

Editorial

Imphal, Tuesday, January 19, 2016

Mending the crack in time

Consider a building with a few broken windows. If the windows are not repaired, the tendency is for vandals to break a few more windows. Eventually, they may even break into the building, and if it's unoccupied, perhaps become squatters or light fires inside. Or consider a pavement. Some litter accumulates. Soon, more litter accumulates. Eventually, people even start leaving bags of refuse from take-out restaurants there or even break into cars. If the concept is to be applied to the law and order situation in our society with special emphasis to the prevailing system of administration and governance, one would find the same psychological response to the prevailing situation. This very social phenomena is termed the Broken Window Theory - introduced by James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling in an article titled Broken Windows, in the March 1982. The Atlantic Monthly following an experiment by Philip Zimbardo, a Stanford psychologist who tested the theory in 1969. Unsurprisingly for many, the test concluded that vandalism, or for that matter, most forms of social disturbances occurs much more quickly as the community generally seems apathetic. Similar events can occur in any civilized community when communal barriers - the sense of mutual regard and obligations of civility - are lowered by actions that suggest apathy. In other words, the theory posits that the prevalence of disorder creates fear in the minds of citizens who are convinced that the area is unsafe. This withdrawal from the community weakens social controls that previously kept criminals in check. Once this process begins, it feeds itself. Disorder causes crime, and crime causes further disorder and crime. A lot of social discrepancies - between the accepted social norms and the ground reality can be explained based on this theory. The snowballing effect of corruption, favoritism, unrest and elitism being increasingly experienced by the general public in the state can be understood more clearly and objectively when one understands the psychology behind the cause of such undesirable social occurrences. But understanding the cause is not the panacea to the festering problem, it is rather the beginning of a long and tedious process of reforms and redressals which should be pursued relentlessly. But the task at hand is easier said than done. The present system of administration and governance which has been consciously shaped and engineered to comply and conform to the interests of a precious few having access to power and connections, with the added bonus of having in place various mechanisms to protect and cover the nefarious activities and conniving characteristics of those fortunate few, needs to be pulled down and a radical system to administration and governance has to be drawn up to be implemented without further ado. In short, an overhauling of the deep rooted social evils and malpractices that has been inextricably intertwined with the present system is the need of the hour. If the present government does not have the gumption to own up and make the much delayed changes, the general public will be forced to act on their behalf. Time to fix the broken window is running out for the government.

Mark Sheet and Admit Card lost

I, the undersigned, have lost my mark sheet and Admit card issued by Board of Secondary Education, Manipur bearing Roll No. 27752 of 1997 on the way between Keishamthong Elangbam Leikai to Paona Bazar on 10/1/2016. Finders are requested to kindly hand over it to the undersigned.

Sd/-
Philachui D. Sareo

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Imphal Times is looking for an experience sub editor with excellent writing skill in English who can read Bengali written script. Working hour is 12 noon till 3 pm. Honorarium is Rs. 3000 p/m. Preference will be given to candidate who had already work in English daily as desk editor. Age no bar, and Imphal Times have no problem with those candidates working in other newspaper at night shift.

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The Indo-Naga conflict: a question of internal Indian ethnic conflict or a conflict between two nations?

(Write up produced here is the lecture delivered at the Centre for Manipur Studies by Kaka D. Iralu)

INTRODUCTION

1. In the light of modern political developments, the author will first try to develop a conceptual understanding of the word ethnic identity and national identity in relation to Nagaland and India. The first section will also point out the striking differences between the ethnic and national identities of Nagaland and India in the light of history, race, culture, religion and other factors.

2. In the next section, the author will give a brief history of the development of how different and even diverse ethnic identities merged into modern nation states in the modern world. These modern phenomena began in the 13th century and culminated in the 20th century. The author will trace the history of this development as it started from Europe in the 12th century and finally took over both Americas in the 18th century and on to Asia and Africa in the 20th century.

3. In the third section, the author will trace the development of this concept of the modern nation state as it developed in Nagaland and India in the 20th century. This development will be described with the words, from ethnicity to nationality. Intertwoven with this concept will be the development of Naga nationalism and Indian nationalism as they both struggled for freedom from the British yoke.

4. The paper will end with a statement of what the Nagas strongly believe are their national lands and their national rights which had been suppressed by India and Myanmar for over half a century.

SECTION-I TOWARDS A CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORD ETHNICITY AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

The Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary defines "ethnic" as "concerning nations or races." The Oxford Advanced Learners dictionary defines the same word as: "connected with or belonging to a nation, race or tribe that shares a cultural tradition." The word ethnic has its origin in the Greek word "ethnos" which literally means nation. In ancient times it was used to denote a tribe or city-state because of the nature of its independent political systems. In ancient times Nagas and Indians also lived in the pattern of the ancient Greek City States. For the Nagas, their villages were their worlds. Every village was a sovereign democratic republic with its own set of laws for the governance of the village. In Naga history, no village ever ruled over any other village or any tribe over any other tribe.

In the case of India, it was in the form of Princely States. Even as late as 1947, India was comprised of five hundred sixty two Princely States ruled by the Imperial British Empire. In more ancient times, broadly speaking, both the political and ethnic identity of the Indian citizen was then confined to the Princely State concerned. The citizens of the Princely State owed their allegiance only to the Prince or Maharaja of their State until the dawn of British rule from 1668 (Surrender of Bombay to The East India Company).

