

Editorial

Tuesday, October 29, 2019

Imagining a nation – Manipur is the only option, Avakarar

Every person has differences of opinion either in some way or other. Even husband and wife sometimes quarrel over differences and misunderstanding to the extent of sabotaging their lives. Divorce, secrete bigamy, polygamy etc. are the causes of misunderstanding between spouses. Quarrel, fight over differences of opinions and misunderstanding happen mostly between blood brothers. Neighbours engage to furious fight just for encroaching inches of land. And this happened from a very long time back and is still happening in human society.

When a small family grows into a bigger one with more brothers and sisters, each member gets separated as their families grow. They start living in separate houses. The increase in the number of families leads to formation of a society and each family then starts getting separate entity in the society. When the society grows, they start contacting similar larger family of similar interest, then comes similar practice of living under a common cause. Sometimes, there are people in the society or the larger society, where actually they come from. When it grows, the concept of nation building comes.

The state of Manipur, today, has a distinctive history of thousands and thousands of years. And this so called distinctive history of the erstwhile nation was formed by accumulation of various unique histories of many ethnic people settled together in the same society living under a common cause.

The erstwhile nation, which is known as Manipur - an Indian state today was a nation of many communities living under the same roof. The need of that time was perhaps the reason for living together. And if one goes to the concept of Nation as interpreted by Benedict Anderson, the Manipur Nation of post 1947 till 1949 until it merged to the Union of India was a nation of 'imagine community'.

Manipur, then, was a nation of imagined political community and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign – an answer probably given by Benedict Anderson if asked to define the then erstwhile nation call Manipur.

The present fiasco that has been haunting the state after a group called NSCN-IM had started hypnotizing the imagine communities of the state. The process of building another nation by implanting divisive theory among the various communities which have been living together since time immemorial, was short. It only began from early 80s. Building a nation by bifurcating the communities living under an imagined political entity within short span of 30 years will be another big history and will surprise the historians.

Manipur, perhaps, can be considered a lucky erstwhile nation as it is now a state in India which joined the Indian nation by signing an agreement called the merger agreement in 1949 at Shillong. Manipur is termed as 'lucky' as the world knows that the administrators of the country (India) are perhaps the best in India. A diplomat took only few minutes to defend the country by giving befitting reply to the Prime Minister of Pakistan. A National Security Advisor of the country took just few months to make the country follow a single constitution by abrogating the Article 370 from Jammu and Kashmir, if the government running the country have supported. And when it comes to the North East India, a top bureaucrat officer of the country took just 3 years to find a solution for ending the decade-old issue arisen due to armed struggle by NSCN-IM. All knows the solution can be brought anytime whether it is accepted by the NSCN-IM or not.

The experiment and perhaps the zeal of the collective leadership of the NSCN-IM to separate the so called Naga they accumulated under an unimaginative perception is the fall out of the differences between major ethnic groups of the erstwhile country. The misunderstanding had brought so much hatred to the communities of the erstwhile nations and has lasted for almost 30 years. Now it is time that the collective leadership of NSCN-IM realizes the fact that the misunderstanding could be resolved and as the Supremo of the NSCN-IM now is left out from the purview of the original Nagas of Nagaland. He should now come back to stitch his relationships with his own people here in the state of Manipur, a once upon a time Asiatic nation. What Muivah should understand is that his dream of the sovereign country, with a separate flag and a constitution can only be fulfilled if he realizes that his dream lies in Manipur and his only brothers are the different communities of Manipur. A stitch in time saves nine – the saying still stands true and it is still not late for Avakarar to return for reconciliation.

Missing

My wife Laimayum (Ongbi) Sophiya Devi (20 years) has not return home till today after she went out from home at around 12.30 pm of October 25, 2019. Her whereabouts could not be found when search my family members. She is 5 ft 2 inches tall, Kulei-Kuchu complexion, rounded face. She wore green colour phanek and a reddish colour ennaphi (shawl). If anybody find her or have information about her whereabouts, kindly informed to the undersigned or hand her over to the nearest police station.



Sd/-
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The Cross and the Flag: Christianity at Risk

Dr Jangkhoham Haokip

In recent years, there has been increasing interest among colonial and mission historians in the West on the question of collaboration between colonial imperialism and Christian mission during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This has resulted in a number of consultations and publications on the issue including The Imperial Horizons of British Protestant Missions (2003), The Bible and the Flag (1990), British Protestant missionaries and overseas expansion (2004). Some of these works argued that Christianity, that is, Western form of Christianity did not support colonial administration. Notwithstanding this argument on a global scale, I would like to highlight a slightly different story in Manipur during what is now called Anglo-Kuki War 1917-1919 wherein 'Christianity' was identical with the European colonial imperialism which not only distorted the image of Christianity as a cross-cultural faith movement but also left a trend that runs the risk of domesticating the message of Christ in a multi-ethnic context like Northeast India.

