

# Editorial

Monday, April 29, 2019

## Diminishing historical facts

**N**Biren's commitment to BJP and his mentor Narendra Modi is beyond any doubt. His loyalty to his party and ideology is so strong and was shown to the world with his controversial speech at Gujarat. In his speech he tried to show that in ancient days, Krishna tried to unify North East with India (by kidnapping Rukamani?), in these days, Narendra Modi is trying the same. In short, to N Biren, Narendra Modi is Krishna in contemporary India. His ideology of one India one culture guides him in sailing the stormy politics of North East in general and Manipur in particular. From this ideological stand, a strong nation should be created with Hindu Nationalism or on the basis of the philosophy of Hindutva. There is nothing wrong with his loyalty to his party or commitment to his mentor.

Remembering any Indian hero, including Jhansi Rani, at the soil of Manipur is not wrong. But, the State of Manipur should know the reason of the remembrance of a particular hero and not all the heroes of same kind. Jhansi Rani was brave and tried to fight for the sovereignty of her kingdom. There were many such notable kings including Bahadur Shah Zafar who fought with East India Company. Why should we remember them selectively or why we should not celebrate the acts or events related with some other Indian heroes? It is related with your commitment to a particular political ideology or your definition of Nationalism or Indian nationalism. If you pay homage to Jhansi Rani, why you should not to Bahadur Shah Zafar?

Building a nation, we remember the words of Mahatma Gandhi, needs to strengthen the rural people. Empowering them is a key to development of India as a nation. Serving them by organizing a few camps is not what empowerment demands in the name of Go-to-village, but strengthening administration in rural or hill areas. Strengthen the Panchayat is the demand of the day. However a moot question that came up in the collective mind of Manipur is that how the issues of rural development is related with the Anglo-Manipuri War 1891 which was fought between Manipur and UK, not between Manipur and East India Company. Is 1891 War inferior to 1857 Sepoy Mutiny? Is the War rather irrelevant today for any observance than the philosophy of Go-to-village approach to rural development? Are not 1891 having any position in the politics of Hindutva or Modi's scheme of national integration?

The publication of a special issue of Manipur Today on 23 April 2019 does not matter much. You may publish or not. The question is on the explanation given by the government for not publishing such a special issue. The government said the special issue would not have any achievement of the Government as there was Model Code of Conduct. Is your achievement more important than the homage to the heroes of 1891? In the collective mind of the Manipuris, 1891 is a great moment that defied the dictate of imperialist British. It was the great moment how Manipuri as a nation showed the world of their love of freedom and independence. It was the great moment the heroes could die for their motherland when its sovereignty was at stake. N Biren should understand that paying full homage to Manipur's heroes would not diminish his loyalty to his party or commitment to his mentor.

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## Holding back the "religion card" in India's election campaign

Courtesy Reuters  
By: Tom Heneghan

*Hindu nationalism, Muslim "vote banks", anti-Christian violence, caste rivalry — Indian politics has more than enough interfaith tension to offer populist orators all kinds of "religion cards" to play. Coming only months after Islamist militants killed 166 people in a three-day rampage in Mumbai, the campaign for the general election now being held in stages between April 16 and May 13 could have been over-shadowed by communal demagoguery.*

But in this election, the "religion card" doesn't seem to be the trump card it once was. It's still being used in some ways, of course, but the main opposition group, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), has played down its trademark Hindu nationalism in its drive to oust the secular Congress Party from power in New Delhi. A BJP candidate who lashed out at the Muslim minority saw the tactic backfire. During a recent three-week stay in India, I found religious issues being discussed freely and frequently in the boisterous election campaign. But they were usually not the main issues under debate and not isolated from the pocketbook issues that really concern voters. Click here

for the rest of my report quoted above.

This is one of those stories where context is king. Thanks to the internet and India's lively English-language media, anyone around the globe can find Indian reports highlighting the religion angle. One of the news magazines, *The Week*, ran an interesting cover story about the "high priests of hate." On balance, I think it looks a bit overdone — it was written at the height of the Varun Gandhi controversy — but it had this classic anecdote:

*"A former BJP minister once said that he had won five times in a row using a simple trick: his men would make an issue of a Muslim boy marrying a Hindu girl or the death of a cow in a Muslim area on the eve of elections. He lost the last Assembly election when he campaigned with a development agenda."*

But religion isn't just on the politics pages. *Outlook*, another news weekly, reported that an American investor long associated with the Hare Krishna movement has offered to build a huge Hindu temple in a planned Himalayan ski resort as part of a project previously nixed by religious leaders who feared it would desecrate the mountain home of

their gods.

