

Working Paper Series

**ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN
CONFLICT RESOLUTION
A CASE STUDY OF
NAGA HOHO**

08

Omeo Kumar Das Institute of
Social Change and Development
Guwahati, Assam

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A CASE STUDY OF NAGA HOHO**

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Working Paper Series
of
OKDISCD
Guwahati, Assam, India

WP No. 08
First Published
December, 2005

Published by:
Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development
39, Sapta Swahid Path, Dispur, Guwahati, Assam
E-mail: dkdscd@yahoo.co.in
Website: www.okdiscd.org; www.okdiscd.net

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Price: Rs. 40/-

Printed at:
Everywhere, Dispur, Guwahati-6
Cell: 98640-82516

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The processes of conflict resolution are generally held as state driven exercises. These are mostly conducted between the state, rebels and mediators. Little consideration is given to the civil society in terms of processes of conflict resolution. Yet the civil society is usually a key actor in the contradictory processes and struggles of conflicts and dynamics of their resolution. Conflicts do not emerge in a vacuum; they are products of the structure and character of society of which the civil society is an integral part.

CIVIL SOCIETY: THE CONCEPT

The term *civil society* is a broad concept and is hard to define. General Colin L. Powell, U.S. Secretary of State, wrote in his article 'Recreating the Civil Society – One Child at a Time': "conceptions of what constitutes a 'civil society' may differ as to details, but at a minimum, a civil society is one whose members care about each other and about the well being of the community as a whole". Civil society is the avenue for group freedom of expression, political organization, and general social development [Article and Web Alert: 2002]. The term *civil society* embraces a wide range of actors including religious leaders, women's organisations, NGOs, scholars and intellectuals. It includes organisations like trade unions, professional associations, chambers of commerce, ethnic associations and others. It also incorporates many other associations that exist for purposes other than advancing specific social or political agendas such as religious organisations, student groups, community development associations, the human rights associations, the press, cultural organisations, sports clubs, and other forms of organisations outside the state arena. The role of the civil society has been broadly identified as facilitating

interaction between the political arena and society at large.

The concept of civil society has a long history in political philosophy and its definition has changed with Roman, Hegelian, Marxist and Gramscian interpretations. According to the conventional notions prevalent in the social sciences, civil society refers to the space in a given society that exists between individuals or families, and is independent of the state [Varshney: 2002]. The Latin notion of *Civilis Societas* referred to communities, which conformed to norms that rose above and beyond the state. The state in Roman thought was identified with the community of citizens. With the development of Roman Law a separation between the public and the private appeared. Private Law referred to the family, and to conventions regulating contract, property and inheritance. With the legalization of private property, a conceptual separation appeared between the public aspects of an individual's life and his personal needs, which became the subject of a separate law. It was recognized that apart from the political life an individual was entitled to live a private life. This separation between the public and the private formed the conceptual environment within which the notion of the civil society took shape [Chandhoke : 2002].

However Locke used civil and political society interchangeably. It was due to that fact that the term *civil society* was used to distinguish a particular form of social and political organization from the state of nature. Civil society to Locke was the conceptual opposite of the state of nature. John Locke's civil society is one in which the rights of individuals received primacy over everything else. Locke maintained that civil society came into existence when men possessing the natural right to life, liberty and estate, came together, signed a contract and constituted a common public authority. In the state of nature men have equal natural rights but there is no legal authority that can uphold these rights and punish the offenders. Civil society emerges when citizen's right to life, liberty and property is guaranteed by law. Legal recognition and protection of the natural rights of individuals transform a political society into a civil society [Mahajan: 1999].

Hegel is said to be the theorist who distinguished the state from the civil society, in contrast to those theorists who used political and civil as synonymous

categories. Hegel saw the civil society as a domain where the individual could find the freedom to pursue his self defined interest. Hegel expanded the notion of civil society and rescued it from being excessively identified with the economy. To Hegel, civil society is a set of social practices, which have an existence distinct from the economy. He located these social practices between the family and the state and invested them with historical significance. Hegel considered civil society as one of the moments of ethical life which regulate the life of the individual, the other two being the family and the state. And civil society is distinguished both from the family and the state. In the family particular interests are transcended in a natural way. Civil society is also the domain of particularity of the self-seeking individual. Civil society is an important stage in transition from the family to the state because it is the sphere where the two principles of particularity and universality are negotiated. For Hegel civil society is a collective body whose members are conceived as "self-subsistent persons" [Chandhoke: 2000].

Marx inherited the Hegelian perspective on civil society, but he took the analysis further to interrogate the system itself. Hegel started from the primacy of civil society and proceeded to sub-ordinate it to the state. Marx restored the primacy of civil society and subordinated the state to this sphere. Civil society in Marx's formulation became the stage where the dialectic between the social and the political, between domination and resistance, between oppression and emancipation is played out. Marx argued that the modern individual is not predominantly political. The modern state with its specialized apparatuses monopolizes political life. For Marx, the bureaucracy prevents access of the individual to the state. The modern individual is, therefore, **destined to live his life** in civil society which is the setting of everyday practices of life and work. And this sphere of civil society is oppressive because it has been left untouched by the political revolution which has transformed the political domain. It is a sphere where greed, egoism, selfishness and exploitation continue to govern the life of the individual. If the individual is debarred from participation in the state, then he is forced to live his life in the civil sphere, which is constituted by the routine mundane practices of everyday life. Marx thinks that modern civil society provides avenues for self-realization which can be achieved only through

reflective, conscious labour. According to Marx, labour should be a joyful activity. But in a bourgeois society labour is reduced to a repetitive and monotonous work. Confined to this specialized activity, individuals become interdependent on each other. In such a society, the individual has to exchange goods, but these exchanges are based on the principle of commodity. Each looks to the other as one who satisfies a particular need. The result is individualism, competition and egoism which replace natural bonds. Civil society develops as a corruption of the natural bonds of humanity generating instrumental social relations. It is the product of capitalism. As a product it creates a world where individuals are bound to each other by ties of dependence. According to Marx, civil society has failed to create a space where the individual could find freedom and self-determination.

Civil society all but disappeared from political and academic debates in the post World War I era. It is Antonio Gramsci whose writings represented a notable exception to the lack of interest in the notion of civil society in the post World War I era. For Gramsci, civil society was not merely the sphere of individual needs but also of organisations where the hegemony of the ruling class and consent to that rule was negotiated. In this sense civil society comprised not only all material but also political and cultural relations. Gramsci portrayed civil society as a special nucleus of independent political activity, a crucial sphere of struggle against tyranny.

A civil society exists when there is a sustained attempt by people to be in charge of shaping their own life conditions by influencing the relevant decisions of various public bodies and institutions. The core characteristic of civil society is its composition of autonomous self-organized associations limited by a framework of law. Civil society is the location of independent thought and, within legal boundaries, voluntary action. Diversity, tolerance, respect, and consensus are considered the four main keys in building and maintaining a civil society [Article and Web Alert : 2002].

CIVIL SOCIETY AND CONFLICT

Conflicts of ethnic, religious, political and cultural nature continue to dominate the world's attention. Over the years the world has been witnessing many

conflicts, most of which are recurrent, protracted and intrastate and there is little evidence that such conflicts will decrease significantly over the coming decades.

In recent years civil society organisations have begun to play a significant role in conflict resolution. Unofficial interventions can be initiated by advocacy and public interest organisations, the news media, humanitarian relief providers, academic or private actors and NGOs. A typical initiative by an NGO would be the convening of meetings between unofficial representatives of disputing parties to build confidence between two sides. Often only a civil society can convene such parties and create such a "space for dialogue" because of the politically sensitive nature of such a meeting. This approach has been quite fruitful in addressing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In South Africa the role of civil society was in opposition to the apartheid regime. South Africa's civic associations played a vital role in the struggle against apartheid. In apartheid South Africa, the civil sector played a vital role in the provision of local health services.

In Angola, the Centre for Common Ground, established in 1996, played a great role in supporting the peace and national reconciliation process. With the onset of open hostilities in late 1998, the CGG was faced with an increased demand for its work due to the increased amount of conflict and violence in the society. The CGG's goal shifted from supporting the peace process to developing Angola's internal capacity to demand and create a basis for a long and lasting peace. With signing of the cease-fire in early 2002, the CGG returned to its original goal to support the peace and national reconciliation process by helping Angolans at the local and national levels to find ways to transform the culture of violence into one of co-operation and co-existence [Search for common ground, Angola].

In the conflict in Sierra Leone, civil society organisations have played a very important role in the peace process, both at the level of mounting pressure on the rebels to accede to peace agreements and also participating, though infor-

mally, in the peace negotiation processes. Organisations like the Inter Religious Council, Campaign for Good Governance, and the Centre for Democracy and Development, have sought to intervene in the peace process. The Inter Religious Council was very instrumental in helping to secure children held hostage in rebel controlled territories and encouraging parties to accede to negotiation. While the civil society groups were present in Lome during the peace negotiations, they were accorded only informal or observer status, yet they played a key role as mediators behind the scene in the negotiation processes.

In Europe also, in Northern Ireland civil society groups played an important role in resolving the conflict situations there. When troubles began in Northern Ireland at the end of 1960s, one response from the British Government was the establishment of a Community Relations Commission to develop the strategies to improve relationship between the two communities. With the support of the Community Relations Commission, the early period of the troubles saw a flowering of local community activity and the development of community leadership. Besides this, throughout the period of conflicts a number of groups emerged calling for peace. The most notable of these was the Peace People, which in 1976 was able to organise huge rallies and demonstrate a strong desire for an end to violence. Its founders, Mairead Corrigan and Betty Williams, were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. It worked to help the people to relieve the stress of living in a violent society to bring together small groups of Protestants and Catholics to learn about each other and develop mutual respect. Cross community contact was promoted most vigorously among young people. Corrymeela, a Christian community, with most consistent and innovative methods and programmes, tried to build links and enter into dialogue with political parties. A group of civil activists established a commission, which sat from 1992 to 1993, to take opinions from the community and political parties. It was composed of weighty individuals from Ireland and Britain. Its lasting contribution was its efforts to encourage community groups and individuals to think and discuss the options for the future. As a result, the wider community began to have greater confidence in putting forward its views and engaging with the political process and politicians from whom it had felt alienated for so

long. In addition to the attempts to shift public opinion and influence decision makers and politicians, civil society groups tried throughout the troubled time to make a contribution to the search for a settlement by offering their good offices in the form of unofficial private diplomacy. They carried messages, facilitated meetings and helped political groups to evaluate their strategies and goals [Mccartney: 1992].