Except Christian missions like the Thado-Kuki Pioneer Mission (better known as 'The Kuki Mission 1910') founded by a Welsh independent missionary Watkin Roberts in 1910, the coming and success of Christianity in North-East India owed much to her cooperation with the government officials as much as the success of the colonial administration owed to the work of the missionaries. Lieutenant-Colonel Shakespear, in the work of the missionaries. He even wrote to the American Baptist mission urging that assistance be afforded to Mr. William Pettigrew, the only official missionary in Manipur who worked

mostly in Ukhrul. At the end of his repeated attempts, the colonial government provided the mission with a Bengali teacher and published for the school primer, catechism, and grammar. Similarly, in Mizoram, while the government carried out what was known as 'disarmament policy', that is, collecting of guns from the chiefs, the missionaries did their philanthropic works like taking charge of distribution of salt which benefited both the administration and the missionaries. Shakespear also speaks of the way in which the work of the missionaries assisted in the pacification of the Lushais. In Manipur, Pettigrew was appointed by the government as Superintendent of the first real census of the hill tribes (1910-11) because the missionary was the only one who knew the language of the people.

During the World War I and the subsequent Anglo-Kuki War referred to above, the main reason for Christian participation in the wars was both political and missional. The Colonial administration in the person of J. Higgins, the president of the Manipur state durbar issued an order and recruited local people for Labour Corps in France. Like others, the Kuki people strongly resisted his demand because for them, besides many other reasons, supporting the war against the Germans was against their international war ethics, saying 'How can we harm someone who had never harm us in a war in our history?' In their mind, the war was not theirs; it belongs to the British and hence the idea of the so-called 'World War' was questionable besides protecting their ancestral land and administration as stated by another officer, Shakespear. In such a situation of helplessness, the official missionary Pettigrew was used by the colonial administration

to persuade the local people. To his great advantage before the colonial administration, Pettigrew was successful in recruiting the local people for the Labour Force. He recruited two thousand local people out of whom one thousand and two hundred were Tangkhul Christian converts as he worked among them eleven years already by that time. Whereas in the case of the Kukis who were well established in their own religious systems and administration, both the colonial administration and the missionaries found it hard to win them except a few Christian converts like Ngulhao Thomsong and a local missionary Dala. With all those efforts, they were able to recruit hardly 500 men from all Kuki clans put together.

On their return from France, in the subsequent Anglo-Kuki War 1917-1919, the colonial administration and missionaries continued to collaborate. Both Pettigrew and another missionary Doctor GG Crozer supported the colonial administration. Crozier worked in the Army as medical officer during the Anglo-Kuki War and in many occasions he protected and save the British Forces from the attack of the Kukis. Angom Porom Singh, an orphan Meitei, converted and brought up by Pettigrew was also a dedicated native missionary to support the Colonial administration during that period. Pettigrew in his report 'Twenty-Five Years: 1897-1922' clearly mentioned about Porom Singh's involvement in the Anglo-Kuki War and how it was received by the missionaries. Apart from Porom Singh, the colonial administration also employed other local converts on their return home from France. Prof. Lal Dena of Manipur University accounts, "[o]n return from the war,

the Tangkhul Nagas were again enlisted in the coolie sections of the Kuki Punitive Measures which was unleashed for the sole purpose of suppressing the Kuki uprising." [Dena, 2008]. It should be noted that the colonial administration also recruited some Kuki converts to suppress their own people during this period. To acknowledge the wholehearted supports during the wars against the Germans in France and the Kukis in Manipur, the Government rewarded the missionaries and their converts with different gifts. Apart from individual recognitions for Pettigrew, Crozer and Prom Singh, what is now known as the Kangpokpi Mission (Kangpokpi) and the Manipur Baptist Compound (Imphal) were given as the recognition of their services during the two wars.

What can be observed here is that during those two wars, the true and transcending message of Christ was put to risk in the uncritical marriage between 'Christianity' and colonial administration. Christianity was not only tamed by some but also becomes an agent that works for the advantages of one at the expense of others. In the context of North East, particularly in Manipur, there is an urgent need to critically look at the way in which we connect Christianity and one's own national or ethnic movement. One cannot afford to domesticate Christianity for his or her own community interest. It was a colonial way of doing Christianity which they could not nurture even for a century. Colonial form of Christianity no longer exist today. True Christianity transcends all boundaries and includes every people and culture. Ethnic engineers in Northeast will do well if they can carry the Cross and their flags peacefully in a multi-ethnic context.

Damage caused by western media to India is enormous: Francois Gautier

By a Correspondent Guwahati Oct 29

Hinduism is the only religion today that accepts and respects all the other religions and Hindus are descendants an ancient civilization in human history, but there are many western journalists and correspondents who are still biased against Hindustan (Bharat or India).

So said Francois Gautier, an India based senior French journalist, during an interactive session with Guwahati based scribes on 26 October 2019 through video-conferencing and asserted that the western media should at least respect the country with a wisest past and still gives birth to humans with wonderful qualities.

"But most of the western correspondents posted in New Delhi take little notice about the uniqueness of India paying almost no respect to the billion-plus nation even after 70

years of its independence.