The *Economic Times* reported on its property pages that "more and more Indians want to have homes in religious centres." Real estate developers and analysts differed on whether the financial crisis would hurt this trend, some seeing a lack of faith in the market while others firmly believed these investments were good. And the tabloid *Mumbai Mirror* had this story about a court defending religious names on clothes.

While in Mumbai, I went to see Asghar Ali Engineer to talk about the role of religion in politics in India. He explained the central role of communalism — the use of religious, ethnic or other loyalties to mobilise social groups — in Indian politics. A noted Muslim reformer, interfaith dialogue advocate and head of the Centre for the Study of Society and Secularism, Engineer said:

*Communalism is not actually a conflict between two religions but between the interests of two or more communities. It is using religious identity for political mobilisation. That is where religion becomes a tool. Religion is not a fundamental cause, religion per se does not cause any problem. Nobody is fighting whether Islam is right or Christianity is right or Hinduism is right. The main point is what the*

*government does for Muslims, for Christians, for Hindus... The BJP bases its whole politics around accusations that Congress uses Muslims as vote banks and inclines towards them, does a lot of favours for them. 'The Muslims vote for Congress and we are against vote bank politics,' that's what they claim. But the BJP itself is basing its politics on the Hindu vote bank. India is not a nation in the classical sense as in Europe. France, for example, is built on the French language and culture. But India is a bewilderingly diverse country and we have made it one nation. Declaring it a nation was easy, but in the process of nation-building, all these forces have come into play. Whatever development takes place is not based on justice. It is highly skewed. Some religious communities get much more than others, some castes or regions get much more than others. That is why this question of identity has become so important. Those who are left out use their identity to mobilise their people. Similarly, those who are privileged see a threat when other communities mobilise, so they also have to use their identity to ward off this threat from lower castes and backwards religious communities. This is the interplay of religion and politics.*

## Retrospecting the Aspiration of the Naga Ancestral Freedom Movement with the Present Naga Political Trend

By - K. Tamrei Zimik (M.Th.)

At the outset, the ancestral struggle for the Naga independence movement from its inception wasn't a demand within the constitution of an Indian state. The Nagas existed as an independent and a sovereign nation and had never been disturbed on its existence by any nations or forces before the advent of the colonial forces of the British government that interfered its free and democratic type of government being exercised and enjoyed by every villages of the Nagas within the Naga state. And even when the British were about to leave the Indian and its neighbouring countries, the British Government send Sir John Simon in order to ascertain the desires and the wishes of the Naga people, whether they were willing to joined the union of India? But the Naga delegates under the aegis of "Naga Club" submitted a memorandum that clearly stated that "the Nagas do not want to joined the union of India, and to leave the Nagas alone to determine their own future as had been in the past". And in continuation to the Simon commission the naga delegates under the aegis of NNC met the Indian leaders in 1947 where the Naga's delegates conveyed again their standing resolution of not joining the union of india, and in response to the nagas aspiration the Indian leaders responded that.... "if the nagas do not want to join the union of india no one will force you, the Indians do not want to be under the control of the British colonial forces.....". Having the assurance from the Indian leaders the Nagas declared its independence on 14<sup>th</sup> of August 1947 one day prior to the declaration of the government of Indian independence day which is celebrated every year till today but under the threat of the Indian occupational forces. But even though, the nagas declared its independence on 14<sup>th</sup> of august, the government of India and the NNC leaders signed a nine point agreement generally known as "Sir Akbar Hydari agreement or Naga-Hydari Agreement" where a condition was made that the terms and condition of the agreement would be observed by the governor of Assam for ten years and that at