Asia is also witnessing conflicts in its different parts, South Asia has remained a conflict prone area for many years. The civil society organisations here are trying to give a healing touch to the conflict affected areas. For instance, twenty eight participants from various civil society groups from Sri Lanka and India met in Bangkok on September 2, 2000 for Peace Audit Exercise on the Sri Lanka Peace Process organised by the South Asia Forum for Human Rights (SAFHR) [Asian Human Rights Commission, Bangkok Statement of Understanding on Peace Process in Sri Lanka]. The South Asia Small Arms Initiative brought together civil society groups and governments from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Nepal to work towards a common approach to reduce the spread of small arms [Canada's Human Security Web site; Conflict Prevention, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade].

India, a member of the community of states in South Asia, is torn by communal strife and blatant terrorism. Jammu and Kashmir and North-East are the two most volatile regions of India. In North East India, five states of Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Tripura and Nagaland, are suffering as a result of continuous strife and violence. The trouble started in Nagaland in 1953, then a district of Assam, now a state since 1964.

Compared to earlier years, Nagaland is now relatively peaceful. The credit for this goes to various civil society organisations existing in Nagaland. Civil society groups have taken the initiative in restoring peace to this strife torn region. There are eminent Naga organisations like Naga Students' Federation, an apex body of all the Naga students in India, Naga Mothers' Association and Naga Hoho, an apex body of all the Nagas. Of these organisations, Naga Hoho is observed to be the most forceful one till present day.

The Peace Mission headed by Jayprakash Narayan can be said to be the first major civil society intervention in the Naga issue. Since then, civil society involvement in bringing about a peaceful settlement of the Naga issue has been increasing at a steady rate. The Naga cause has been highlighted not only by civil rights organization within Nagaland such as the Naga People's Movement for Human Rights and the Naga Mothers' Association, but also by several other organisations in the rest of the country. Since the eighties, there has been a marked increase in civil society involvement in the Naga peace Process and today the question for a permanent settlement of the Naga issue cannot be discussed without taking into consideration the voice of the civil society. In areas where the state has perceptibly failed, civil society has moved in and obtained spectacular results. Over fifty years of insurgent violence and wide scale state repression in Nagaland have resulted in politicizing the entire civil society to such an extent that in recent years it has come to play an increasingly decisive role in the peace process, a role in which the elected representatives have totally failed. Church organisations have also been playing an increasing role to help civil society involvement in the Naga peace process. Civil society intervention has reached such a stage in Nagaland today that no insurgent organization, however strong it might be, can afford to bypass it. Unlike most other states of the Indian Union, civil society organizations in Nagaland have been highlighting the cause of the common man in such a manner that it is now impossible for any insurgent organization not to consider the civil society's voice in arriving at a settlement. And since the overwhelming response of Naga civil society has been for a peaceful settlement of the issue, the Naga rebel groups cannot afford to underestimate it [Misra: 2002].

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Naga struggle for independence has now become more than half a century old. Ever since independence Nagaland has been affected by both militant and state violence. Following the Ceasefire Agreement between the Government of India and the Naga rebel groups in 1997, peace talks have been going on between these two parties. While ultimately peace depends on agreement between the Government of India and the militants confronting the gov-

ernment, the civil society's democratic and informed initiative is indispensable for creating a congenial environment for the success of the negotiations currently going on. In the post-conflict situations a well developed civil society is important for sustainable growth and stability. The absence of a vibrant civil society in Kashmir is one of the main reasons for its still existing conflict situations. But Nagaland is blessed with the active participation of civil society organisations. To-day there are many civil society groups which keep an eye on violation of human rights by both the state as well as by the militants and have been working in close liaison with other groups in other parts of the country for the return of peace to this strife torn state. Civil society organisations like the Naga Hoho, the Naga Mothers' Association, the Naga Peoples' Movement For Human Rights have great contributions in resolving the conflict situation in Nagaland.

The present study, therefore, aims to observe the role of the civil society in de-escalating conflict by taking Naga Hoho as a case study.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study contains the following objectives :

1. To throw some light on the socio political history of Nagaland.
2. To assess the role of Naga Hoho in resolving the conflict situations in Nagaland.

ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

Chapter I is an introduction to the study which presents a brief statement of the problem. It also includes objectives of the study and the methodology.

Chapter II is an introduction to the socio-political history of the Nagas.

Chapter III deals with the role of Naga Hoho in resolving the conflict situations in Nagaland.

METHODOLOGY

The method adopted in this study is historical and qualitative and the analysis is on the basis of content analysis. Data relevant to the study have been collected from secondary sources like books, journals, paper clippings, and magazines. To verify the secondary sources, personal interviews were conducted with some of the members of the Naga Hoho.

CHAPTER II

SOCIO-POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE NAGAS

The Nagas belong to Mongolian racial groups and the areas they inhabit are India's North-Eastern states of Nagaland, the hilly regions of Manipur, North Cachar and the Mikir Hills as well as Lakhimpur, Sibsagar and Nagaon districts of Assam, north-eastern parts of Arunachal Pradesh, the Somrah Tracts and its contiguous areas of North-Western Myanmar. The area is about 1,00,000 sq. kilometers and lies between the parallels of 93 and 97 degrees longitude.

However, the present state of Nagaland, the sixteenth state of the Indian Union, is situated at the eastern frontier of India. The state covers an area of 16,488 sq. kilometers. It is bounded by Assam in the west and north, and in the north-east by the Tirap district of Arunachal Pradesh. The southern boundary is shared with the state of Manipur, while the eastern limits of the state are on the international boundary between India and Myanmar.

The Nagas comprise not less than 39 tribes such as Ao, Anal, Angami, Chakhesang, Chang, Chiru, Chethe, Kabui, Kharam, Khimniunjam, Kaireng, Konyak, Lainung, Lankang, Liangmai, Lotha, Makhori, Mao, Maram, Maring, Mensang, Meyen, Nocte, Pangmi, Phan, Pochury, Poumai, Rengma, Rengmei, Sangtam, Sema, Saira, Tangkhul, Tangsa, Tarao, Thangal, Wancho, Yimchunger, Zemi. All these tribes have their own distinct languages and dialects which vary widely from one another. All the dialects, however, belong to the Tibeto-Burman group of languages. Besides their own language or dialect, in order to exchange ideas amongst different tribes they speak 'Nagamese', a lingua franca. English is the official language of Nagaland and used as the medium of in-

struction and examination in schools and colleges. The Nagas do not have their own original script. There is a popular story that the written script recorded on animal skin was devoured by a dog due to their carelessness, while some say that they had cooked, by mistake, the piece of animal skin on which their script was written.

ORIGIN AND MIGRATION

It is difficult to give a coherent account of the origin and migrational pattern of the Nagas due to dearth of written records and materials. It is said that the Nagas migrated towards their present home from different directions through the route extensively used by the Chinese traders and embassies between China and India. It is also said that the Nagas migrated to South East Asia and South Asia from China, Korea and Mongolia following the southern direction passing through the Yunnan province of China. It is also probable from Yunnan the Nagas took two directions, westerly and southwesterly. The group which went south-west reached Myanmar, and then Bay of Bengal and moved northward again to reach the Indo-Myanmar frontier. Another group took westerly direction from Yunnan province and on reaching Irrawady and Chindwin rivers bifurcated in several directions, leading to Tibet and to the hill ranges between Assam and Burma [Vashum: 2000]. Several writers have also believed that the Nagas may have come from somewhere in north-west China between the Huang Ho and the Yangtse-Kiang rivers because the Tibeto-Burman language is supposed to have sprung from this region.

Most of the Naga tribes are also traced back to Monkhmer-Bodo races, Thai races and a fourth race of southern origin having similarities to some of the inhabitants of Philippines and Borneo and other parts of Indonesia. The Nagas have a similar culture with the natives of Borneo, a common traditional way of head-hunting with Philippines and Formosa, the common system of terraced cultivation with the Indonesians as both use the binboom for weaving and embroidery. According to W.C. Smith, the Nagas have common physical characteristics and cultural traits with the Indonesians. He found affinities of the Nagas with the Dyaks and Kayans of Borneo, the Battak of Sumatra, certain

groups of Formosa, the Igores and Ifugao and several other groups in Philippines [W.C. Smith: 1925 quoted in Joshi: 2001].

There were at least three waves of immigration of races from different directions to the areas now inhabited by the Nagas. The first wave of migrants were the Maos, Angamis, Semas, Rengmas, Rongmei and Lothas, who moved from the south through the mountain fringes touching the valley of Manipur to the north, reached Mao area and settled in Kekruma, then moved north-eastward to Kezakenoma and Kohima, where they spread and went into the different areas. The second wave of immigrants comprised the Aos, Changs, Khiamnuangams, Sangtams, Yimchunger and Tangkhils. This group is believed to have migrated from Thangdut near Chindwin river in Burma by a different route, to their present hills. The third group of immigrants was the Konyak Nagas who came to their present hills from the north-east of Burma and trace their original migration to Burma. Thus all of the Naga tribes came to their respective settlements in different waves of migration at different stages of time [Yonuo: 1984].

However, each Naga tribe has its own legend of origin and migrational pattern. Most of the Naga tribes trace their origin from Makhel or its adjacent area. Makhel is located in Mao area of Manipur state which is about ten miles from Kohima. The legends of the Angamis, Chakhsengs, Rengmas, Sumas, Lothas, Tangkhuls, Maos, Marams, Thangals, Marings and even Meiteis point to Makhel or its adjacent areas as their original place [Vashum : 2000]. But the origin of the Nagas is still obscure. Nothing can be said definitely until and unless more sources and materials are found.

ORIGIN OF THE WORD NAGA

Before the arrival of British into the Naga Hills, the inhabitants of these hills knew themselves by the designation of their respective tribes only. There are various theories about the origin of the word 'Naga' and there is no unanimous opinion on that score. According to some non-Naga scholars, the word 'Naga' has a relation with ancient Sanskrit literature. To these scholars 'Naga'

means 'serpent', 'mountaineer' and 'naked'. But these theories have been contested by non-Naga and Naga scholars alike. According to William Robinson, "the origin of the word Naga is unknown; but it has been supposed to have been derived from the word naga and applied in derision to the people for the paucity of their clothing; but there seems little foundation for the etymological derivation as the term has never been known to be applied by the Bengalis to either the Khasias or the Garos with whom they were better acquainted than with the Nagas; and besides, the Garos especially are habitually accustomed to a greater degree of nudity than any of the Naga tribes with whom we are more acquainted". There is a general consensus among the different scholars about this theory.

S.E. Peal, a British tea cultivator, writes that the word 'naga' is probably derived from the word 'Nok' meaning 'from man or folk' as used in some of the Tibeto-Burman languages like those of the Ao, Nocte, Garo etc. This theory became very popular and was supported by scholars like Holcombe, E.A. Gait, Verrier Elwin, M. Horams among others. As Elwin said, the most likely derivation to my mind is that which traces 'Naga' from the word 'Nok' or people which is its meaning in a few Tibeto-Burman languages".

