

Editorial

Imphal Saturday, September 24, 2016

Chopping to our own foot

A picture is worth a thousand words, so said Napoleon Bonaparte. Incidentally, such a picture that evoked the deepest sympathy of every reader came out in a local daily that of a man pleading with folded hands to a group of enraged volunteers blocking the roads protesting some cause or the other, with his motorcycle destroyed and dismantled by the group menacingly wielding logs and bricks. Of late, the disturbing frequency of resorting to bands and blockades to express dissatisfaction over the Government's conduct of state affairs or to push for a demand has taken a more horrifying turn with even traditional and cultural dos as well as exigent circumstances getting the boot. While the various demands that are being made are, in most cases if not all, genuine and necessary, there is an emerging need to rethink the strategy and the means to achieve the demand or set of demands. It is perplexing to note that these JACs and Demand Committees have not been able to put enough pressure on the local representatives of the State Government with any amount of success to expedite their demands. In fact, we have yet to see the involvement of these local representatives in addressing such social issues. Getting back to the point, what is the point of propagating more violence and fomenting animosity? Should one life be put to jeopardy to demand for the preservation of another? Does it make any sense to anyone when a person's right to freedom is curtailed, often with violence and threat of physical injury, in the demand for justice against another's? Are we acting responsibly when we refuse to accept or even hear out another desperate person's circumstances for disregarding the public dikta? Are we supposed to put every single blame on the Government, even when the blame happens to be that of a family or marital dispute? And are we still so immature as to expect immediate justice without finding out the whole truth? The State still do have a court of law, however lethargic and tainted it may appear to be to a common man. We also do have a policing system duty bound and sworn to protect and serve the society, although the discharging of that sworn duty has become dubious in light of the increasing reports of various atrocities committed by members of the armed security forces, both of the state and the central. It is our legal right to seek remedial measures and even press for damages. The media is always open for anyone to air grievances or undue pressure amounting to abuse of power by any Government official. Corruption, inactivity and indifference are the biggest hurdles a common man is being made to face everyday. Yet we succumb to such pressures in spite of all the grumblings and cursings. A far more effective, albeit difficult option would be to report any and all such cases of intimidation, coercion or abuse without giving in. There are some matters the Government might try to conceal and mislead the people deliberately from. This calls for the removal of such power mongers at any cost, fair or foul. For most other circumstances, it would be a better option to resort to the established courts of law as well as the police for justice. The media is always ready and willing to report and publish any discrepancies and undue harassment by any official, armed or otherwise. We should take full advantage of the checks and counter-checks in place to achieve our demands, if genuine, without resorting to violent and destructive means.

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AR conducts careers counselling prog.

It was also disclosed that various developmental projects will be started in village like conservation of water, opening vocational Centre for training of youth, installing dustbins, development of medical facilities, providing agricultural

advice through government agencies, cleaning and beautification of village & developing standard of education. Villagers appreciated the steps taken by 12 BIHAR for making Choubung Kampany a model village.

Wanted Sub-Editor

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RPF President Irengbam Chaoren greets People on occasion the 38th Raising Day of its armed wing PLA

India has more than 34 lacs of drug abusers with more than 25 lacs death in the last 10 years. According to National Crime Records Bureau, India recorded at least 39,088 cases of crime against women. In the recent past, India's criminality seem to have struck upon the people of Manipur with an apparent growth in the crime against women which otherwise is an altogether a new phenomenon. The story of drug abuse in Manipur has been a handiwork of India with evident involvement of security officials as drug cartels in the northeast India.

The design comes as a part of India's warfare against the people of Manipur through its malicious manipulations of several types such as ideological indoctrination of youths, alienation from knowing the realities, commodification of education, deprivation of educational rights, encouragement of anti-social forces, qualitative decline in the role of youths due to parasitic consciousness and finally misuse of the society. The colonial education systems imposed upon the people of Manipur have only produced parasitic and dependent psychology. This has in turn led to engineering of local puppets who simply follow the dictates of New Delhi. Such colonial education systems have come to play the role of a brainwashing machine. The machine engineers serfdom of a unique kind who ultimately plays the role of delegated ruling class that acts only according to the whims of the coloniser India. Manipur has today descended into such a level of being colonised with subsequent downfall of its socio-economic and political fabric.

