

Editorial

Saturday August 18, 2018

Unsettle crisis

The one thing that the people of the state would perhaps be pining for at present is "if only....".

If only-the state government would have heeded the protests of the people and the opposition at the outset before any instrument is being finalized either for settling of the vex Naga issue. If only-the state government have understand the emotion of the public. If only- the state government have been more transparent in its dealings, especially when it concerns the interest of the public. If only-the state government have recollect the series of events that occurred in the state as the fall of wrong decision that hurt the sentiments of the people.

The present situation is a result of the failure of the state government to perform its most basic function- that of ensuring the welfare of its people- economically and politically. The perennial effort to appease the central government and to be in its good books, and worse still, to maintain and increase their coterie of unscrupulous racketeers and swindlers to do their dirty deeds and biddings have distanced the so called peoples' representatives from the public. Distrust, suspicion and lack of communication increases as a result.

The declaration by the major civil society organization of the state as well as the main opposition political parties including Congress to convene a special state assembly session to discuss the issue and to take a consensus harms none to the ruling BJP led govt. as it is a matter of the state.

The voice of the opposition on the present steps being taken up by the state government as not trustworthy conveys the manner in which the public have come to view those at the helm of affairs. It would not be an exaggeration to state that the present set of ministers and MLAs has shifted their focus from governance towards profiteering. Every single activity is being carried out on consideration of money and personal benefits and nothing else. The practice had thus been institutionalized leading to a trickle-down effect.

When thoughts about how to remain in power filled the mind of those ruling the state, bureaucrats and other political advisor had failed to give good advice to the ministry regarding the development to see from the perspective of the Constitution. The issue of Article 370 and Article 35 which give special status to the state of Jammu and Kashmir has been not studied. Counter arguments which could be established from the angle of the constitution of India which is being pending in the highest court of the country has not been studied well.

Nothing is better when it come to the welfare of the state. Already academic activities of the Higher studies have been put to halt due to the failure to understand the sentiments of the people of the state particularly to those of the Manipur University Community.

The state is at a standstill as of today, and the hardest hit lot would have to be the people of the state when any decision has been taken by the parliament that divides the state in terms of administration. The need of the hour is to convey the message to the central government that the state of Manipur still is united over its emotional issues of integrity, for that a consensus of the state assembly is needed besides the earlier resolutions adopted as certain changes has been seen taken up to solve the issue of the NSCN-IM.

Could the state government kindly enlighten the public as to the rationale behind such a consideration? Does it still believe that it can somehow wriggle itself out of its present quandary?

2019 is not far from today and the beauty of democracy is that certain issues which were not handled with extreme seriousness understanding the mindset of the people often ruin the fate of any political party. The alternative isn't much comforting either, with most of the leaders being outcasts of the present government or ones who have been discarded by the people- a classic case of old wine in new bottle. The ultimate responsibility of protecting the interests of the public will therefore come down to us, the general public through our judicious choice of representatives who can dig deep and fight our fight, not someone who can shell out the highest bid for our mandate.

Letters, Feedback and Suggestions to 'Imphal Times' can be sent to our e-mail : imphaltimes@gmail.com. For advertisement kindly contact: - 0385-2452159 (O). For time being readers can reach the office at Cell Phone No. 9862860745 for any purpose.

Manipur: The Boiling Bowl of Ethnicity

By- Dr. Aaron Lungleng

The *Land of Jewel or Switzerland of India* has now become the epicenter of ethnic conflict apparent to tremor any time suspected of erupting ethnic inferno. The boiling bowl lies in the North-Eastern region of Indian Sub-continent, between 23.5°N-25.3°N Latitude and 93.4°E-95.3°E Longitudes. The total area of Manipur is 22,327 sq. Km. Out of which only 2,238 sq.km is valley while, the remaining areas are covered by Hills. The people of Manipur State are distinctly grouped into three main ethnic communities. Meiteis (inclusive of the Meitei Bamon and the Meitei Pangans). Whereas, the hills are inhabited predominantly by the tribal dividing into two main ethnic-dominations namely, Nagas in the north, east and west whereas Chin-Kuki-Mizos in the South. It will be worthy to study the sensitivities among the ambiguous ethnic anthology within one administrative entity.