One cannot be too dogmatic here and insist that the Naga world and the Indian world were similar in all respects. In fact as later details will show, whatever similarities their worlds may have, the Naga worldview and the Indian worldview were poles apart. For many

hundred and thousands of years, the two Naga and Indian worlds existed in their respective patterns. However, with the dawn of the modern era, drastic changes overtook the world political scenario. In the cataclysmic changes that swept over the pages of human history, old political words changed their meanings from the ancient to the modern. In the process old words with narrow meanings suddenly developed broad meanings. In many cases entirely new words also came into the fray, sometimes swallowing up many old concepts into themselves. The word "ethnic" is one such word, which developed a much wider meaning in the modern era. For example fifty or so years ago when a Punjabi talked about his ethnic identity he would be talking in the context of his Punjabi race, culture, and customs, etc. But now in the modern world, he has to talk in the much wider Indian context. What developed in the modern world therefore, was a dual identity. Today citizens of many modern nation states have to live with these two identities. In my case I am an Angami by tribe but I am also a Naga by nationality. Politically, the only way I can describe myself is to say that my ethnic identity is Angami and my national identity is Naga. Here I must remember that while I am an Angami, all Nagas are not Angamis. In the case of Indians while a Punjabi is an Indian all Indians are not Punjabis. In my case there are cultural factors that are peculiarly Angami in nature. Similarly there are cultural factors which are peculiarly Lotha (another Naga tribe) in nature. These peculiar cultural factors are found in the form of dialect, customs, dress, mannerisms etc. However in spite of these peculiarities, there are also common cultural factors like democratic polity, system of law, clan affiliations etc which binds the Naga family together. One can put it this way; that the "peculiar factors" come under ethnic identity and the "common factors" come under the national identity. I believe this fact is also true of the Indian Punjabi and the Indian Marathi. This fact is also true of almost all modern nation states in the world.

DIFFERENCES IN THE ETHNIC AND NATIONAL IDENTITIES OF NAGAS AND INDIANS

We have just concluded that there are similarities in the patterns of the ethnic identity and national identities of both Nagas and Indians (as well as other nationalities). However we must remember that similarity in pattern does not mean similarity in essence too. As far as the national identities of the Nagas and the Indians are concerned, they are worlds apart. What I mean is that the "Naganes" of a Naga is totally different from the "Indianness" of an Indian. Please do not get me wrong here by accusing me of racism. What I am talking about here is the national identity differences of different nations. These differences are an undeniable universal fact. It is true that at the human level, irrespective of our different nationalities, there are many common human factors that bind all human beings together into a common humanity. These common human factors are factors like a common sense of right and wrong, truth and falsehood, justice and injustice etc. At this level we are all citizens of the world and the UNO is a symbol of that common humanity. However, at the level of our ethnic and national identities, there are undeniable differences. These differences are based on historical, political, racial, cultural and religious factors. To deny their existence is to imperil our own peaceful co-existence as nations. In the case of Nagaland and India, various attempts have been made to deny the existence of these truths. Not to talk of a denial of its existence, even military force had been used to impose the Indian national identity on the Naga identity. Hence there is political conflict between the two nations. Therefore in order to understand the Indo-Naga conflict, we must put these differences into black and white so that both sides know what they are talking about. Now, the Indo-Naga ethnic and national identities are different because of the following facts:

1. While racially, the Indian people mostly belong to the Dravidian and Aryan races, the Nagas in contrast belong to the Mongolian race.

2. Religion-wise, except for a very

small minority of Christians and other faiths, the bulk of India's millions belong either to the Muslim faith or the Hindu faith with its multifarious offshoots like Buddhism, Jainism or Sikhism etc. By contrast, the Nagas were all formerly Animists but are now mostly Christians. There is not a single Naga Hindu or Muslim in Nagaland.

3. In the Linguistic category too, the Indian languages belong to the Indo-European group of languages with Urdu and Sanskrit as its main languages. In contrast the great variety of Naga languages belong to the Tibeto-Burman group of languages.

Because of these striking differences in race, religion, and language, the cultural by-products and the national identities of both countries are strikingly different. Now, nobody can deny that the cultural ethos of a nation is the visible and practical expressions of a nation's "worldview." A nation's worldview is in turn based on the nation's religious or philosophical beliefs. To put it in mathematical equation, it will be Religious and Philosophical beliefs = Worldview of a Nation = Cultural Ethos of a Nation. The laws of a nation and the character of a nation are all influenced and shaped by this formula. Keeping this formula in the back of our minds, let us now briefly summarise the Indian worldview and the Naga worldview.

THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE INDIAN WORLDVIEW AND THE NAGA WORLDVIEW

The Indian worldview: The Indian worldview has been deeply influenced by Hinduism and Islam. Islam has its different sects with slightly different theologies. On the other hand, Hinduism, besides its pantheon of gods and goddesses, also has its many offshoots like Sikhism, Jainism, Buddhism etc. In all these offshoots, there are myriads of Gurus, Monks etc. Now, nobody can deny that these religions have influenced and shaped the Indian national identity. The cultural history of India as a result of these influences has a history of Kings with divine right to rule; and a cast system controlling their society. (To be contd.....)

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