There are some theories propounded by Naga scholars. One is that the word 'Naga' was derived from the Burmese word 'naka' meaning pierced ears as the Nagas had the tradition of making holes in the ears for ear decorations. Charles Chasie opines that the word 'Naga' is a Tibeto-Chinese word, as opposed to its being a Sanskrit word, even if it could also as easily have been coined by early neighbours of the Nagas in their present location. According to Alemchiba, the words 'Naga', 'Nabas', 'Naka', 'Naiga' are found respectively in Philippines, Myanmar, Indonesia. Gangumei Kabui, an eminent Naga scholar, traces the derivation from 'nok' or 'nokhar'. In his opinion the term 'Naga' was derived from the Cachari word 'Nak' or 'Nakhar' meaning warrior or fighters as the Cacharis came into conflict with Naga tribes like the Angamis and Zeliangrong.

NAGAS' WAY OF LIFE

The structure of Naga society is basically rural in character. Nagas live in a matrilineal and patriarchal society. Their society is basically casteless and classless and egalitarian in structure. Age old customary laws seem to be still prevalent in the Naga country in a less vehement, more or less modified and refined form to cater to the needs of day-to-day situations [Youno: 1984].

It is difficult to bring out the common factors that bind the Naga society. The Naga society is composed of diverse elements. In the words of J.P. Mills [1922], "it is generally assumed in a vague sort of way that these tribes which are spoken of as Nagas have something in common with each other which distinguishes them from the many other tribes found in Assam and entitles them to be regarded as a racial unit in themselves. The truth is that if not impossible it is exceedingly difficult to propound any test by which a Naga can be distinguished from other Assam or Burma tribes which are not Nagas." But still there are some common identifiable characteristics of the Naga tribes. W.C. Smith, (1925) a western anthropologist, has given thirteen outstanding characteristics which are common to the Nagas even though they speak different languages. These are: (1) head hunting; (2) common sleeping house for the unmarried men, which are taboo to women; (3) dwelling house built on post and piles; (4) disposal of the dead on raised platforms; (5) a sort of tribal marriage or great freedom of intercourse between the sexes before marriage; (6) betel-chewing; (7) aversion to milk as an article of diet; (8) tattooing by pricking; (9) absence of any powerful political organization; (10) the double cylinder vertical forge; (11) the simple loom for weaving cloth; (12) a large quadrangular or hexagonal shield, and (13) residence in hilly regions with a crude form of agriculture. Smith, however, maintains that these characteristics do not occur uniformly in all the Naga tribes. Again, these characteristics would not be seen any more in the contemporary Nagas' way of life.

'Morung' or youth dormitory is one common and very important socio cultural and political institution of the Nagas. In boys' 'Morung' young boys are taught the art of warfare, code of conduct, traditional values, etc., as they attain pu-

berty, and they continue to be in the 'Morung' till they get married. The youths in the 'Morung' are also deployed for various assignments if necessity arises, specially for general welfare of the village and security purposes. The girls are also given training in 'Morung' from moral codes to handicrafts and to their role in the welfare of the village [Yonuo: 1984].

Marriage is considered as a vitally sacred institution of the society. Generally, marriage is settled by parents, but boys and girls are also given freedom to choose their life partners. Marriage within the same clan is strictly prohibited under their unwritten customary code. The marriage price is given by the parents of the boy and the girl in the form of paddy, money, cows etc. and in some cases, paddy field, in order to form a new family. All these vary considerably according to the social status of the families.

Head-hunting is another common practice associated with all Nagas. The practice of headhunting is not merely random chopping of anybody's or any stranger's head for anything. In the words of Vashum [2000], "For the Nagas, head-hunting was one of the main necessary mechanisms for 'defence', and regulation of life in a sovereign setting just like the modern warfare. It is also seen as a mechanism for survival itself. In order to maintain and sustain a sovereign entity of village republic or monarchy, there is bound to be some mechanism, measures and regulations. 'Headhunting' fulfills one of those criteria or requirements of existence maintenance." Head-hunting usually takes place when any one from outside its village state trespasses, hurts, harms, humiliates and mistreats any of the villagers and when an individual or village or sometimes group of villages tries to invade or act mischievous with the village. Head-hunting was also unusually associated with bravery and social recognition for the able head-hunters. A young man who could take heads of enemies was regarded by the villagers as a capable man. Success in head-hunting was also a means for the young man to acquire a better bride. Head-hunting was also practiced for religious rituals and economic prosperity. Heads were sacrificed to appease and please gods whenever a chief's house or 'morung' etc. was being constructed. Though outsiders considered head-hunting as evil, the Nagas valued head-hunting as a noble means to prosperity and respectable living with a sense of security [Bashum: 2000].

There is a practice among the Nagas of having a 'collective communal provision' or 'paddy store house' called 'maazum' in the Tangkhul Naga language, for the poor and needy ones. Paddy stored in the 'maazum' is voluntarily brought by the people according to their capacity. Usually, families who produce more paddy contribute more for the 'maazum'. There is no compulsion as to how much the families would contribute for the village maazum.

The Nagas wear bright pattern of clothes, mostly coloured in dark blue with red and yellow stripes. They are fond of cowries and shells as ornaments. Spear, dao, bow and arrow are pre-dominantly used by the Nagas for domestic purposes, agriculture, hunting, warfare etc.

Agriculture and animal husbandry have been the main sources of livelihood of the Nagas. Their staple grain is rice and they use two methods of cultivation. One involves wet and dry rice cultivation known as the terrace method and the other *jhum*. The former method is being used by somewhat advanced tribes like Angami, Mao, Sema and Tangkhul Nagas. Barter system was very widely practised. The articles of exchange included paddy, sesame, yam, millet, chilly, bead, salt, wooden-plate, earthen pot, loomed clothes etc. People engaged themselves in weaving, wood-craft, blacksmithing, handicrafts in their traditional ways. Due to rapid development in education, road-transport, mass-media communications, market system, Nagas are changing fast.

The political and administrative systems of the Nagas are varied. The permanent political institution of the Naga society has been the sovereign village state which has different forms of government. Naga villages present typical systems of government of monarchy and republic and every village is independent of each other. Among the Konyaks, Maos, Semas, Tangkhuls there is prevalence of the monarchical system. Among them the king of Konyaks is very powerful. The 'Angs' or kings of the Konyaks has under them villages varying from 4 to 21 paying tributes to the Great Ang. The Mao King of 18 villages would receive tributes from other villages in the form of paddy and legs of animals killed. In each of these monarchical village state, kingship was hereditary. Among the Aos, Lothas, Sangtams republican form of government

was prevalent. The Aos have a council of elected headmen called 'Tatars' which rule with limited authority. One could become the chief in an Ao village by virtue of one's merit and influence. It is not hereditary but chosen by the villagers. In Lotha tribe, the chief of the village is chosen from one who is considered the greatest warrior. On the other hand the Angamis have a system of pure democracy. The head of the Angami tribe is known as Kemero. Its functions are both religious and administrative. In religious matter, he could issue formal order. On the other hand, he has no power to issue formal order in secular matters. The decision of people of any public meeting, which could be called by any influential person of the village, would be final in any such matter.

In short, the administrative system of the Nagas differed widely. As Elwin had summed it, "Naga society represents a varied pattern of near dictatorship and entrance democracy. There is a system of hereditary chieftainship among the Semas and Changs. The Konyaks have very powerful chiefs or Angs who are regarded as sacred and whose word is law. The Aos, however, have bodies of elders who represent the main family groups in the village; and the Angamis, Lothas, Rengmas, and others are so democratic that Hutton remarks that in the case of the Angamis it is difficult to comprehend how, in view of their peculiar independence of character, their village held together at all before the coming of the British Government" [Elwin: 1961].

THE NAGAS AND THE AHOMS

It is generally held that the first outsiders to come into contact with Nagas were the Ahoms. The Ahoms speaking a language belonging to the Siamese-Chinese linguistic family were the Shans from the ancient kingdom of Mongmao or Pong lying in the upper portion of the Irrawady valley and Yunnan. The Ahoms -- about 9,000 men, women and children with eight nobles led by Sukapha on the way to the Brahmaputra valley through Patkai range -- attacked the Naga villages for conquest, and in return the Nagas offered stiff resistance [H.K. Barpujari: 1990].

This hostile action of the Nagas enraged Sukapha so much that some of the Nagas were captured, killed and, in some cases, roasted to be forcefully fed to their relatives. As historian E.A. Gait remarked, Sukapha treated the Ahoms

with ghastly barbarity causing "many of them to be killed and compelled their relatives to eat their flesh". Such horrible display of brutality coupled with the superiority of the trained forces of the Ahoms brought the Nagas -- Wancho, Nocte, Tangsa, Konyak, Ao and Lotha tribes -- under their control, though occupation was temporary. But since this event, the relations between the Nagas and the Ahoms followed a curious course of war and friendship following raids and counter raids after an interval [Yonuo: 1984]. Verrier Elwin held the opinion that the Ahom kings regarded the Nagas as their subjects and took taxes from them in the form of slaves, elephant tusks, spears, hand woven clothes and cotton. But once the Ahoms settled in Assam, they adopted conciliatory attitude towards the Nagas. The Ahoms never interfered in the internal administration of the Naga tribes. As Asoso Yonuo also opined, "from the very beginning the Nagas living near the plains used to submit and pay nominal tribute to the Ahom kings in the form of mithuns and other commodities whereas the Ahoms, in return, granted to the Nagas revenue free lands and fishing waters on the tacit understanding that they would not carry any predatory raids in the plains. Thus, in summing up Ahom-Naga relations "one may say that while the Nagas submitted to the strength of the Ahom rulers, the latter respected the Nagas' love of freedom and desisted from interfering in their internal matters" [Mishra: 2000].

THE NAGAS AND THE BRITISH

After the Ahoms the Nagas came into contact with the British. The beginning of the 19th Century marked the struggle for supremacy between the British and the Burmese over Assam and North-East frontier which led to First Anglo-Burmese War on 24th February, 1824. The war resulted in the expulsion of the Burmese from Assam. The British after signing the Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826 with the Burmese annexed Assam. But even after annexing Assam the British followed a policy of cautious non-interference towards the neighbouring hill tribes, especially the Nagas. Initially the British did not want to conquer the Naga country. But the British had to come into contact with the Nagas mainly for two reasons. Firstly, they wanted control over the Naga hills in order to have lines of communication between Assam and Manipur. Secondly, the Nagas

had subsequently caused enough troubles by way of raids, etc. for the British subjects, and that it was obligatory for the British to intervene in the matter, in which process they started conquering the Naga territories.

The first direct encounter of the Nagas with the British happened in 1832 when Captain Jenkins and Pemberton with 700 Manipuri troops and 800 coolies marched through the Angami Naga territory from Manipur on their way to Assam. The British had fierce encounters with the Nagas all the way down to Dimapur. The Nagas were so irritated by this invasion that the British had to face continued raids. Therefore, to curb the activities of the Nagas, the Court of Directors decided in 1838 that the Naga affairs would come directly under the purview of British Government [Horam: 1975 in Vashum: 2000].