The commodification of education and knowledge patterns have utterly alienated the masses from acquiring a democratic rightful education. The darker side of commodification is the wholesome ruining of public educational institutions and collective failure which have led to systematic exodus of students, displacement of youths from

their homelands, unemployments and severe colonial brain-drain. In other words, capitalist commodification of education and knowledge has systematically deprived the poor section of the society from acquiring basic education and rightful processes of learning. Today, education is privileged system which the rich and 'haves' consider as their sole prerogative. In this way, we have come to a historical stage of inequality and class based deprivation. Education of a commodified kind has only produced degree-based learning and knowledge forms that degrade social and politics ethics. The colonial education, therefore, needs to be overhauled so that the youths and new generation could have an experience of learning their realities which in turn would instil a love for their lived-worlds, a love for their nationality. The idea and practice of self-determination shall be possible when such a state of knowledge possibility is ensured.

On the other hand, the onus lies with the oppressed people of Manipur to actually understand that India has been sufficient to dismantle the self-sufficient economic traditions of Manipur by implanting its propagandist post-colonial developmentalism. India's developmentalism has only sustained a false economic consciousness amongst the struggling peoples since it has tried to legitimise a sense of being unable to survive without external support and funding mechanism which India calls 'grant-in-aid' economic system. The false economic premise has ruined the fertile arable lands and resources of Manipur while increasingly making Manipur a dependent economy for subsistence and food-stocks. The economic depression of Manipur has been used as an opportune moment for consolidation of India's colonialism over Manipur. Grant-in-aid economy has dismantled the economic calibre of the Manipuris by making them a sterile collective in terms of labour and self-

sustenance. One of the ways to come out of such a situation of sterility is to inculcate a work culture. A collective work culture shall be at an enhanced stage only when there are working class including peasant organisations at grassroots. The working class movement shall also be a democratic answer to the sectarian and ethnic politics while at the same time there will be movement towards increased production and economic self-reliance. This is an answer and means to stop neoliberal colonialisation of Manipur. Neo-liberalism is a capitalist proposition that aims at neoliberal social systems in the name of competitive market and development. Neoliberalism encourages domination by a rich few where progress and development of the poor is impossible. The sustenance of inequality and domination come a logical method for neo-liberal subjugation and deprivation of people. The neo-liberal economic policies, implanting of secret agencies, encouragement of the influx of foreign population, supplanting of local products by goods from outside and exploitation of natural resources with disastrous economic deprivation and environmental problems are all symptoms of being a colonized society.

Such conspiring ruling class who has produced puppet ruling class who are nothing more than a temporal element. However, the oppressed people of Manipur must understand to come out of such a reality bestowed upon them colonially. Each and every community in Manipur must today forbid sectional assertions for a larger cause of liberation which is possible only with a united struggle. A united vision and a collective struggle shall only bring a lasting peace and progress. We must recall the pre-colonial collective existential relations of peoples in the past that gradually formed a Manipuri identity: of people and its territoriality, known to the neighbouring countries and the world. The attempt to break up the historicity

of Manipur has suddenly become a challenge to our quest for freedom with evident instigation from the government of India. The people of Manipur or for that matter any such society who are in the journey of its liberation must not fall prey to the inventions of colonial India.

In the absence of a free and self-regulative Manipuri society, the influence of the coloniser India has grown ever more only to essentialise colonial diplomacy and geo-political scramble. The danger of colonial geopolitics is such that the much hyped Look East Policy has been used as an occasion to induce India's geo-political game plan to encounter the rise and presence of China in the Asia. Militarisation, AFSPA and counter-insurgency diplomacy are the hallmarks of India's colonial diplomacy in the region. The northeast, which is actually a part of the South East Asian World, has become a site of colonial India's military installation platform and a security bastion. Reflective of its geo-political strategy, India has ventured into weakening China by an overt attempt of Tibetan movement and militaristic policy such as the formation of Special Frontier Force. However, the same respect for the liberation of WESEA region or Kashmir has not come forth. The colonial double standard of India has been even clear with its self-conflicting sloganeering for human rights issues in Myanmar, Bangladesh, Baluchistan, Gilgit-Baltistan and Sri Lanka on the one hand. India is equally involved in unleashing human rights violations in WESEA region and Kashmir. Last but not the least, with the growing solidarity and support of international community, the struggling oppressed people of Manipur must make a historical move to liberate itself from the colonial yoke of India. A united and collective struggle of the oppressed people in the state of Manipur in particular and WESEA in general can bring about a complete revolution.

