

TRIBAL MOVEMENT IN COTEMPORARY INDIA- WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO NAGA MOVEMENT

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Introduction

The Northeast region of India comprises of eight states, namely, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura covering about 2,66,178 sq. Km, and it covers 7.8% of total areas of India. Northeast India is the homeland of a large number of tribes and there exists near about 145 tribal communities in this part of the country. They constitute around 12% of the total population of India and 25.81% of the total population of Northeast India. There are many tribes in the region which have been scheduled as sub-tribes and also a large number of tribes/sub-tribes are yet to be scheduled. In the North-Eastern states of Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland more than 90% of the population is tribal.

The state of Nagaland is situated in the easternmost part of India. The state is bounded by Arunachal Pradesh to the north, Assam to the west, Manipur to the south and Myanmar to the east. It has an area of 16,579 square kilometres. According to 2011 census report, total population of Nagaland is 19,78,502 of which 10,24,649 are male and 9,53,853 are female. Nagaland is the homeland to 16 major tribes namely Angami, Ao, Chakhesang, Chang, Dimasa, Kachari, Khiamniungan, Konyak, Kuki, Lotha, Phom, Pochury, Rengma, Santam, Sumi, Yimchungru and Zeliang. Traditionally, the Nagas wanted to be free from all outside domination. During colonial rule, the Naga tribes offered stiff resistance in several times. In the entire northeast region the Nagas were the first ethnic group to declare their territory as an independent state. Since then, a series of discussions and peace settlements are going on among the Naga political leaders, militants and the Government of India but, the Naga problem remained unsolved till date.

Among many other reasons that led to ethnic movements in Northeast India, historical reason too, plays a crucial role in this respect. Most of them liked to live an isolated life from one community to another. Although a trend of integration was seen during the establishment of colonial rule through market economy but it was not realised even after the end of it. After the establishment of democracy it turned out to be a way of dominance by the larger groups over the smaller ethnic communities. It created a sense of deprivation among the comparatively smaller communities. Moreover, it seemed to be a threat to their existence. As a result they started to demand for separate state for autonomous district councils according to their linguistic and cultural diversity under 'sixth Schedule' and 'Fifth Schedule' of the constitution.

Naga, a major ethnic group of North East India living in Nagaland, confronted some serious problems such as lack of infrastructure, lack of industrialisation and threat to lose of

ethnic identity. Besides, the Nagas feared that the interference by plain people might pose a threat to their cultural autonomy.

Pre-Independence history of the Naga

It was a lasting period when there prevailed head-hunting and warfare among different tribes in the Naga hill areas. This period was the previous one of the pre-independence history of the Naga people. The next period included the advent of the British who brought local warfare, head-hunting and bloodshed to an end. The British ventured to rectify the traditional system of their village ruling and administrative system. They tried to modify the judicial functions of tribal leaders. The British very strategically imposed their own administrative system.

Naga hill areas, in those days were designated as scheduled districts. It meant that it was excluded from the general enforcement of laws that were imposed in the rest of India. In course of time the Naga Hill Districts were declared as excluded area within the Assam Province by the Government of India Act of 1935. On the eve of Indian independence there grew a strong discontentment among the Nagas as they failed to cope up with the emerging socio-political phenomenon of those days. They got frightened that the people of the plains might exploit them and capture their forests, the base of their economy. Besides, being unique regarding their culture and tradition from the plains, the Nagas felt that they might lose their cultural uniqueness.

The formation of the Naga Club in 1918 can be considered to be the first organised Naga Movement. The Naga Club submitted a memorandum to the Simon Commission when the later visited Kohima requesting not to keep Naga Hills inside the scheme of political reforms. It highlights that a sense of consciousness regarding uniqueness and ethnicity developed among the Naga tribes.

Besides, the formation of Naga Hills Districts Tribal Council in 1945 (renamed as Naga National Council in 1946) throws another lights regarding their collective effort to preserve own identity and solidarity. In the mean time the British Govt. in 1946 decided to create a trust territory including Naga Hills as crown colony that would be controlled by London.

Post-Independence Movements of Naga

After annexation of Assam by the British in 1936, they constituted the Naga Hills Districts in the year 1866. Then a policy of non-interference by the plains with the tribes was created. When the British rule ended in 1947, the president of the Naga National Council (NNC), A. Z. Phizo declared independence on August 14, 1947. Although in 1963 Nagaland was declared as a separate state, the state has been facing political turmoil time and again. The Nagas defied the central government and denied the assimilation strategies and policies of the Govt. Although the Indian armed forces thought that the Naga militants could be resisted easily, they failed to do it.

When the Nine Point Agreement was signed in June, 1947, initiated by the leaders like T. Sakhrie and Aliba Imti with Akber Hydari, the then Governor of Assam, it was declared that after ten years of agreement the Naga will get freedom to decide their own future. In the following years this declaration became a cause of political turmoil and controversy between the Naga leaders and the Govt. of India and between the Naga leaders too. In July, 1947 the Naga

delegation met Mahatma Gandhi who assured that he would ask the Indian Govt. not to forcibly integrate The Naga people into Indian Union. When the Indian Govt. neglected it NNC declared independence on August 14, 1947. In the meantime NNC reported the same to the United Nations Organization and to Indian Government.