The first British expedition to control Naga raids was sent in 1839 under Mr. Grange, sub-assistant at Nowgong. From 1829-1850 as many as ten punitive expeditions were sent to put an end to Angami Naga raids. But the British troops were withdrawn in March 1851, as Lord Dalhousie, the then Governor General of India, laid down a policy of non-interference in the Naga Hills, "our possessions could bring no profit to us, and would be as costly to us as it would be unproductive". Taking advantage of the non-interference policy of the British, the Nagas again started raids in the plains neighbouring their territories. From 1854 to 1856 the Angami Nagas committed 19 raids, in which 232 British subjects were killed, wounded or carried off [Mackenzie: 1979 in Vashum: 2000]. In order to put a stop to the Naga raids the British decided to extend political control over the Naga Hills. As a first step towards this "forward policy", the British established the Naga Hills District in 1866 with Samaguting as the headquarter. In 1876, a sub-division of the Naga Hills District was created at Wokha. Kohima was also occupied by the British in 1878 after heavy fighting and the district headquarters was shifted from Wokha to Kohima.

During early part of the British administration of the Naga Hills, legislation was enacted from time to time to ensure special status of the hill areas and to prevent entry and settlement of the non-tribals. As Mackenzie said, the policy adopted by the British was not of coercion and 'contemptuous devastation', but a firm and kindly policy of defence and conciliation [Mackenzie: 1979 in Vashum: 2000]. One instance of the protection granted to the hill peoples

including the Nagas was the Inner Line Regulation of 1873. According to Gait, "the unrestricted intercourse which formerly existed between British subjects in Assam and the wild tribes living across the frontier frequently led to quarrels and, sometimes, to serious disturbances. This was specially the case in connection with the traffic in rubber brought down by hill men, for which there was great competition, the opening out of tea gardens beyond the borderline also at times involved the government in troublesome disputes with the frontier tribes in their vicinity. In order to prevent the recurrence of these difficulties power was given to the local authorities by the Inner Line Regulation of 1873 to prohibit British subjects generally or those of specified classes from going beyond a certain line, laid down for the purpose without pass or license issued by the Deputy Commissioner and containing such conditions as might seem necessary" [Gait: 1992].

But the welfare of the Naga people was not the sole aim of such British policies. The British policy of non-interference was motivated by reasons of political expediency and not necessarily out of concern to safeguard the tribal people [Misra: 2000]. By introducing Inner Line Regulation, 1673 people from the plains were prevented from entering the Naga areas. This might have saved the Nagas from exploitation by outsiders and sudden disruption of Naga culture but succeeded in isolating the Nagas from the Indian sub-continent.

The British rule brought certain changes in the life pattern of the Nagas. The inter-tribe wars were contained. Barter economy was replaced by monetized economy and a small class of traders and businessmen emerged. The most influential impact was on the field of education. With the impact of western education and Christianity, there was a gradual change in the outlook of the Nagas. Western education created a new class, quite different in profession such as teachers, government officials, interpreters, clerks, pastors etc.

During the First World War, the British sent a considerable number of Nagas to serve as labour corps which went to the Western Front in Europe. These men during their stay in Europe came into contact with the advanced nations of the west and returned home with a new consciousness that their interest and outlook should go beyond the limits of their clan, village and tribe.

In 1918, an association called the 'Naga Club' was formed with the efforts of a few government officials, leading Naga Chiefs, including those who returned from Europe. In the absence of any other organization the Naga Club represented an effective political forum of the Naga tribes. When the Simon Commission visited the Naga Hills in 1929, the Naga Club representing the various Naga tribes presented a memorandum demanding that their hills should be excluded from the proposed reforms scheme and kept under direct British rule in order to "save them from being overwhelmed by the people of the plains". In the memorandum, the Naga Club stated: "You are the only people who have ever conquered us and when you go, we should be as we were". The memorandum concluded with the demand "if the British government, however, want to throw us away we pray that we should not be thrust to the mercy of the people who could never have conquered us themselves and to whom we are never subjected, but to leave us alone to determine for ourselves as in ancient times". According to Asoso Yonuo, [1984] "the asking for the exclusion of Nagaland from the proposed reforms, however precise in presentation contained considerable political significance. It emphatically pointed out the obvious desire of the Nagas for the restoration of their independence that the British had snatched from them". However, Udayan Misra [Misra : 2000] opined that the Naga Club was not clear about the kind autonomy it was asking for, the only emphasis being on the continuance of British rule so that their tribal way of life was left undisturbed. As a result of the recommendations of the Simon Commission, the Government of India Act, 1935 excluded the Naga Hills from the reformed scheme.

ZELIANGRONG MOVEMENT

During the late 1920s there was another development. One Mr. Jadonang Kabui, who was enlisted as British soldier in Mesopotamia in the First World War, started a religio-political movement in 1925. Jadonang was a Kabui Naga. The aim of his movement was to unite three constituents of Naga tribes – the Zemeis, Liangmeis and Rongmeis – to drive away the British as well as the

Kukis who were regarded as outsiders [Aosenba: 2001]. But Jadonang was hanged to death on 13th June, 1931. After his execution, his sixteen year old cousin Gaidinliu carried on the movement which was also suppressed in 1932. Jadonang's religious ideas were given shape as the 'Heraka Cult' by Gaidinliu. However, Gaidinliu was sentenced to life imprisonment. She was released after India achieved independence by the Government of India which recognized her as a patriotic freedom fighter. She was also honoured with the title of Rani by the late Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. Since then she came to be known as 'Rani Gaidinliu'. But it has been argued that Gaidinliu did not participate in the Indian freedom struggle. Gaidinliu's movement was for unification of Zeliangrong, freedom from foreign rule and establishing Naga Raj [Aosenba: 2001].

THE CROWN COLONY SCHEME

During the 1930s and 1940s some attempts were made by Sir Robert Reid, the former Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills, and Sir Reginald Coupland to shape the future of the Nagas. Sir Reid recommended a scheme to carve out a trust territory called Crown Colony comprising the Naga Hills, North East Frontier areas in Upper Assam and the hill areas in Upper Burma. This Crown Colony would be controlled not by Delhi but by some appropriate department of Whitehall. Sir Reginald Coupland, a constitutional expert, reviewed Sir Robert Reid's proposal and introduced a new proposal known as Coupland Plan. Sir Coupland proposed to form a 'trust territory' of the Naga Hills. The Coupland plan emphasized that "the government of India and Burma might have a treaty with the British and it should take care of responsibilities for the areas as 'trust territory'. But the 'Coupland Plan' did not materialize due to change of government in United Kingdom. Sir Winston Churchill of the Conservative Party was succeeded by a Labour Party Government under Clement Atlee . The Nagas also opposed the Coupland Plan as they had no interest in British colonialism.

SECOND WORLD WAR AND THE BIRTH OF THE NAGA NATIONAL COUNCIL

The Second World War broke out in 1939. India was also dragged into it. Nagaland was one of the theatres of this war. The war affected the Nagas both physically and mentally. The Japanese invasion of Kohima led the allies to mobilise men and troops from different parts of India and abroad. While a small section of the Nagas who came under direct Japanese control were compelled to serve their new masters, majority of the Nagas supported the allied forces to preserve their health and home. The local people were faced with a critical situation as far as their loyalties and securities were concerned. They had to go to the forest and hide there with fear and anxiety [Barpujari : 1990]. After the war, at the initiative of Mr. C.R. Pawsey, the then Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills District, the Naga Hills District Tribal Council was formed in April, 1945 to unite the Nagas and for repairing the damage done during the Second World War. But later on, in its Wokha session, it was renamed as Naga National Council with Mr. Mayang Nokscha as its president.

The birth of the Naga National Council was a major step towards the growth of Naga nationalism. It emerged as a common platform for all Naga tribes to voice their grievances. In the opinion of S.K. Barpujari, the formation of the Naga National Council is indeed 'a major step in the consolidation of Naga nationalistic forces. The most significant fact about the Council was that for the first time the term 'National' was used and the Council comprised 29 members representing different tribes on the basis of proportional representation. The NNC elected T. Aliba Imti as President and T. Sakhrie as the General Secretary to run the Naga National Council office. Under the auspices of the NNC, the leadership brought out a regular monthly journal called the 'Naga Nation' published from Kohima. The 'Naga Nation' as the propaganda organ of the NNC created immense political consciousness and sense of identity.

The NNC made its first political move when it passed a resolution demanding the Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills District to restrict the entry of members of any political party from the rest of India into the Naga Hills without the

consent of the NNC. The NNC then submitted a Four Point Memorandum to Cabinet Mission in 1946. The Four Points are :

- (1) This Naga National Council stands for solidarity of Naga tribes including those in unadministered areas.
- (2) The NNC strongly protests against the grouping of Assam with Bengal.
- (3) The Naga Hills be constitutionally included in autonomous Assam, in a free India, with local autonomy and due safeguard for the interest of the Nagas; and
- (4) The Naga tribes should have separate electorate.

On August 1, 1946 Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, as president of the Indian National Congress in a letter to Mr. T. Sakhrie, General Secretary of the Naga National Council, said "It is obvious that the Naga territory in Eastern Assam is much too small to stand by itself politically or economically. It lies between two huge countries, India and China, and part of it consists of rather backward people who require considerable help. When India is independent, as it is bound to be soon, it will not be possible for the British Government to hold on the Naga territory or any part of it. They would be isolated there between India and China. Inevitably, therefore, this Naga territory must form part of India and of Assam with which it has developed such close associations." Again he said, "I am glad that the Naga National Council stands for the solidarity of all the Naga tribes including those who live in the so-called unadministered territory. I agree entirely with your decision that the Naga Hills should constitutionally be included in an autonomous Assam in a free India with local autonomy and due safeguards for the interest of the Nagas".

The content of the letter shows that the independent status of the 'Naga territory' was accepted by the Indian leadership but it felt that for historical as well as strategic reasons this territory must form part of the Indian union [Misra: 2000]. Nehru had talked of giving autonomy to the Naga Hills within the province of Assam. Others preferred a mandatory status, with Great Britain as the Guardian Power. But the NNC position was clear on one point that the Nagas never formed part of India and they must be given the choice to decide on the

nature of their relationship with the latter. Not satisfied with Nehru's assurance, the NNC demanded an "Interim Government" of the Nagas for ten years. During this period, the Nagas would run their own government under the supervision of a guardian power, preferably India, but would be free to decide their future after the lapse of this period [Misra: 2000].