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Human rights issues in Manipur and participation of Tangkhul women

Burning down of Huishu Village: On 11 March 1996, some suspected NSCN (IM) men attacked the Assam Rifles Camp at Huishu village in Ukhrul District. The heavy exchange of fire between the two groups lasted for three hours. The episode was a notorious one in that this was the first time when women were used as a shield by the armed personnel of the Government of India. Khachungla a village woman was made to cover Captain Sharma with a Naga Shawl while approaching in the midst of the heavy exchange between the two groups. After the exchange of fire, the Assam Rifles torched the village, house by house after ransacking and collecting all the valuables in sacks at around 10:30 am. (<http://www.insafindia.org>). Except the church, school building and some few houses located at odd places, no other dwelling places were spared. One hundred seven houses were reported to have been burnt down. During this time the NPMHR Delhi along with other media organisations were trying to organise an All India Fact Finding Team to look into the human right related cases in the state. One member each of the Team was sent to all the districts of Manipur. As a result, Miss Shirajli from Maharashtra arrived at Ukhrul District. The TSL President Miss Veronica Zinkhai met Miss Shirajli and narrated in detail the atrocities committed to the civilians of the District by the armed personnel of the state. She also submitted a report along with photographs about the atrocities committed to the civilians covering the period from 1974 until 1996 including the Huishu village burning incident. Apart from this, the TSL, President, together with the Tangkhul Katamao Saklong (TKS) and NPMHR, took Ms. Shirajli to Huishu Village so that she could witness firsthand what has actually happened in the village. The TSL requested the visiting team to help in the issues of - immediate repeal of Armed Forces (Special Power) Act 1958; and removal of 20th Assam Rifles post from the heart of Ukhrul. (Ibid.).

Thus in this way, the TSL worked for the protection and promotion of the human rights of the Tangkhuls. It also helped in highlighting the atrocities the people suffered in the local and national media. In recognition of its endeavours, the Indian Federation of Small and Medium News Papers (IFSMN) on its 10th Anniversary Celebration held on 20-21 September, 1995 in Bombay honoured TSL with an award. (Zingkhai, op.cit., p.37).

Tangkhul women and peace and unity movement: The peace and unity movement was started by the Nagas after the Government of India and NSCN (IM) entered into a ceasefire agreement on 25 July 1997. The Nagas initiated this movement mainly with a view to accomplish two things: 1) to bring understanding and unity among all the Nagas, especially the two factions of NSCN and 2) to bring a permanent, peaceful and amicable solution to the vexed Naga issue in view of the Indo-Naga peace talks. The Tangkhuls, with the rest of the Nagas, also took an active role in it. The Tangkhul women also have their own share of contributions in this regard. Their role in this can be viewed from two different angles. Firstly the work of the TSL with regard to this matter, and secondly the role of Tangkhul women living inside as well as outside the state in their capacity as members of their respective localities, churches, other women groups, etc.

The year 1997 is considered as a historic year for the Naga people because it was in this year that the Indo-Naga peace talk began and the historic 'ceasefire' between the Government of India and NSCN (IM) took place. On 25 July 1997 the then Prime Minister of India Mr I.K. Gujral announced in the Indian Parliament that the Government of India and the NSCN (IM) have mutually agreed on a ceasefire for three months with effect from 1 August 1997 and to initiate discussions at political level. (*Souvenir Nagalim - 50 Years of Resistance*, op.cit., p.12.) The terms of ceasefire between the Government of India and the NSCN (IM) were as follows: *the talk shall be unconditional from both sides; the talk shall be at the highest level, that is at the Prime Ministerial level; and the venue of the talks shall be anywhere in the world outside India.* Thereafter, on 12 December 1997, both the parties representing the GoI and the NSCN-IM agreed for monitoring the ceasefire process by drawing members from both sides including some NGOs. The ceasefire, thereafter, was extended after every three months until 31 July 1998 but from 1 August 1998 onwards it was extended on annual basis, which is still being continued. (Chandrika Singh, New Delhi, 2004:185). The ceasefire and peace talks have created some positive results, such as reducing the armed conflicts between the Naga

