmer's Day  
Naga Seed Day  
Naga New Year  
Naga Seed Sowing Festival and so forth.

The members recommended Naga Seed Sowing festival (NSSF) which is to be observed in the 15<sup>th</sup> of February every year as the most appropriate and decided to forward it to the state government for necessary implementation. NSSF was observed for the first time in 15<sup>th</sup> February 1987 with an appeal to 'every sane Naga' to play their part to make it a permanent Naga festival for years to come for "a race without its own culture is a lost race beyond redemption". (*Lui-Ngai-Ni Souvenir*, 1988). The follow up seminars and consultations in the aftermath of the festival decided that the function shall hitherto be called Naga Lui-Ngai-Ni. Lui-Ngai-Ni has never been listed as one of the tourism festivals of India by the Ministry of Tourism, GoI. The nomenclature 'Lui-Ngai-Ni' was coined by amalgamating the initials 'Lui' from the Tangkhul festival, 'Lura'; 'Ngai' and 'Ni' respectively from the ending of the Romgei festival 'Gaan Ngai' and the MaoMaram/Poumai festival, 'Chithuni'. The biggest and first festival of the Zeliangrong which is also described as a New Year Festival. 'Gaan-Ngai' is also called 'Hegang' among the 'Zeme' and 'Gin-Ngi' among the Liangmei. Gaan-Ngai which performs the production of fire, 'Mairapmei' is usually celebrated between the month of October and December depending on the state of the progress of agricultural operation. Later, the Kabui Naga Association, the progenitor of the present Zeliangrong Union decided in 1947 that Gaan-Ngai be performed on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of the Meitei month of 'Wakching' a month which usually falls in the month of January as per the Meitei calendar of the lunar year. Since then, it has been performed on 13<sup>th</sup> of 'Wakching' onwards. 'Chithuni' is the biggest and most important festival among the MaoMaram/Poumai tribes of Manipur. It falls in the month of January (Chithunikhro). The festival in accordance with the significances attached to it can also be called as the festival of 'the Harvesting; the New Year; and the Seed Sowing'. The genesis of the ethnonym 'Naga' is still shrouded in mystery. Tracing the genesis of the term 'Naga' from the Assamese word 'Naga', meaning 'mountain' or the word 'Naga' meaning 'naked' by the colonial historiographers are all rejected by the Naga scholars. E.W. Dun observed that Nagas have no generic name but used their respective tribal names only. He identified only five tribal sub-groups of Naga tribes in Manipur namely Luhupa, Tangkhul, Koyla(Khoirao), Kaupui, and Maring in the Census of 1881. Naga scholars who do not accept the colonial ethnography on Naga identity came up with two proposed theories. One, Naga is derived from the Kachari word 'Nok', meaning warriors or fighters as the 'Kacharis' came into violent conflicts with the Naga tribes like the Angamis and Zeliangrong. Two, RR Shimray in his work 'Origin and Culture of the Naga (1985)', opines that Naga is derived from the Burmese word 'Naka' meaning 'pierced ears'. This is also accepted by Isak Chisi Swu, a leader of the naga rebel faction group, in his book, *From generation to generation: stories of origin and Migration of the Nagas*, (2001) as the most accepted and authentic version.

In the attempt to fashion an identity and history suitable to the political agenda of the present generation, the Naga Students Federation (NSF) put a ban on researches into Naga history and identity by the non-Nagas. It was in the first quarter of the twentieth century that the process of pan-Naga identity was experienced among some of the sub tribes in erstwhile Naga Hills. It was said that a great realization that they belonged to the same racial stock

with cultural affinity, and consequent decision to come together as one people took place while they (Lothas, Rengmas, Aos, Changs, etc.) were sojourning in Paris as Labour Corps during World War-I. In 1918, a group of Nagas who had returned from military service in France met to form the Naga Club. The Club submitted a memorandum signed by 20 different signatories who claimed to represent all tribes belonging to Angamis, Kacha Nagas, Kukis, Semas, Lothas and Rengmas when the Simon Commission came to Kohima in 1929 to seek opinions on the future of India. One Kuki was also there among the signatories, but no tribes from Manipur who are afterwards to be identified as Nagas. The memorandum expressed its desire to the British government when they requested the later to continue to safeguard their rights against all encroachments from other people who were more advanced than them. The club also wanted their (Naga) country to be placed directly under the protection of the British. The territories they so claimed as Naga country doesn't include any part of present day Manipur.