The Nagas
William Watson (1961), basically for much of history, South East Asian earliest settlers were Paleolithic or pre-Paleolithic food gatherers, hunters, fishers and folk who had made the transition to stone-using culture. A Hindu epic tells the presence of the Mongoloids in India as early as 2500-2000 BC. Archaeological excavations found, such as stone and bone tools, as well as animal remains as evidence of Stone Age habitation in the four caves of Khangkhui Caves located near Khangkhui, some 11 kilometers (6.8 mi) southeast of Ukhrul District on the border with Upper Burma (Sharma, T.C. Pandey S.N. Ed. 1985). The first evidence of Pleistocene man in the northeast India dates back to about 30,000 BC. Other notable caves nearby include Hunding Caves, 11 kilometers (6.8 miles) south of Ukhrul (Ukhrul district), Purul Cave in Purul (Senapati District) and the Song Ring rock shelter in the Beyang village in Tengnoupal in Chandel district (O.K. Singh, 1984). One of archaeologist most valuable findings is a pebble chopping tool discovered in the Maring Naga village, Machi, in the Chandel district. The Marings Nagas are one of the oldest tribes of Manipur and this finds are considered as a landmark in the Paleolithic archaeology of Manipur, as it confirmed, the area was inhabited by Neolithic people from the early Stone Age or lower Paleolithic period.

New Stone Age findings in the Tharon Caves in Tamenglong district provide the first concrete evidence of Hoabinhian culture in India, a Mesolithic Southeast Asian cultural pattern based on historic finds from the village of Hoabinhian in North Vietnam. Similar relics have been found in Thailand at the Spirit Caves as well as in Burma and other places in Southeast Asia. Tharon is a Liangmei Naga village where the five caves and rock shelters were first explored in December 1979 by the State Archaeology Department. Tharon's edge-ground pebble tools are similar to finds from Burma, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia and the Philippines where they were used about 7000-8000 BC. Possible dates for the Neolithic age in northeast India are between 500 BC 2000 BC. It is probable that the sites are already inhabited by Neolithic men in or around 2000 BC.

Although the presence of Mongoloid groups in the Northeast region had been detected as early as 10 B.C. the Nagas had maintained little outside contact till the later part of the 13th century. The existence of Naga was mentioned by Ptolemy, the great Greek Philosopher of the 2nd century A.D., in about 150 A.D, who heard of this people during his visit to Western and Southern India as a wild people with a characteristic flat nose of the Mongol race. These Mongoloids groups in Asia took different reasons and routes to enter

the present habitat. Some were due to pressure of population and some due to ecological and environmental hazards and for some, due to socio-political issues (Shinmi, 1988). "One of the factor of their migration within Asia was the expansion of the Chinese Han people pushing southwards as population grew in the valley of the Yellow River (Gerald, 1972). They filled up sub-tropical and tropical China and the pressure of population triggered the momentum which sets off ripples of migration which affected the whole of Asia (Sardesai, 1981). These immigrants' tribe took different routes. Some took the Himalayan section which extends down through the Patkai, Arakan Yoma, and Banda Arch towards Sumatra and Java, and some took the Pacific section extend from Formosa through the Philippines, Borneo and on to Japan. Smith, 1925, Hodson, 1911, Hutton, 1921, Vissie, 2008 argued that perhaps the Nagas were among those tribes who migrated from China and settled on the way in the Naga Hills. The sinologist Derk Bodde posits in *The Cambridge History of China* stated that "for every man whom Meng Tian could put to work at the scene of actual construction of the Great Wall of China, dozens must have been needed to build approaching roads and to transport supplies" (Bodde 1978, p. 63). This was supported by the Han dynasty statesman ZhuFu Yan's description of Qin Shi Huang's Ordos project in 128 BC. "When the populace had become, tired and weary, they started to disperse and escape. The orphans, the frail, the widowed and the seniors were desperately trying to escape from their appallingly derelict state and wandered away from their home (Yap 2009, p. 159).