They are supposed to report honestly about India so that their readers, many of whom are ignorant about the great nation, get enlightened," said Gautier. Himself a regular contributor to various international publications including few from France, Gautier argued that the foreign correspondents are normally assigned for four to five years in India and that is not enough for understanding a country which is so vast, diverse and also contradictory. More precisely, Delhi is very far from southern or eastern India.

Shockingly, the Indian journalists who regularly write for western media outlets normally follow the guidelines of their editors and very often they don't hesitate to paint a negative image of their own country exclaimed Gautier. However,

he feels that the alternate media has provided space for many Indians, including qualified journalists, to speak on various issues they deem fit for exposures.

"India is never in the news in the West unless there is some major catastrophe or huge elections. Thus, if anyone wants to write forthose publications, he or she has to find stories that might often border on the sensational, marginal and even misleading," commented the outspoken journalist, who is living in India for many decades now.

Speaking about Hindu tolerance, Gautier opined that it has been an one-way traffic for the Hindus as they experienced cruel genocides in the sad history of humanity. But Hindus have shown extreme tolerance and Hinduism is the only religion that never tried to convert others.

However many Indian intellectuals claim that Hindus are intolerant, fanatic or fundamentalists.

India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru was a great admirer of English socialism and he adopted British constitutional, judicial and even education systems without considering the exceptional Indian socio-cultural and traditional values.

Nehru had to nurture the sentiment of a sizable Muslim population that did not join Pakistan (west or east) and continued to live in India.

"For these reasons, Nehru asked historians to show esteem to Muslim rulers like Akbar or Aurangzeb and ignore the greatness of Hindu warriors like Chatrapati Shivaji, Maharana Pratap, Rani Lakshmbai etc knowing that Hindus would not react not to speak of protesting," commented the contributor to Journal de Geneve, Le Figaro, La Revue de l'Inde along with various Indian newspapers.

Hence Gautier believes that the Indian history should be rewritten and he has reasons to explain. For over seven decades, the Indian establishment comprising people from Nehruvian-Marxist and

pseudo-secular ideology used to influence everything from school curriculum to public policy to history writing.

It has built up a false narrative that systematically condemned India's civilizational journey. Since the overwhelming majority of the people here remain Hindus, the establishment tried its best to turn itself as anti-Hindu. It encouraged people to negate anything associated with Hinduism. The tendency extended up to reproving the Vedas, Upanisad, Bhagavad Gita, Ramayana, Mahabharata along with Ayurveda and Sanskrit.

Bringing the reference to Hebrew, the ancient language of Israel, Gautier pointed out that Israeli people after getting part of their holy land in 1948 started welcoming Jews from various parts of the world. As they came back to live in Israel a major problem was aroused because they spoke different languages. The Israeli authority asked their scholars to revive Hebrew, which had fallen in decrepitude so that everybody can speak Hebrew.

"Today the Hebrew language has unified Israel like nothing else, which should inspire India to revive Sanskrit. The government should invite some dedicated linguists to sit down with Sanskrit scholars for

devising a way of simplifying and modernizing the mother all Indian languages. I am sure, it would energize and revitalize the whole Indian culture" stated the author of 'India's Self Denial', 'Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, a Guru of Joy', 'A New History of India', 'A History of India as it Happened' etc Married to an Indian woman, Gautier also argued that India and Israel share so much in common and both can learn a lot from each other! Hindus and Jews, far from being the persecutors of minorities have been persecuted for nearly two thousand years and have been the victims of worst genocides in history. While the German dictator Hitler murdered six million Jews in his gas chambers, Gautier revealed eight million Hindus had to die at the hands of Muslim invaders.

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A Response to Government Recommendations

The people of Manipur are shouting for integrity of Manipur and no administrative change on the ethnic line. Though the autonomous councils are named after geographical terms like Northern, Southern and Central, the ethnic division is clearly seen in the arrangement. Jini in Central and Kangpokpi in the Southern Council show the hidden agenda of the Government. The avoidance of ethnic names, Naga, Kukior Meitei in naming Council is but to befool the people of Manipur. It is high time to debate over the Government Recommendations.

The people of Manipur should remind the State Government and asks to act bravely to safe the oneness of Manipur, to adopt the principle of development rather than one for appeasement of ethnic groups. Why should Meitei be considered as Scheduled Tribe in search of Naga Solution? While a Naga party is demanding unification of the Nagas with their own

flag and constitution, the Manipuris are recommended to be divided by their own Government. The State of Manipur will be reduced to only sum total of three Autonomous Councils. It will lower down the status and dignity of the State and its Assembly. This is most ridiculous act in the history of Manipur. The voices of the people of Manipur are sidelined with these recommendations.

The destroying of Manipur and its history, dignity and oneness, historical legitimacy of its people as one is in the offing. One time Asiatic State is minimized into an arithmetical sum. It is because of insensitive government or leaders of civil society organizations whom the people have full faith or political parties (including non-state organizations) who are supposed to lead the people towards brighter and stronger Manipur for their inaccurate action against the Government stands on this solution?