When the Advisory Committee on Aboriginal tribes visited the Naga Hills in May 1947, the NNC put forward its scheme for an Interim government for ten years which has the following terms: (1) The Interim Government of Naga people will be a government of the Naga people, having full powers in respect of legislation, the executive and judiciary, (2) Nagaland belongs to the Naga people and will be inalienable, (3) the Interim Government of the Naga people will have full powers in the matter of revenue and expenditure, and annual subvention to cover the deficit being given by the guardian power, (4) for defence and for aiding civil power in case of emergency a force considered necessary by the Naga National Council will be maintained in Nagaland by the Guardian power. The NNC's meeting with the members of the Advisory Committee on the Aboriginal tribes on May 20, 1947 in Kohima resulted in a deadlock over the question of autonomy. The committee could not accommodate the proposed terms of the Nagas and so failed to recommend it to the Constituent Assembly.

HYDARI AGREEMENT

An attempt was made to break the impasse by the Hydari Agreement. The Hydari Agreement reached between Government of India, represented by Sir Akbar Hydari, the then Governor of Assam, and the Nagas, represented by the Naga National Council, in their meeting held at Kohima from June 27 to 29, 1947. The preamble of the agreement recognized the right of the Nagas to develop themselves according to their freely expressed wishes and provided full safeguards to customary law. "Hydari Agreement acknowledged the Naga National Council as the sole representative authority of the Naga people and gave it right of control over almost every aspect of Naga life ranging from customary laws to the ownership of land and taxation. It assured full autonomy for

the Naga tribes and was clearly an unprecedented move in the sense that a body whose credentials were yet to be established through a democratic process was being given such wide ranging powers" [Misra: 2000]. But clause 9 of the agreement turned controversial between the NNC and the Government of India. The Clause 9 of the article says :

"The Government of Assam as the agent of the Government of the Indian Union will have a special responsibility for a period of the years to ensure the due observance of this agreement, and at end of this period the Naga National Council will be asked whether they require the above agreement to be extended for a further period. Or a new agreement regarding the future of the Naga people would be arrived at".

The Clause 9 of the agreement implanted seeds of discord among the Nagas which resulted in their division into moderates and extremists. The extremist group led by Angami Zapu Phizo protested against the agreement. A six member delegation of the extremists led by Angami Zapu Phizo went to Delhi on July, 1947 and visited Mahatma Gandhi. The Mahatma told the Naga delegation: "The Nagas have every right to become independent. We did not want to live under the domination of the British and they are now leaving us. I want you to feel that India is yours. But if you say that it is not mine, the matter must stop there. I believe in the brotherhood of man, but I do not believe in force or forced unions. If you do not wish to join the Union of India, nobody will force you to that".

The NNC firmly stood for the modification of the Clause 9 of the agreement. That is, if the Government of India did not implement the new modification, the Naga people shall cease to be apart of Indian Union from 6th December, 1947. Phizo, after returning from Delhi, declared independence for Nagaland on August 14, 1947.

COMING OF ANGAMI ZAPO PHIZO

In November, 1949 Angami Zapu Phizo was elected President of the Naga National Council. The coming of Phizo transformed the NNC into a militant

outfit and the moderates were relegated to the background. Soon after the coming of Phizo, the NNC rejected the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution which provided for wide powers to the District Councils which would be elected bodies and would replace the tribal councils. The decision of Phizo to reject the District Councils in favour of the traditional tribal councils gave him a wide mass support [Misra: 2000].

This mass support was witnessed during the 'plebiscite' for Naga independence which Phizo organised from May to August 1951. The plebiscite was held on the basic issue whether the Nagas wanted to remain in India or to be a separate independent state. During this period NNC volunteers visited the remotest of Naga villages and collected signatures and thumb impression. The results of the Plebiscite showed that 99% of the Nagas were in favour of independence. "The solidarity and oneness of Naga people which was an impossible task due to traditional feelings of enmity, language difficulty and different tribal set up was achieved through the spirit of plebiscite" [Ao: 1993, in Bashum: 2000].

On 11th March 1952, three leaders led by NNC President A.Z. Phizo met the Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in New Delhi. It turned out to be a stormy meeting. According to the Naga delegation, Nehru told them thumping his table with clenched fists, "whether heaven falls or India goes into pieces and blood runs red in the country, whether I am here or anyone else comes, Nagas will not be allowed to be independent". In July, Nehru, speaking in the Lok Sabha, dismissed the Naga demand as 'completely unwise, impracticable and unacceptable'. The Nagas boycotted the first general election of India in 1952. In March 1953, Nehru along with the then Burmese Prime Minister visited Kohima. The Nagas boycotted the visit of Nehru. "Pandit Nehru, the darling of India's crowds, was effectively boycotted by the Nagas, as 'the entire Naga audience excepting a few government servants left the place of the meeting' where Nehru was addressing, and he was left to address a few dozens of Government servants and their family members, most of whom were not Nagas but plains people" [Mullick: 1972 in Vashum: 2000].

BEGINNING OF ARMED CONFLICT

At the beginning armed confrontation was not the NNC policy for the attainment of their aspiration. But when not being able to solve the Naga problem through a political dialogue the Government of India decided to use force on the NNC towards the middle of 1953, the situation deteriorated. This was the turning point of the insurgency movement. In 1953, Bimala Prasad Chaliha, President of the Assam Pradesh Congress, visited the Naga Hills to take stock of the situation. He made a sincere attempt to find a solution by a political settlement through peaceful means. To find a solution, he suggested, "Since the Constitution is changeable, any defect in it could be removed". During this time the Goodwill Mission of the Praja Socialist Party led by Hareswar Goswami, Bipinpal Das and B.K. Bhattacharyya was sent to the Naga Hills in November 1953. After visiting the different places of interiors of Nagaland, they wrote in their report, "whether we like or not, it is a fact that the idea of independence has become popular with the Nagas". They expressed that the Naga issue could be solved through peaceful means. In an exchange of 'goodwill mission', a Naga delegation visited Assam to eliminate suspicions and misunderstanding in order to avoid violence and bloodshed and to build bridges for Assamese - Naga relationship [Aosenba: 2001].

The Government continued with the repressive measures. Police action against the NNC resulted in most of the NNC leadership going underground in order to mobilize the people. The Government of Assam promulgated the Assam Maintenance of Public Order Act, 1953 and applied it to the entire Naga Hills District. Naga Tribal Councils and tribal courts were also dissolved. The Assam Disturbed Areas Act, 1955 was enforced in January 1956 and law and order was finally handed over to the armed forces. These steps taken by the government made matters worse and thousands of Naga men and women joined the Naga Home Guard and Naga Women's Society. The NNC declared the formation of the Federal Government of Nagaland in March, 1956 [Misra: 2000]. Having disagreed to the extreme and violent means of the NNC some close associates of Phizo, T. Sakhrie, Dr. Imkongliba Ao, and Zasokie resigned from the NNC. On January 18, 1956, T. Sakhrie was assassinated for co-operating

with the Indian Government and anti-NNC activities. Phizo escaped from Nagaland, in June 1960 he reached London to internationalize the cause of the Nagas. With the killing of T. Sakhrie the movement split into overground and underground factions.

NAGA PEOPLE'S CONVENTION AND CREATION OF THE STATE OF NAGALAND

The Naga moderates then decided to play the middle role and with this aim an All Tribes Naga People's Convention was held at Kohima from August 22 to 26, 1958. About 1,765 delegates and over 2000 visitors participated in the convention. As an outcome of the convention a single administrative unit called the Naga Hills Tuensang Area was set-up. It was to be under the Ministry of External Affairs of the Government of India and to be administered through the Governor of Assam as the agent of the President of India [Vashum : 2000]. A Second Naga People's Convention was held at Ungma village, near Mokokchung in May 21 to 23, 1958. The convention appointed a Liaison Committee to find out ways for solution of the Naga problem. Later a 16 point memorandum for the constitution of a separate state to be called "Nagaland" within the Indian Union was drafted which was passed with little modification in the Third Naga People's Convention held at Mokokchung from October 22 to 26, 1959. The 16 point proposal of the NPC was considered by the Government of India with a little modification. An interim body was formed and the 16th state of India called 'Nagaland' comprising Naga Hills and Tuensang Area was constituted under the State of Nagaland Act, 1962 and was inaugurated on 1st of December, 1963.

PEACE MISSION OF 1964

The creation of Nagaland State was not the desire of the majority of Nagas. It was a great setback to the Naga National Movement, while for the Government of India it was a great success. The Naga National Council, and the Naga Federal Government did not recognize the new Nagaland state. Phizo declared that the 16 point Agreement concluded between Government of India and

NPC 'was nothing more than a bribe'. The incidences of violence and hostilities still continued. The need of the moment, most felt, was to restore peace in Nagaland and a Peace Mission consisting of Bimala Prasad Chaliha, Rev. Michael Scott and Jay Prakash Narayan was formed at the initiative of Naga Baptist Churches. This mission arrived at an agreement for ceasefire and suspension of operation in Nagaland with the Federal Government. Part of the agreement reads as follows : "on the understanding that the Security Force of the Government of India undertake to suspend (a) jungle operations, (b) raiding of Federal Army and all administrative camps, (c) patrolling beyond 1000 yards of security posts, (d) searching of villages, (e) aerial actions, (f) arrests, (g) imposition of political fines; (h) forced labour, the Federal Government of Nagaland also undertake to suspend (a) swiping and ambushing, (b) imposition of fines, (c) kidnapping and recruitment, (d) sabotage activities, (e) raiding and firing at security posts, towns and administrative centres".

The first Indo-Naga peace talk took place at Chedema camp near Kohima on September 23, 1964. There were as many as nine rounds of official level peace talks between the Indian Government and the Nagas from September 1964 till May 1965. But no concrete results came out from these talks. This was mainly due to extreme views of both the parties. While the Nagas did not want to make any compromise on the question of sovereignty, the Indian Government could only think of an settlement within India. To break this impasse the Peace Mission members came out with a proposal package called 'Nagaland Peace Mission Proposals' on December 20, 1964. The Peace Mission proposals stated that it 'appreciates and understands the desire of the Nagas for self-determination and their urge to preserve their integrity'. The Mission, while emphasizing the need for a peaceful settlement of the issue, stated that the "Naga Federal Government could on their volition, decide to be a participant in the Union of India and mutually settle terms and conditions for that purpose". The Government of India too could reshape its relationship with Nagaland "so as to satisfy the political aspirations of all sections of Naga opinion". This Peace Mission proposal also ended in dilemma. The proposal "to join the Nagaland in the Union of India on their own violation was welcome by the Government of India. It is said that through this proposal more autonomy

would be given to the Nagaland state. But it was not clearly mentioned to what states the Government would consider this proposal. The Naga Federal Government rejected it and demanded another 'plebiscite' to decide their future according to their own volition. But the Naga Federal Government's demand was not accepted by the Peace Mission as well as Government of India".