the end of this period the Naga council will be asked whether they required the agreement to be extended for a further period or a new agreement regarding the future of Naga people arrived at. But when the Government of Indian betrayed the nagas by not honouring the conditions made in the agreement, the nagas under the leadership of AZ Phizo, the then the President of NNC conducted a plebiscite on may 16, 1951 where 99.9 percent voted in favour of reaffirming the declaration of an independent and sovereign Naga nation on 14<sup>th</sup> of August 1947. And when the Naga leaders continue to seek every means to work out its legitimate right to exist Naga nation as an independent nation before the world through political confrontations the Government of India began to used its occupational forces of police and para military to subdue the rights of the Nagas, its leaders and their movement. This led to a fierce confrontation between the Indian occupational forces and the Naga army where thousands of Naga people lost their lives including innocent children, women, youth and old. The history clearly gives the evidence that right from the very beginning of the naga political movement the government of India had been discriminating the Nagas on all the areas of human rights even on the rights to exist as a Naga on this earth. For this reason the Nagas had been resisting the occupational forces of the government of Indian with all means and its police and military forces with arms as well, but had never asked an inch of land from the government of Indian and that had been clearly stated before the United Nations, and the UNPO had clearly stated that the Nagas have every right to be an independent nation. The government of India had tried its best to subdue the Naga's rights to be a sovereign nation by offering a puppet gift like statehood and an agreement within the constitution of India with threat and intimidations where some of the vested Naga leaders accepted the puppet gift from the government of India leading to a wide spread of killings among the Naga brethren. The worst of all occurred when the peace committee of Naga representative

singed a sixteen point agreement on 26 July 1960 which led to the formation of the present so called Nagaland state in the year 1963 and the infamous agreement of Shillong accord on 11 November 1975. Signing of such agreement as an alternative means for a sovereign Naga nation had been bluntly rejected with fierce confrontations by all the right thinking people of the Nagas and had even brought a bitter relationships among the Naga brethren because of the fratricidal killings that ensued due to the confrontations that followed after such agreements. Such confrontations led to the formation of different Naga political groups though most of the group unanimously stood for the same goal (i.e. Naga sovereignty and not any sort of an agreement within the constitution of India). But the first and the foremost group that was formed after the condemnation of Shillong accord of NNC was the NSCN among all the other Naga political groups that are existing today. It was formed under the leadership of Th. Muivah, Isaac Chishi Swu and SS. Khaplang to advocate the voice and the aspiration of the Naga public and the ancestral rights of the Nagas as a sovereign and an independent nation and to resist the occupational forces of the Indian state in the year 1980. Through the formation of NSCN the Naga as a whole look forward for an honourable solution with the government of India i.e. a full fledged sovereign nation without accepting the constitution of India at any cost in the same way as they had condemned the sold out agreement of the Shillong accord and the formation of the present Nagaland state within the constitution of India. The Naga public hoped and believed that the newly formed Organization of the Naga political group will not despair the Nagas with any sort of agreements within the constitution of India again which they had condemned with lots of bloodshed among the Naga brethren in the past. And even though the NSCN parted as NSCN (K) and NSCN (IM) in the year 1988 due to some unavoidable circumstances, the ultimate group to bring an honourable solution as expected by

the Naga public is NSCN (IM) since it is the only group after the NNC that had reached to an international forums to exegute the voice of the Nagas rights and whereby the world in response had supported for an honourable and an amicable solution. But fortunately or unfortunately on 3<sup>rd</sup> of August 2015 the NSCN (IM) which the Naga public as a whole apart from the few supporters of the other Naga Political Groups supported with all heart had signed an agreement with the government of India which is commonly called "Framework Agreement", whereby the agreement is officially remained as a concealed and an unknown agreement about the full content of the agreement to the general public of the Nagas had brought a lots of confusion even among the Naga brethren apart from the other ethnic groups who do not support the solution of the Indo-Naga talk. The Nagas as a whole looks forward for a solution at the earliest but there are some curious speculations among the Naga brethren i.e. whether the NSCN I-M could really bring an honourable solution which is a sovereign Naga nation outside of the constitution of India or will they also fall into the seductive snares of the government of India to accept an agreement within the constitution of India as the NNC did in the past? This curious speculation has become the voice of the Naga public with one accord, since the NSCN I-M had stood tooth and nail to eliminate everyone as "anti-Naga" whoever tried to accept an agreement within the constitution of India as a solution for the Naga political movement in the past. And at this juncture the atmosphere is likely to be detected that, most of the Nagas from every region (Naga inhabited Areas) as a whole are ready to joined hand in support with the NSCN I-M regardless of the mistakes and the wounds that had inflicted to each other due to some unavoidable disagreement that had occurred in the past, but only if the agreement were for an honourable solution with respect to the ancestral demand of the Nagas i.e. "to withdraw all the Indian occupational forces from the sovereign Naga soil and to allow the Nagas to exercise its rights as an independent nation". KUKNALIM!