There is confusion as to the actual number of Naga Tribes. The memorandum submitted to the Simon Commission in 1929, by the Naga Club, mentions eight tribes within the administered area. The view of the Naga insurgent outfits is also important as more often than not their agenda becomes the agenda of the Naga mainstream politics and pursued vigorously to achieve through (Indian) Constitutional means. V. Suniti and Timothy's compilation *Cry For Justice*, published and brought out by GPRN, NSCN (IM) in the later part of 1990s mentioned 38 tribes living in Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Eastern Myanmar as belonging to the Naga. Out of that, 18 of them belonged to Manipur, namely, Aimol, Anal, Chiru, Chote, Kharam, Koireng, Kom, Maring, Mayon, Monshang, Lamkang, Mao and Maram, Thangal, Poumai, Tangkhul, Tarao, and Zeliangrong. According to Prof. Gangmumei Kamei, identification with the Nagas has been a process of pan-Naga identity. The term 'Any Kuki Tribe' was deleted from the list of Scheduled Tribes of Manipur in 1956. In the years that followed, there was a deep internal crisis of identity amongst the Kuki-Chin speaking tribal population. A number of the bridge-buffer communities that were oscillating between the Naga and the Kuki-Chin constellations were converted into Naga fold by the Nagaisation process and they joined the Naga movement. The Nagaisation process was also greatly strengthened by the Naga insurgency. Marings have come to identify themselves as Naga at the instance of Church leaders and the Naga hostiles.

In the early part of 2002, the NSCN-IM suggests a number of tribes in the Naga fold as 43. Instances of tribes being encompassed within the Naga fold is still an ongoing process. The simple example of it is the Peace Process Annual Calendar, 2008, *MIP, Government of the Peoples Republic of Nagalim*, in which the number was expanded to 68. Among those, tribes from Manipur are: 1. Anal; 2. Angami; 3. Ao; 4. Aimol; 5. Chiru; 6. Chote; 7. Inpu; 8. Kharam; 9. Kom; 10. Lamkang; 11. Liangmei; 12. Maram; 13. Mao; 14. Maring; 15. Mayon; 16. Monsang; 17. Poumai; 18. Romgei; 19. Tarao; 20. Wung Tangkhul; 21. Thangal; 22. Zeme. Sajal Nag (Naga Identity: Formation, Constructing Expansionism, eds., Thomas, C.J., *Dimension of Development in Nagaland*, Delhi, 2002) stated that the Naga identity in the 1940s included the Karbis and Nepalis but excluded all the sub-tribes of Manipur. The present Naga tribes of Manipur did not know the term Naga as late as 1940s, Shimray stated. He recorded his boyhood experience when he and his father were called Naga by a retreating Japanese troop during World War II. He and his father told the Japanese troop that they were Tangkhuls and not Naga. The Nagas in Manipur did not take part in the 1951 plebiscite, which was considered as the bedrock of the Naga independence movement. In 25 January 1952, the Nagas in Nagaland under the banner of Naga National Council (NNC) launched civil disobedience movement. As a part of it, the first Indian elections of 1952 were successfully boycotted. On the other hand, in Manipur all the ethnic

groups took active part in the said elections and a Tangkhul was elected from the Outer Parliamentary Constituency. Later, the GoI made an agreement with the Naga People's Convention (NPC) in 1960 and subsequently formed Nagaland as the sixteenth state of the India in 1963. It is noteworthy that many of the prominent leaders of the tribes who were later to be identified as Nagas stuck to the stand of remaining with Manipur instead of acceding to Nagaland. The All Tribal Delegation went to Delhi in May 1970 for demanding statehood of Manipur. The members of the said delegation include:

- 1) Daiho, Ex-Finance Minister, Manipur Assembly, 1948
- 2) Stephen Angkang, Ex-President, Tangkhul Long
- 3) K. Kalanung, President, Zeliangrong Regional Council
- 4) Shoukthoang Ashon, Ex-MLA. Nagaisation process, according to Gangmumei Kamei is still ongoing. Considering the diversity in the emergent Naga Nationhood, there has been remark that Naga Nationhood is more like a marriage of convenience rather than socio-historical process. Divorce can follow any time. Zeliangrong is a nomenclature of the three sub-tribes, Zeme, Liangmei and Romgei. This nomenclature is formed by the initials of the three sub-tribes. Ze for Zeme, Liang for Liangmei, and Rong represent Romgei. But Pumei who were included as the sub tribe of Kabui in the scheduled tribes list of Manipur asserted that they cannot be identified as 'Zeliangrong' as Pumei had not been represented in the nomenclature. Zeliangrong has aspiration for exclusive ethnic homeland of its own. But the Pumeis who together with the Romgeis formed main groups within the Kabui did not take part in it. They now prefer the ethnonym, "Inpu!" instead of Zeliangrong. Among the constituent Naga tribes, the Naga identity has shown fragmentation at the intra-tribal level. It is evident when the Pumeis wanted to break away from Zeliangrong and the Khoibus from Marings. Lui-Ngai-Ni represents only the three biggest communities in the present Naga fold, that also in head-tail-tail order, the head represented by Tangkhul, as usual in other life-world of the Manipur Nagas. Lui-Ngai-Ni, in public notice, remains a political festival, observed only at the district headquarters where Naga Communities based lobby groups used its festive ambience to further their political machinations like severing of ties with state government, separate administration, or even hate campaign during the yesteryears ethnic conflict days etc. In this year 2016 also TR Zeliang and Lal Tahawha respectively the Chief Minister of Nagaland and Mizoram took part in it with the former going overboard explicitly with the agenda of Nag integration politics. It started with invocation in Tangkhul dialect by Tangkhul Headman of Ukhrul/Hunphun village. Social-gatherings, songs, colorful dances, glittering fashion shows and rejoicing continually passes on to be the highlight of the Lui-Ngai-Ni. Even then, the festival in this present layout is no tribute to those who are now in heavenly abode or in their twilight years being in advancing old age, but in their prime time 30 years before or so, have contributed all what they have, their head, heart and hard labor in assembling Lui-Ngai-Ni so that the Manipur Nagas of the present generation joins the comity of nations with a common festival which will be the 'national festival'. Why because? It has not been filtered down to and no community at the present Naga fold observes it at the village level. The countdown of this festival begins from 1987 as this festival, though not with its present name, was first observed in the year 1987 in its proto form as 'Naga Seed Sowing Day'. The festival doesn't in anyway help in concretizing the Naga identity which is still at the abstract level. With only three communities being represented in the etymology of Lui-Ngai-Ni, the issue of exclusion and inclusion is very much there. Correspondingly, it doesn't seem to serve any purpose in boosting the morale and strengthening the bond of Naga solidarity. Therefore, our fellow native brethren, the Manipur Nagas as people with unique history needs to review and scrutinize whether the present form of Lui-Ngai-Ni requires redefinition, reconfiguration or a reinvention of altogether new festival, with all the qualities of uniqueness so that all the tribes in the colorful Naga identity will not feel left out and collectively share and cherish an encompassing and inclusive feeling.

### Marksheet / Certificate Lost

I, the undersigned, have lost my Mark sheet/ certificate for class X bearing roll no. 14270 of 2008 issued by Board of Secondary Education, Manipur (BOSEM) on the way between Jiribam to Imphal on 10/2/2018

Finders are requested to handover to the undersigned.

Sd/-  
Thongam Jibam Singh  
S/o Th. Bodon Singh

### Name changed

I, the undersigned, **Khundongbam Diasy Devi**, Residence of Wangkhei Ningthem Pukhri Mapal P.O. Imphal, Dist. Imphal East - Pin 795001, Manipur do hereby declare that, I have wholly renounced, relinquished and abandoned the use of old name **Ningthoujam Diasy Devi**, as I have assumed my new name **Khundongbam Diasy Devi**.

Sd/-  
**Khundongbam Diasy Devi**  
Wangkhei Ningthem Pukhri Mapal P.O.  
Imphal, Dist. Imphal East - Pin 795001,  
Manipur

### Bank pass book lost

I, the undersigned have lost my State Bank of India (SBI) pass book, Account no. 31783631648 issued by the SBI, Thoubal Branch, on the way between Thoubal Bazar to Khongiom Tekcham, on February 5, 2018.

Finders are requested to kindly hand over the items to the undersigned.

Sd/-  
Soibam Roshan Singh  
Contd no. 8132856196  
Tekcham Mayai Leikai.

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