Then on the demand of the Naga Federal Government peace talks were upgraded to the ministerial level. There were six rounds of talks in Delhi from February 18, 1966 to October 5, 1967 between Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and the Naga Federal leaders led by Kughato Sukhai. These talks also ended in a deadlock. During this period the Peace Mission was also dissolved. Jai Prakash Narayan was the first to resign, on the ground that Federal Naga leaders 'had no confidence' in him. After two months Rev. Michael Scott was expelled on the ground that he was 'soft and partisan towards the Nagas'. The same day Peace Mission came to an end when Bimala Prasad Chaliha resigned following the incidences of explosions in the trains at Lumding and Diphu which were the handiwork of the Naga Underground Army and that was considered to be a breach of the terms of ceasefire.

The year 1967 marked the beginning of split in the NNC. For the failure of the peace talks the NFG apex body, the Tatar Hoho or the Naga Federal Parliament, blamed Kukhato Sukhai and a no confidence motion was moved by Tatar Hoho against his leadership. Consequently he resigned from 'Ato Kilonser' or Prime Ministership on 24th October, 1967. General Kaito Sema, who was one time Defence Minister and later a member of Tatar Hoho, was also ousted. Seato Swu resigned from the post of President. General Kaito formed the Council of Naga people and Mr. Kughato Sukhai was unanimously elected as the President of the new party. The following day, the CNP declared the formation of the "Revolutionary Government of Nagaland and elected Mr. Scato Swu, former President of the Federal Government of Nagaland, to be the Prime Minister of the 'Revolutionary Government'. The Revolutionary Government of Nagaland came to an end, when their cadre numbering about 1500 surrendered to the Government of India on August 16, 1973.

With the failure of ceasefire agreement the situation in Nagaland became very tense since both Government of India and the Naga underground outfit were acting according to their wishes. In 1972, for the first time in the history of the Naga National Movement, the Government of India enforced the Unlawful Activities Act 1967 and banned the activities of the Federal Government of Nagaland, the Naga Federal Army and the NNC. This was necessitated after the abortive assassination attempt on the life of Hokishe Sema, then Chief Minister of Nagaland, by suspected Naga militants.

SHILLONG ACCORD, 1975

At this critical juncture an accord called the Shillong Accord was signed on November 11, 1975 at Raj Bhawan, Shillong, between the Naga underground six member delegation led by Kevi Yalley, brother of Angami Zapo Phizo, and Government of India represented by L.P. Singh, then Governor of Nagaland.

The Accord essentially meant that the Naga underground outfit on 'their own volition accepted the Constitution of India without condition, while the underground representatives had reasonable time to formulate other issues for discussion for final settlement.

The Shillong Accord was taken by the Government of India to be a great breakthrough to the final political settlement and the end of Naga Insurgency Movement. But the Naga people in general and the leaders did not endorse the Accord. A.Z. Phizo, then NNC president, refused to acknowledge the existence of the Shillong Accord. Both Isak Chishi Swu as the NNC Vice President and Thuingaleng Muivah as the NNC General Secretary condemned and denounced the Shillong Accord as a complete roll out of the Naga rights. The Shillong Accord created more complication among Naga underground leaders. This brought disunity, misunderstanding and differences of opinion within the Nagas. The Shillong Accord ultimately led to the split within the NNC. Muivah's group broke off from the parent NNC and formed the National Socialist Council of Nagaland under a strong leadership of Isak Chishi Swu as

Chairman, S.S. Khaplang as Vice President, Thuingaleng Muivah as General secretary. The NSCN issued its manifesto in 1980 and declared the Phizotie NNC as 'treacherous'. It affirmed its commitment to a sovereign independent Nagaland which would be "socialist" and Christian in character. The NSCN declared its struggle primarily to be one for a Christian Nagaland and adopted the slogan "Nagaland for Christ".

But soon dissension appeared in the NSCN as well. On 30th April, 1988, the Muivah camp was attacked by the S.S. Khaplang group killing about 140 men mostly Tangkhuls, while 230 others, women and children, were killed. But Muivah with 33 others managed to escape and join up with Isak Swu. After that incident the NSCN was split into two factions, one led by Isak Swu and Thuingaleng Muivah called NSCN (I-M) and the other led by S.S. Khaplang NSCN (K).

In May 1990, A.Z. Phizo, the founding father of the NNC breathed his last at Bromely, in London. After the death of Phizo, there was a further split in the NNC on the issue of who would succeed Phizo as the President of the organization. The split led to the formation of the NNC-A headed by Adino, daughter of Phizo, and the other faction called NNC-K led by Khodao Yanthan, who was the Vice President of the NNC. This division weakened the NNC.

Since the 1990s several efforts have been made by both the Government of India and Naga Revolutionary groups to arrive at an understanding on the Indo-Naga conflict. Since the 1980s the Government of India started to send mediators to the most powerful underground group of the NSCN. But nothing came out of such initiatives because the Government of India had set the precondition that any solution to the Indo-Naga problem should be within the 'Constitution of India' whereas for the NSCN there could not be any dialogue with India without discussion on the sovereignty of Nagaland as the main issue. In the early 1990s the then Prime Minister of India P.V. Narasimha Rao sent mediators to the NSCN-IM for an Indo-Naga dialogue without any precondition. But, with the loss of power of Narasimha Rao, the effort to settle the Indo-Naga conflict was shattered. But the initiatives of Narashimha Rao were

followed by his successors Prime Minister Deve Gowda and I.K. Gujral. During the Prime Ministership of I.K. Gujral, Satish Chandra, then Principal Secretary, was sent to meet the NSCN leaders in Geneva. After this discussion the Government of India in a goodwill gesture unilaterally declared ceasefire for three months with effect from August 1, 1997.

The terms of the Agreement of the Ceasefire read as follows:

"For securing a peaceful political solution, discussion has been held between the Government of India and the NSCN leadership. It has been mutually decided to ceasefire for a period of three months with effect from the 1st of August, 1997 and embark upon political level discussions".

The terms of understanding of the Indo-Naga political talks were:

1. The talks shall be unconditional from both sides.
2. The talks shall be at the highest level, that is, at the Prime Minister level.
3. The venue of the talks shall be any where in the world outside India.

The terms and conditions for the ceasefire were reached on December 12, 1997 by the "representatives of the Government of India led by Shri K. Padmanabhaiah and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland led by Mr. V.S. Atem. The ceasefire was extended after every three months till 31st July 1998. From August 1, 1998, it was extended on annual basis and is still being continued without any lapse. As for recent developments, on June 14, 2001 an agreement was signed between the Government emissary K. Padmanabhaiah and the NSCN (I-M) in Bangkok. The agreement extended the four year old ceasefire by one more year "without territorial limits", that is, to cover all the Naga inhabited areas in the entire North-East. It virtually triggered off a conflagration in the North-East. The first state in the North-East to be engulfed in flames was Manipur. Over 13 Manipur citizens were killed and more than 50 wounded in police firing as demonstrators protesting the extension of Naga ceasefire set ablaze the Assembly and the Chief Minister's Secretariat and the Government buildings. The people of Manipur feared that the

latest ceasefire extension would undermine the territorial integrity of their state and legitimize the demand for a common administrative umbrella for all Naga dominated areas.

Following this violent opposition the Government of India had to abandon the ceasefire agreement and on July 27, 2001 the Union Government decided to restrict the four year old ceasefire arrangement to Nagaland. Meanwhile the NSCN on July 30, 2001 claimed that the Centre's decision to restrict the ceasefire to Nagaland was "not acceptable" and claimed that nothing was finalized on the review of ceasefire extension.

CHAPTER III

THE ROLE OF THE NAGA HOHO IN RESOLVING THE CONFLICT SITUATION IN NAGALAND

The Naga Hoho is a federation of all Naga tribes and is the third institution of the Nagas, the first two being the Naga Village and the Tribe Hoho. It was born on 25th June 1994 at Wokha and its constitution was adopted after official formation of the Naga Hoho on the 11th and 12th March during the 1998 session at Zunhebuto. The Naga Hoho is not a political or a Government body, nor is it like the other NGOs and social organizations. But it is a tribe based apex body of the Nagas under the traditional system of the Naga people.

Most political and social organisations begin first with the formation of the apex body and only subsequently the structures at the regional, district and block levels are organized and formed. But the Naga Hoho was formed in an almost unique and indigenous manner unlike other organisations. It was built up upon the Naga traditional institutions which evolved naturally. The sequences are as under –

- (a) The Village : The first among Naga institutions at the grassroot level.
- (b) The Tribe Hoho : The second among Naga Institutions at the tribe level
- (c) The Naga Hoho : The third and apex institution of the Nagas.

As seen above the Naga Hoho did not organise and form its units. The first among the Naga institutions, that is, the villages had existed for generations before the Naga Hoho came into being. Likewise the Tribal Hohos of the Naga tribes such as the Ao Senden, The Sumi Hoho, The Angami Public Organiza-

tion, The Konyak Union, The Lotha Hoho etc. were already in existence before the formation of the Naga Hoho. The formation of this apex Naga body was through a process that was intrinsic to the Naga ethos and way of life. The tribe Hohos are the foundation on which the Naga Hoho now stands.

The Naga Hoho came into being as a natural process when an alien system was imposed on the Nagas to destroy the traditional Naga system. All Naga villages and tribes were required to come together by forming a common platform for protecting and safeguarding the rights of the Nagas. Thus the Naga Hoho was formed by the Naga people with the following objectives:

1. To uphold the solidarity of the Nagas.
2. To rebuild the Naga family.
3. To facilitate early settlement of the Naga issue.
4. To safeguard and protect the Naga system and tradition.
5. To promote the social, cultural, economic and political heritage.

MEMBERS

Other organisations belong to some individuals or group of people. But the Naga Hoho belongs to all Nagas irrespective of tribe or whether they are underground or overground, young or old, man or woman. The members of Naga Hoho include twenty nine tribes with associate memberships from rest of the Naga tribes which have not been officially affiliated as yet.

ORGANISATIONAL MEETINGS

The organization meets at least once in a month at the executive office bearer level. The President's Executive Council, which includes office bearers and tribe presidents, meet once or twice in a year according to exigencies. The Federal Assembly consisting of office bearers, presidents and secretaries of the tribes or two official delegates from each tribe meet once in a year or more if necessary. The General Session is held at least once in a year in which office bearers, President and Secretary of the tribes and villages took part. The Sev-

enth General Session of the Naga Hoho was held from May 20-22, 2002. In this session the General Assembly approved the extension of tenure for the existing office bearers of the Naga Hoho, reiterating the decision of the 6th session of the Naga Hoho Federal Assembly. The Finance Secretary, Naga Hoho, presented the budget of the Naga Hoho for the year 2002-2003 and the General Assembly unanimously accepted and adopted the Budget presentation. The General Assembly agreed to make it mandatory on the respective tribe Hohos to submit their contribution at the earliest convenience.

The General Assembly reconstituted the Constitutional Amendment Committee. The Committee is endorsed to make necessary review of the constitution and propose necessary amendments in order to strengthen the smooth function of the Hoho in tune with the change of time and situation.