As of Marshall (1960), on the basis of information received from Dr. Berthold Laufer, "the early home of the peoples of Eastern Asia was in the upper reaches of the Hwang-ho or Yellow river in China and from this center, the Tibetans moved westward; the early tribes of Indo- China Southward, and the Chinese, South-East. Accepting this view of Marshall, the Nagas can be said to have followed the early tribes of Indo-China group. "The Nagas are a blend of early aboriginal populations referred to as Mongoloid peoples that migrated from China 12,000 years ago," (Frans Welman, 2007). By discerning into the Naga legends, tales, stories and folk songs which were verbally passed on to the succeeding generations, we locate the Nagas origin in the giant Asian Civilization.

From the early period, Chinese civilization maturely developed. Elizabeth Seeger, in "The Pageant of Chinese History", New York, 1934, writes "when the Pyramids were being built in the valley of the Nile, China too was building up her early kingdom along the Hwang-Ho, and when Babylonian wise men were studying the stars measuring the sky, Chinese were making a calendar and foretelling the eclipses." Similarly, the Nagas believe to lead by reading human events through cosmological phenomena. They believed that if the corona of the sun is circled by a ring, it signifies the death of a chief or nobles. On the day of AZ. Phizo rainbow over Khonoma was said to witness, again prior to Issac Chishi Swu a circle on the corona was manifest and on his death, a rainbow over his native village was testified. Such were the two major events Nagas seen during their decade of resistance movement when their greatest national leaders' die.

Nagas are a speaker of both Sino-Tibeto and Tibeto- Burmese

language. Names such as 'Hung-wung'/Tatar etc. and other names like, 'Hungshi' 'Yang' among the Tangkhul Naga traced their history to Hwang-Ho River or China. Human sacrifices when chiefs died draw parallel practices among the Chinese and Nagas are some of the instances. The Chinese and Nagas share a common belief that the spirit of a person could work actively; these are the few illustrations of the common belief of the Sino-Nagas from the very ancient times.

Oral traditions abound among the many Naga tribes regarding how they came, dispersed, etc. Folk songs, folk tales and stories of Nagas tells the latest waves of migration and the particular spot from where they took off are traced back to China as their root habitation. According to Shimray, R.R. (1985), the Nagas had first followed the southward movement and after reaching the coast or some island, they turned north-west, but left their brothers somewhere near the coast or perhaps in some island. They take the westward movement and finally reached Burma from there they came to the present hills. The hypothesis of the Nagas that come from the sea cost or at least from some islands is strengthened by the lifestyle of the Nagas and the ornaments being used till today. Their fondness of cowrie shells for beautifying the dress, and use of conch shells as ornaments (precious, valuable and prestigious to them are marine gastropods which are found only on the sea beaches) and the fact that the Nagas have many customs and way of life very similar to that of those living in the remote part of Borneo, Sarawak, Indonesia, Malaysia etc. indicates that their ancient abode was near the sea, if not in some Islands. It is also said that in remote part one party having pierced ears left Chiangmai area in Thailand. This group of people with pierced ears is again seen by the Burmese who know them as Na Ka (Na means ear and Ka means holes in Burmese) so in Burmese Na ka means people with holes in the ears. This event is further substantiated by the account of Burmese. "According to Burmese Census report, successive incursion of the so-called Tibeto-Burman people come from a region of western China between the source of Hwang-Ho and Yangtse-Kiang rivers" (Chatterjee, 1950).

Many scholars of the Nagas are of the opinion that the Naga migration waves took from two directions, namely Southeast Asia and Eastern Tibet or Western China. It was followed that the Nagas passing through the mainland and the Irrawaddy and Chindwin valley during the Paleolithic or Neolithic Age had gradually moved up and finally settled at Hsawngsu, now Thangdaut in Burma (pronounced as Samsok in Tangkhul) from where they finally moved to the homeland that are occupied today. Their migration movement is traced through legends, stories and folk songs and that most of the Nagas tribe affirmed to have come out of a 'hole', here the hole in the earth is likely to refer to a cave or wall or to a rugged ridge (Shimray, R.R. 1985).