While going to analyse the Naga Movements after independence we must pay a bird's eye view to the steps of the Central Government to resolve the Naga conflicts. The Indian Govt. reasoned that some people misguided them intentionally to create conflict. It is a fact that the central govt. has been considering the Naga issues with a colonial mindset ignoring their ethnicity and genuine problems. The Indian Government tried to control the conflict by assigning the Nine Point Agreement. But it proved to be a futile one as neither of them was able to understand each other's sentiment cordially. Central Government used to consider the Nagas as a colonial legacy. Similarly, the Nagas failed to understand the demands of the Indian government. Consequently, the Naga nationalists were compelled to take arms as the Naga leaders and Indian Government failed to resolve the problems by initiating peaceful dialogue. It was the early part of 1950s when the Naga tried to attain their dream of freedom.

The constituent Assembly formed a committee making Gopinath Bordoloi, the first Chief Minister of Assam as chairman to find ways and measures relating the demands of the Naga community. But, the NNC did not send any representative to the constitutional sub-committee. Many Naga militant leaders inspired the Nagas to start civil disobedience. They all even did not participate in the assembly and Parliamentary elections held in 1952. Gradually, Naga movement turned more violent and the Naga militant created the Federal Government of Nagaland (FGN) in 1956. At the same time a few of them realised that peace and progress is more necessary than achieving political goals and it led to the first Naga Peoples Convention held in august 1957 at Kohima. The third Naga Peoples Convention held in October 1959 resulted in signing of 16 Point Agreement wherein the Government recognised that the political goal of Nagaland would be a full fledged state within Union of India. In the year 1961 the territory was placed under the Nagaland Transitional Provisions Regulation. Accordingly, Nagaland attained statehood with the enforcement of the state of Nagaland Act in 1962 by the Parliament.

Still rebel activity continued in many Naga inhabited areas both in India and Burma. In 1980 a group of rebellions led Isak Chishi Swe, Muivah and S. S. Khaplang broke away from NNC to form the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN). Since then they continued secessionist activities to attain their goals. In spite of many peace treaties and a series of talk between the Government of India and NSCN till date, this indigenous

Objectives

Following are the main objectives of our study-

1. To find out the historical background that led to the secessionist tendencies among the Nagas.
2. To examine the various measures taken by the Govt. of India to resolve the Naga problems.

Methodology:

The paper is completely descriptive in nature. Following are the brief sketch of methods and procedures of the study-

1 The Area of the Study: The area of the study is the Naga movement of Northeast region of India, its background that led to the formation of the State of Nagaland and the respond shown by the Govt. of India time to time to resolve the Naga problem.

2 Techniques of Data Collection: While preparing this paper, we have taken help from the secondary sources of data that includes books, journals, bulletins and e-books written and published on Naga problems.

Findings

1. Being a hill community the Nagas have quite different culture, unique identity, age-old tradition and beliefs. This ethnicity had been pledged and intimated to the Government of India after independence many times by the Naga political leaders and rebellions. Unfortunately, the Indian Govt. paid little attention to it or did little effort to preserve this ethnicity. As their sentiments was respected little it paved the way to create Nagaland as a separate state.
2. By the Nine Point Agreement, which was signed in June, 1947 initiated by the leaders like T. Sakhrie and Aliba Imti with Akber Hydari, teh then Governor of Assam, it was declared that after ten years of agreement the Naga will get freedom to decide their own future. In the following years this declaration became a cause of political turmoil and controversy between the Naga leaders and yhe Government of India and among the Naga leaders too.
3. There was a perpetual resistance of the Assamese speaking people of Assam against the imposition of Bengali language in Assam in the pre-independence period. It created a threat among the hill tribes thinking that they would lose their ethnic identity such as language, dialect, culture and tradition.
4. In the initial stage after independence, the Government of India paid little heed towards preserving and protecting the tribal communities. As a result, the tribal communities could not make sufficient progress in comparison to other races of the country. It nourished the feelings of separatism in the minds of tribal communities of the country as well as in Nagaland.
5. The Third Naga Peoples Convention held in October, 1959, resulted in signing of 16 Point Agreement wherein the Government recognised that the political goal of Nagaland would be a full fledged state within Union of India.
6. Although Nagaland was declared as a separate state many genuine demands of the Naga community have remained unfulfilled due to various reasons. A prime one among them is that there are some inner conflict between the Naga leaders and the revolutionaries. For instance, the ideology and work procedure of NNC is to some extent different from Naga Federal Army. The former is a political organization and the later is a separatist guerrilla organization. It can be expected that if all Naga organizations and groups resolve their inner conflicts and uniteldy pledge their demands to the Govt. of India, then all their age old demands will be fulfilled in near future.

Conclusion

We may conclude that various peace talks and peace agreements have failed to solve the long standing Naga problems of Northeast region. Even after granting a separate state for the Nagas by Government of India in the year 1972, still the demand of NSCN for a sovereign Naga

state 'Nagalim', has plunged the state into political crisis over and again. It can be expected that if all Naga organizations and groups resolve their inner conflicts and unanimously pledge their demands to the Government of India, then all their age old demands will be fulfilled in near future.

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