CONSTITUTION

Other organisations have independent constitutions framed as per the desires and designs of the founding members which are also amended to suit situations. But, the Nag Hoho can not have a constitution that is totally independent of the customary laws, traditions, conventions and common practices of the Nagas. Its functioning is governed by the Naga world view from which it derives its objectives and goals.

THE ROLE OF NAGA HOHO IN RESOLVING THE CONFLICT SITUATION IN NAGALAND

EFFORTS OF NAGA HOHO TO UNITE THE REBEL GROUPS

From the very beginning the first priority of the Naga Hoho has been to resolve the conflict situation in Nagaland. The Naga Hoho is playing a key role in the efforts to unite the different Naga rebel groups under a common platform so that a broad based solution to the more than fifty year old insurrection could be worked out, a move that has been generally welcomed in the state. The Hoho is trying to get the four Naga underground groups together and the response has been good. Among the four Naga insurgent groups the NNC fac-

tions have been maintaining a low profile, but the two NSCN groups have not only been active, but have been engaged in bitter fratricidal feuds in recent years. Naga Hoho President M. Vero met NSCN (K) General Secretary Kitovi Zhimami in the early months of 2002. Zhimami said his group would have no problem if the current peace exercise succeeds in working out a solution that is honourable and acceptable to all the Nagas. On the initiative of Naga Hoho the NSCN (I-M) sent feelers to the NSCN (K) and the two NNC factions. However, it is not easy for armed organisations to come together unlike the overground groups. The NSCN(I-M) maintains that it has the authority to talk peace with the Government of India as it has the mandate of the people. The Naga Hoho holds that talks with one faction will seldom yield any tangible results. It is because of that the Hoho is trying to bring almost all sections of Nagas on one platform. The organisation has quite aptly pinpointed the need for inclusion of all warring groups in the continuing Naga peace talks.

The Naga Hoho has been meeting the different camps of militant groups from time to time. The main issue of discussion has been the cessation of hostilities among the various camps of national workers and exploration of the possibility of evolving a common approach to the peace process for final settlement of the Naga Issue. All camps have the same desire for a solution. But there are different perceptions in terms of priorities for arriving at a solution. All the camps expect the Naga Hoho to endorse their point of view and the Naga Hoho is trying to build up on the areas of commonality to pave the way for meeting points.

The Naga Hoho is not a party in the talk on the peace process that has been going on between the Central Government and the NSCN (I-M). But the Naga Hoho is playing the role of a facilitator by adopting various measures.

FORMATION OF CO-ORDINATION COMMITTEE

Under the aegis of the Naga Hoho, a Co-ordination Committee was constituted on August 18, 2001 in a meeting held at Kohima. The meeting was attended by Naga representatives from Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur

and Nagaland. The committee was supposed to coordinate programmes and policies on various aspects of the ceasefire fallout. The policies would include facilitating the peace process, bringing out a white paper on Naga unification, resettlement of displaced Nagas in Manipur and working out a plan for Naga national reconciliation. The formation of the Co-ordination Committee and its decision to reach out to the people, both within the state and outside, can be said to be an important development in Naga history. By its formation a beginning has been made to build trust in the divided Naga House. The Co-ordination Committee stressed the need for a concerted effort to bring unity and understanding among different Naga tribes to facilitate the political talks between the Centre and Naga underground groups. A congenial situation is necessary so that all sections of Naga society can express their views on current issues to project a unanimous stance in the political talks between the Centre and Naga underground groups. The Co-ordination Committee, comprising representatives from NGOs, church organisations, different tribal bodies, intellectuals, university teachers, government officials, political parties and underground groups, met from time to time trying to dispel the mistrust and suspicion among the Naga tribes and create an atmosphere of unity and understanding.

The Naga Hoho Co-ordination Committee held a "mass Naga peace rally" in order to affirm the basic stand of the Nagas on urgent issues of common concern and ways to deal with the challenges confronting them.

Two major works of Co-ordination Committee are:

- (a) Goodwill Mission to Assam
- (b) Reconciliation Process

GOODWILL MISSION TO ASSAM

An eight member delegation of the Naga Hoho led by its President Mr. M. Vero paid a goodwill visit to Assam during September 6th to 8th, 2001 to renew traditional ties with the Assamese people and to build understanding, friendship and brotherhood. The Naga Hoho delegation had come at the invitation of the Asom Sahitya Sabha, the largest literary organization of Assam. During

its visit the Naga Hoho expressed hope that the on going peace talks between Government of India and the Naga Rebel Organization NSCN (I-M) would culminate in a settlement which would be widely acceptable among all in Nagaland as well as in North East. The Naga Hoho is more concerned with rebuilding the faction-ridden Naga society and the wounds it has sustained over the years during the course of the long struggle. The Naga Hoho delegation pledged to strive towards ending all misunderstanding among the Nagas and people of the other north-eastern states and strengthening the traditional bond of friendship and brotherhood among them. M. Vero, the President of The Naga Hoho, in his speech said that they had been mandated by a conference of the Naga Hoho held in Kohima to undertake the mission to Assam and other neighbouring states to renew the traditional ties and help build understanding, friendship and brotherhood among them all. He said that they had come to Assam first because "it was right for the younger brother to go looking for the elder brother". Vero said that Naga society had been engulfed in armed conflict for many decades now. There was now a need to restore and rebuild their society. Part of the process of restoring and rebuilding was to reach out to understand the difficulties others were also trying to face, as the Nagas had for long remained obsessed with themselves and their problems and they had become insulated. The Hoho, therefore, undertook this journey of healing and restoration. Vero said that the Naga Hoho apologized to some of the neighbouring communities who felt hurt for their mistakes. He said that the Nagas desired that the peoples found "meeting points of the heart" because that would be "true" with greater chance of proving beneficial to all. Vero said that the Naga Hoho was searching for answers about what could be the right things for all of the neighbours too, and appealed to the people to be kind and charitable enough to remain "open". He said that the Naga Hoho was prepared to stand with anyone and search out the answers together. Vero called upon everybody in the region to realize the urgent need for the "healing of history" lamenting that there was a tendency among some to deny history.

The Naga Hoho described their visit to Assam as an important beginning in the future relationship of the people of the North-Eastern region. The purpose of their visit to Assam was to strengthen the Naga-Assamese relationship by un-

dertaking the journey after 48 years when a similar visit had been made in 1953 during the time of former Chief Minister Bimala Prasad Chaliha. Their purpose was not to gain political support or to talk about politics in the aftermath of the Centre - NSCN (I-M) agreement although some people might have thought that was the purpose of the mission. The Hoho again wished to undertake such goodwill journeys to other parts of the country, including Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh, to build better bridges of understanding in the area.

RECONCILIATION PROCESS

The Naga Hoho launched a reconciliation campaign to resolve the decades long insurgency issue. The reconciliation process is an effort to bring together all sections of the Nagas, particularly the underground groups, for the greater cause of rebuilding the Naga family and ending years of blood letting. The Naga Hoho believes that the problem can not be solved without unity among the 52 Naga tribes. The church in Nagaland has for the last several years made efforts in this direction. But the situation has only worsened with almost irreconcilable differences emerging among the extremist underground organisations. Perhaps many more militant Nagas have died fighting among themselves than at the hands of the security forces. The Naga Hoho's effort, as distinguished from the church's, constitutes a people's initiative.

The inaugural function of the Naga Reconciliation process initiated by the Naga Hoho, together with the various churches and other mass based Naga NGOs, was held on December 20th at the Kohima local football ground. On this day, 28 Naga leaders, representatives of Naga tribes from all over the Naga inhabited areas of Nagaland, Manipur, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, and Myanmar solemnly pledged to heal and rebuild the Naga family. Members of all nationalist groups and all state political parties were present at the meeting. However, the outlawed NSCN led by K.K. Khaplang stayed away from the rally, while one of the two NNC factions sent a message supporting the Hoho's move. The representatives of the NSCN (I-M), the dominant underground group were present in the rally. The theme of the Inaugural Ceremony was 'to heal and

rebuild the Naga family with the Prince of Peace'. The Naga political struggle has been going on for over half a century. The Nagas are unable to just give it up without an honourable settlement. The Naga people have suffered enough atrocities and killings at the hands of the Government of India forces and their own "national workers". And the Naga people now resent continuing factional clashes and killings while longing for peace, justice, and achievement of common aspirations. After so many decades of fighting the people have become wounded and weary. They need healing of the wounds of the past. But without including all the tribes and all sections of Naga society, there will not be a workable settlement of the Naga issue. Therefore, the circumstances demand interaction, consultation and reconciliation.

BACKGROUND OF THE RECONCILIATION PROCESS

At the initiative of the Naga Hoho, representatives of Naga organizations and churches from all over the Naga inhabited areas except Myanmar met in Kohima on August 18, 2001. It was clear in that meeting that the Nagas wanted reconciliation which might heal and rebuild the Naga society. The reconciliation concept was later fully endorsed by the different Tribe Hohos on November 29th, 2001 and by the various churches and other NGOs on November 30 at Kohima. In that meeting the call for journeys of conscience, "internally" among Nagas and externally with neighbours and beyond, was also given. This demanded all Naga organisations and churches to come together and work as a team. Therefore, the Co-ordination committee was instantly formed in the meeting to give shape to the reconciliation process.

All Nagas are important and needed and will be required in the search for an honourable political settlement. The most encouraging part of the meeting was that representatives of various organisations and churches had all come to the meeting without any prior discussion on any issue. They have all risen and fully responded to the cry of the Naga people. The meeting laid the foundation for the reconciliation process.

THE BASIS OF THE NAGA RECONCILIATION PROCESS

All Nagas are important and needed and all will be required in the search for an honourable political settlement.

The Naga people form the most important element in Naga nationhood.

The Naga people need to heal the wounds of the past so as to become free of the chain of hatred.

Before God the Nagas have all sinned and they ask the Prince of Peace to forgive all and show them the way.

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE INAUGURAL FUNCTION OF THE RECONCILIATION PROCESS

The combined Inaugural Function was an occasion to remember and pay respect to those who died 'overground' and 'underground' and those caught in between because they have all died in the common Naga attempt to go forward in the modern world.

To pray together for the humiliated and embittered families of those killed and for all Naga families as well as for the Nagas as a people.

To feel sorrow for the mistakes and the bitterness of the past.

To pray for God's grace so that there may come realization, true spirit of repentance and confession of wrong doing in order that forgiveness may prevail. In so doing, there will be "restoration".

To bless one another and seek God's blessings for the Naga people.

To ask the Prince of Peace to show the way to securing a future for the coming Naga generations.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE INAUGURAL FUNCTION OF THE RECONCILIATION PROCESS

The Co-ordination Committee of the Naga Hoho together with the Naga churches, Tribe Hohos took collective leadership in organizing the Combined Reconciliation Function.