underground group and the armed forces of the Indian Government. However, the factional fighting and conflicts between the two rival groups - the NSCN (IM) and the NSCN (K) did not stop in spite of the appeals made by different sections of the peace loving Nagas. This factional rivalry serves as an obstacle to the road for peace and normalcy in the Naga inhabited areas. In addition, it gives lots of insecurity to the Naga people. It was against this backdrop that the Tangkhul women in general and the TSL in particular began to work together with other Naga civil organisations and church leaders for removing distrust among different Naga groups and for the unity and fraternity of all the Naga tribes. The TSL worked together with other bigger Naga civil organisations like the Naga Hoho, the United Naga Council (UNC), the Naga Women's Union, Manipur (NWUM), the Naga Mother Association (NMA), the Naga People's Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR), etc. The TSL participated in every agitation and campaign of peace organised by the different Naga civil bodies. For example, shortly after Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee had a meeting with two top underground Naga leaders in exile, Isaac Chishi Swu and Thungaleng Muivah, in Osaka, Japan, on December 8, 2001 the Naga Hoho, an apex body of all the Naga tribal councils, launched a 'reconciliation campaign' in Nagaland's capital Kohima to resolve the decades-long insurgency issue. The Naga Hoho believed that the problem cannot be solved without unity among the 52 Naga tribes. (*Frontline*, Vol. No. 19, Issue 03, February 15, 2002: 42). The TSL and other Tangkhul women residing in Nagaland joined in the reconciliation campaign. The TSL also became a part of every reconciliation meetings held in Ukhrul District from time to time. Whenever any reconciliation public meeting was held, the representatives of the TSL will come out and join the deliberations and discussions there and appeal to the different sections of the Nagas to work with unity and cooperation. They will even venture out to meet the leaders of the two factions of NSCN, viz., NSCN (IM) and NSCN (K), and urged them to sort out their differences peacefully and work together. It is important to note that, the church also played an important role in this

endeavour for peace. For example, in 1997, the 125 years of Christianity in Nagaland was celebrated in an unprecedented manner with a record of gathering of more than one lakh people at the Kohima ground. In this gathering everyone accepted that 'the crying need of the land was peace, understanding and reconciliation in Christ'. (Singh, op.cit.). Appeal was also made to all the national workers "to stop fighting against one another". (North East Sun, Vol.3 No. 17, December 15-31, 1997: 13). Church leaders, Student Unions, Naga Hoho, and UNC, and various other Naga civil society groups together organised several rallies, demonstrations, fasting and mass prayers as a protest against the factional fights. The TSL joined all these campaigns organised by the Naga civil bodies at large. Besides, Tangkhul women groups inside churches also observed fasting and held prayer meetings in their respective churches for the reconciliation of all the factional groups among the Nagas, particularly the two factions of the NSCN. The Churches of different denominations located in Ukhrul town conducted special prayer and fasting meetings for this purpose and Tangkhul women were always in majority during such gatherings. Not only the churches located in Ukhrul town, but also the Tangkhul Churches located in every village, and even in Imphal city also prayed for bringing peace and unity among the Nagas. Thus, the Tangkhul women took an active role in the movement for not only securing unity and understanding among various Naga factions but also in taking up initiatives to secure peace among the people. Indeed, they were always in the forefront while pursuing these goals. In addition to the appeal for the peace and reconciliation between the two Naga underground factions and for the unity of all the Nagas, the TSL together with the Naga Hoho, UNC and other civil bodies, also pleaded the Government of India to bring fast and amicable solution to the vexed Naga issue. They knew that without finding a peaceful and lasting solution to the problem, there will be no end to the sufferings which the Naga people at large has been experiencing since the emergence of Naga insurgency. As such, along with various civil organisations of the Nagas, the TSL has been giving pressure to the Government of India to find a fast and amicable solution to the problem. (*To be contd.....*)