Another authentic theory on Naga dispersal is that; the Nagas forefather came from a watery domain through the 'Hourie river' (tributary of Chindwin in Myanmar) and reached the valley and settled there, but because of mosquito menace they move northward to a place called Makhefii (which is commonly called Makhel). Hardly, any theory may stand against this popular theory of dispersal as belief, taboo, and relics which many Nagas tribes considered as sacred to them holds the support with evidences. This sacred place is situated at Mao- Maram region 7 kilometers away from the National highway 53. The name for Makhel is 'Makhefii' in Mao, 'Mekhroma' in Angami, 'Makhel' in Tangkhul and 'Mahou' in Zelliangrong.

Therefore, Makhel occupy a very important place from a historical point of view not only for the Mao alone but for the Nagas as a whole. (Maheo M. Lorho, 2004).

The Nagas is a generic name applies to all the people inhabiting in the Naga Hills that refers to the confluence of India, China and Myanmar. The area which lies at the tri-junction is about 1,20,000 sq.km lies within 93°E-96°E longitudes and 23 ½ °N-28°N latitudes (Raising et al., 1994). In the word of J.P. Mills (1922), the area inhabited by the Naga is "bounded by the Hukawng valley in the northeast, the plain of Brahmaputra valley to the north-west, Cachar to the south-west and Chindwin (river) to the east. In the south, the Manipur valley roughly marks the point of contact between the Naga tribes and the very much more closely interrelated group of Kuki-Chin-Mizo tribe.

The area of the present Nagaland State is 16,579 Sq. Km and the Nagas areas in Manipur measure 15,519 sq. Km. Many Nagas such as Somras Tangkhul, Kongyaks, Kheimngans, and Yimchungers etc. are living in the Naga Hills of Burma (Myanmar). Today, one will find the Nagas in four divided folds in India and another two folds in the province of Kachins and Shans State of Burma (Myanmar) numbering to 4 million in population" (www.tangkhul.com assessed 21/4/2010). In the Indian side, there are 16 tribes in Nagaland and 32 tribes in Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. Tanai in Kachin state of Myanmar is populated by the Tangshang Nagas while Khamti Township is populated altogether by all the Naga tribes. Around 120000 Nagas are said settle in the Naga Self-Administered Zone (Sagaidiv Division). Therefore, the stretch of Naga Hills in the tri-junction of China, India, and Myanmar is the home of the Nagas with its exotic culture that branched from Chinese civilization.

Initially, the first confrontation with the British was when Capt. Jenkins and Capt. Pamperton marched from Manipur and set foot into the land Angami region in Naga Hills in 1830 via Popolngmai and Samaguting (B.C. Allen, 1905). Then, an imaginary line within the Naga Hills stretch started to draw for the convenience of the British administration. Further, Indian after she freed from the British yoke, divided the Nagas and putting them under different administrative states such as Assam, Nagaland, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh to loosen the Nagas cultural and political solidarity. As a result, the greatest conglomeration of Nagas scattered into pieces. The present Nagaland State of 1963 came into being as an outcome of the divide and rule policy of India executed through the Naga People's convention (NPC) to douse the flame of nationalism when the Nagas spirit runs very high for self-determination. Thus, the majority Naga population and their land are divided and placed under the sympathy of the different Indian Unity Government. The present struggle for the self-determination is due to the repercussion of the Indian divisive politics. Historically, Nagas are not Indian subjects. The Indian national anthem openly and vibrantly declared its people and geographical landscape. The present Northeast was not at all part and parcel as well as the dream of Bharat. Rabindranath Tagore in sound mind and knowledge composed the anthem according to what and what who Bharat was. The occupation of the Nagas solely confined to the Jawaharlal Nehru egotistic interest of subjugation else the Nagas lives within a good social and political set up of socialist democratic fully in self-independent sovereign village state.

(To be continued)