One of the main highlights of the programme was the pledge taken by 28 tribe leaders representing over 35 Naga tribes and sub-tribes. The pledge goes as-

“Nagas are one and we are one family. We will work towards the Nagas growing as a people”.

“We hereby state that we will start a process whereby we will truthfully examine the ways and areas in which we may have hurt others so that the needed changes may begin with us leading to practical step of restitution to make healing lasting”.

“We affirm that we will go beyond seeing only where others have hurt us and be ready to see where we too may have provoked them to hurt us so that forgiving and being forgiven will become possible”.

“We shall undertake to enlist the full support of tribes for the Naga Reconciliation Process. We will do all we can to strengthen it”.

DECLARATION ADOPTED AT THE INAUGURAL FUNCTION OF NAGA NATIONAL RECONCILIATION PROCESS

A Naga Declaration was adopted during the December 20, 2001 function. About 132 persons signed the declaration. The Declaration re-states Naga history, but also humbly acknowledges the failures and mistakes of the past. In the declaration it is said that the Naga people can not give up their struggle without an honourable settlement and an adequate acknowledgement of the history. It is also known that division, bitterness and armed confrontation will

not solve the Naga political issue. Therefore there is an imperative need for the Nagas to come together to share and discuss with grace, accept the past mistakes and realize that armed confrontation will not solve the Naga political issue. They all need to begin building a new future of hope, truth and peace through a process of healing and compassion. The Naga Hoho, churches and the social organizations feel the urgent need to initiate a process to acknowledge the wrongs and pains of the past that must be put right for the sake of the future. By this declaration the Nagas as a people commit themselves to take the first step of their journey towards healing as one nation by collectively expressing their sorrows to all victims of injustice and oppression.

Every Naga village will receive their declaration through the respective Tribe Hohos for discussion and fullest understanding. Each village council or competent authority is expected to return the Declaration with the village's support or otherwise with explanations, if the concerned village has some serious doubts. All such support as well as doubts and objections will be published for the knowledge of the Naga public.

The continuation of the Reconciliation Process has been entrusted to the various Naga churches and they are working out the modalities. What must be clear is that the present process is not only talking about “political Reconciliation” or reconciliation only in the context of Naga nationalism. Anything that has divided any two persons – pride, ambition, personal disputes etc. – falls within the ambit of reconciliation. The priority of the Reconciliation Process is the search for lasting “unity” and “peace” which can come only as a result of reconciliation. Therefore the Naga Hoho considers the churches as the right platform to carry out the next stage of the Reconciliation Process.

Reconciliation occupied a prominent place in the 7th General Assembly of the Naga Hoho, that was held in the Senapati District in Manipur from May 20-22, 2002. The Naga Hoho is of the view that solution to the fifty years of Naga peoples' struggle for self-determination has to be found soon and reconciliation should work towards the realization of this vision and objective. The Naga Hoho realizes that it is a time for consolidation of whatever they have achieved

and therefore the tribes should play a meaningful role in strengthening the Naga Hoho in their initiative including the efforts towards reconciliation and integration of the Naga areas. The Naga people must occupy the central theme in the reconciliation process and the reconciliation highway must be God's way and not self's. Therefore, the Hoho advises the Nagas to avoid the temptation of projecting the self above the people's interest.

The General Assembly also directs the Naga Hoho Co-ordination Committee to ensure that the participation of members be made on the basis of organization and not on that of individuals to maintain consistency in its functioning.

The General Assembly expressed that Naga tribes must initiate positive steps to uphold the sacred image of the Naga Hoho and play their part to strengthen the institution and its auxiliary bodies by developing a mechanism which will help in the effective co-ordination between the Naga Hoho's executives and the Tribe Hoho's. The Naga Hoho must reach out and fetch the different Naga tribes under its ambit. It must also work towards the involvement of a larger Naga audience including the Naga intellectuals, bureaucrats, professionals and others. Therefore, the Naga Hoho would accommodate representatives from the Nagas in Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and elsewhere in its executive set up.

NAGA HOHO FOR INTEGRATION OF ALL NAGA INHABITED AREAS

The Naga Hoho supports the integration of all Naga inhabited areas. The Naga Hoho thinks that Nagas live in compact and contiguous areas and have a strong desire to develop and grow as a people like other nations in the world. Unfortunately, the Nagas have not been able to grow because of certain reasons such as the Nagas were divided by imposed boundaries, reducing them to minorities and placing them under different administrative units without their consent and knowledge. The governments of the different administrative units are kinds of imposed government for the Nagas, the imposed outside system contradicted and conflicted with the Naga system instead of promoting and developing it. Hence to achieve the aspiration of the Nagas, the removal of

imposed boundaries, imposed government and imposed systems becomes necessary. With the removal of the imposed system, the Nagas want to live together as one people under a single political roof for all round growth of the Naga people. Integration of all Naga inhabited areas including the present Nagaland state by the removed of all imposed boundaries, imposed governments and imposed systems is the desired meaning of Naga integration.

The Naga Hoho formally raised the demand in a seven hour consultative meeting held at Kohima on August 18, 2001. The Hoho believes that the geographical division of the land of the Nagas has become one of the root causes of divisions among the Nagas and therefore the Naga Hoho must find out a strategy to unify all Naga areas under one political roof.

The draft copy of the controversial White Paper on Naga Integration was presented in the 7th General Assembly of the Naga Hoho in the Senapati district in Manipur. The White Paper contained a broad history of the Nagas, geographical areas inhabited by the Nagas and the chronology of the Nagas' struggle for Right to Self determination.

The Naga Hoho opposed the alteration of the June 14 Bangkok bilateral agreement which extended the ceasefire to all Naga inhabited areas. But the Central Government had to abandon the agreement following violent oppositions in Manipur. The Hoho believes that ceasefire without territorial limits would enable other militant groups to come within the purview of the truce in the entire north eastern region. The Naga Hoho also could understand the apprehensions of the neighbouring states. When violations broke out in the neighbouring states over the extension of ceasefire limit the Hoho asked the Naga population living in those states to remain calm, however difficult the situation or the provocation might be.

NAGA HOHO AS A FACILITATOR OF THE PEACE PROCESS

The Naga Hoho is not a party in the peace talks. But the organization is playing the role for a facilitator. The Naga Hoho has been asking the rebel outfits to

stop fratricidal killings which could jeopardise hopes for an end to the dragging insurgency in the region. The Naga Hoho initiated the Reconciliation Process to take the Nagas beyond the present unacceptable tragedy of Nagas killing fellow Nagas that could wreck the ongoing peace talks with the centre. About 40 representatives of the Naga Hoho, tribes, student organizations, and church groups went to Bangkok in the first week of January, 2002 to persuade the NSCN (I-M) to see reason and forge unity among various tribes and warring Naga outfits. They also held a five day convention in Bangkok from January 7 seeking unity ahead of the ongoing Centre – NSCN (I-M) talks aimed at ending the 54 year old struggle. The Naga representatives felt that unity among the three different warring groups must precede the peace talks and first step towards unity would be to bring about a truce between the two NSCN factions.

The Naga Hoho observed August 9, 2002 as the National Prayer Day in continuation of the Naga Peace and Reconciliation Process. This decision was taken in a meeting held on 26th July, 2002 at the conference hall of the Naga Club building at Kohima. The Naga Hoho expressed deep concern over the re-emergence of fratricidal confrontations. The Hoho expressed its strongest resentment and urged all rebel outfits to immediately stop all hostilities, including the demand for expulsion of certain fellow tribes and the quit notices served to students of the said tribe. The Hoho also condemned the irresponsible circulation of statements against fellow Nagas which was only self defeating in manner and character and only reflected deeply the sickness of the Naga society.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Over fifty years of insurgent violence in Nagaland have resulted in division of Naga society. Fratricidal and factional killings have become the order of the day. But due to intervention of civil society groups, the number incidences of killing and violence has come down to a great extent. The Naga Hoho has been trying to free the Naga society from factional killings and differences by uniting the tribes under one roof. After the formation of the Naga Hoho with the motto "Nagas are one" the Naga people have since had the opportunity to meet together, think together, share together and work together. This has narrowed down gaps and differences among the Nagas and has enabled them to start moving forward together. Thus, in the midst of pervading fear of the gun, the Nagas after a long time have a forum to frankly and courageously voice their minds and souls to each other and to the out side world. The Naga Hoho has been asking all Naga rebel groups to stop fratricidal killings and unite for the interest of the community. The Hoho calls upon the warring factions to sit together and sort out their differences in the greater interest of the Nagas, who have sacrificed and suffered for such a long time.

Besides securing Naga unity the Naga Hoho has been trying to facilitate the peace process. It will mediate between the Indian Government and the Naga rebel groups to arrive at a final solution to the Naga problem. It initiated the Reconciliation Process to unite the 52 different Naga tribes. It is to the credit of the Naga Hoho and other civil society groups that despite all the anger released during the ceasefire declaration, the peace process was not hampered and the possible outbreak of inter-community violence was checked effectively.

During the extremely difficult days following the violence in Manipur over the inclusion of the territorial clause in the extension of the Naga ceasefire, it was the intervention of the Naga Hoho, and other civil society groups which prevented the outbreak of any violence in Nagaland. The Naga Hoho also took some very bold and meaningful steps such as sending a goodwill mission to Assam to prevent the outbreak of hostility between the peoples of Nagaland and its neighbouring states.

The Naga Hoho faces certain impediments in playing an active role in resolving the conflict situation in Nagaland. Naga civil society has forever remained divided on tribal lines. The Naga Hoho received a setback when the Tuensang and Mon People's Organization decided to withdraw from the Naga Hoho. This was followed by the Angami People's Organization's decision to stay away from the Hoho. But the Naga Hoho considers it as a blessing in disguise for certain reasons. It has brought out the best in the President of the Naga Hoho and his colleagues who have become more active, serious and concerned than before. The Naga people have become conscious of the important role and place of the Naga Hoho in the life of the Naga people and have also realized the great need for a strong Apex Body of all Nagas. The concern of the TMPO and the APO is for furthering Naga unity and now they have taken up the vital role of bringing all Naga tribes together.

There is need for the unqualified support of all the Naga tribes and Naga people to build a strong and effective Naga Hoho. And to support and strengthen the Naga Hoho the people must differentiate between the office bearers and the institution. One may be biased against office bearers, may have differences and quarrels with the office bearers but one should not be biased against the institution.

The strength of the Naga Hoho is derived from the strength of the Tribe Hohos. Therefore, the tribes should play a meaningful role in strengthening the Naga Hoho, particularly in its efforts towards reconciliation. The strength of a Tribe Hoho depends on the support of the villages, the first institution of the Nagas. Therefore it is the responsibility of each and every village and Tribe Hoho to

build and strengthen themselves and thereby contribute to the strength of the Naga Hoho. The Naga Hoho has an indispensable and crucial role to play for which it requires unstinting support of all Nagas.

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