

HOW THEN SHALL WE LIVE?



REFLECTIONS ON THE POLITICAL,
ECONOMIC AND RELIGIOUS
IMPLICATIONS OF NAGA
NATIONHOOD

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Author's note: *The title of the book had already been used by Dr. Francis Schaeffer in a religious context. However, I have also used the same words because even in the political and economic dimensions, the words are so appropriate.*

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

The present book is a compilation of articles that the author had been writing since 1997. It is not a book in the true sense of the word. Also because it was written in the form of articles, there will be repetition in some cases. This could not be avoided, as removal of the repetitions would mutilate the article in its format. These repetitions are regretted. Also the articles are not reproduced according to their date sequence but according to topics.

Many readers of the articles had requested me to compile it in a book form so that the points and issues raised in the articles can be kept in a systematic form. Hence this small booklet.

Though not a book in the true sense of the word, I have however tried to provoke the readers to think out issues from which none of us can escape. Many people say that they are not interested in politics. I also formerly belonged to that group of people. But the horrible fratricidal killings, especially prior to the 1997 Ceasefire and Peace talks, forced me to rethink my stance. I was one who always tried to turn my back on politics because of the lack of ethical principles on the part of the players and also perhaps because of the danger in Naga national politics which had cost so much suffering and death to Nagas. However the sight of splattered brains and blood flowing in our streets and villages forced me to think again. I just could not close my eyes and ears and run away because any direction I ran to escape, I was confronted by the same sights again and again.

My initial anger was towards my own fellow Nagas who seemed to have gone berserk and lost all sense of value for human lives. I screamed in anger: *What kind of human beings are these Nagas if they can, in their fratricidal killings unleash hails of A.K. 47 bullets against their opponents in crowded streets, where many times even civilian pedestrians were also mowed down?*

After all, the pedestrians were not stray dogs or pigs but Naga fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters. In defiance of their actions, I often stooped down to pick up bullet riddled bodies and carried them to vehicles to be transported to hospitals. Their bloodied bodies and faces were total strangers to me, but I often wept in anger because I knew they were Naga faces and Naga bodies shot by Naga guns. I realised that I had to do something more than just picking up dead bodies. I therefore turned my attention to the Naga political struggle to better understand what had gone wrong with that struggle. The result was my first political article "***Whither the Nagas in the 21st century?***" - with a sub title ***A brief historical recapitulation of the splendid Naga achievements in the 20th century and an optimistic look into the 21st century with a fervent plea for cessation of fratricidal bloodshed*** - dated January 18, 1997. This article has been slightly modified in the present book. I next turned my attention to the Shillong Accord because I was told that this Accord was the cause of all the horrible fratricidal killings. In the process of my research, I discovered a much wider picture than the one that had been projected in the writings of various factions and also the press and media. The result was an article entitled "***An open letter to uncle Isaac and Muivah on the Shillong Accord and its aftermath***" dated October 24, 1997. In this present book, I have again removed the personal aspects and rewritten it as "***The Shillong Accord and its aftermath: A Historical Retrospection***".

Many of my relatives after reading the manuscript of the article forbade me to publish it lest I wanted to join the dead. This was before the ceasefire had come into operation. But I was convinced that someone had to speak up and therefore it was published.

One thing led to another and I finally found myself writing "***Nagaland and India, the Blood and the Tears***". I knew I was treading into dangerous territory and often lay awake whole nights worrying what

would happen to my children and wife if an assassin's bullet should drop me dead along the way. And yet, having seen the Naga political picture from a wider and more horrifying perspective, I just couldn't turn my back and walk away. I knew I would be haunted by guilt feeling for the rest of my life if I had seen the picture and did nothing about it. So I went on...

Eventually, what I thought would take one year to write instead took me three years of hard labour as I interviewed hundreds upon hundreds of people and travelled to many parts of Nagaland to compile the stories.

My next problem was finding a publication company that would have the guts to publish the book. Several companies turned me down and I had to finally publish it myself by borrowing money right and left.

My greatest fear on publication of the book was that my pen journey into Naga national politics would end in an Indian prison! However, by God's grace and because of India's big heart, I am still a free man living with my family in the heart of Nagaland. Lets hope things remain that way!

I have written all these things about my former book because the present book is a follow up on my first book. I do not expect everyone to agree with me in everything that I had written. There may also be others with better ideas than mine. This booklet is in no way an exhaustive analysis of the political, religious and economic implications of Naga nationhood. I am sure there are much more qualified people than me to write on these dimensions who can also correct me on any wrong presumptions or assumptions on my part. I hope they will do so. However, the purpose of writing all these things is to provoke us to think together on issues that none of us can escape from. I am also aware that through ignorance or a lack

of sufficient information, I might have hurt some people, both Indians as well as fellow Nagas through my writings. Should this be true, though I had not written with any malice or ill will against anyone, I ask their forgiveness. However on those issues – even the painful ones – where the accounts are based on facts, I offer no apology to anyone.

Many of the present articles written over a span of two years took many hours of research and reading before the facts could be presented in a condensed form. If I had written something worthy of the reader's consideration, I hope such considerations will lead to action so that our Indo-Naga political problem will finally find a solution. This political problem is a common property of every Naga. It's solution can also come only through a concerted effort of every Naga. No Naga, whatever his or her profession, cannot be excused from this effort. This has been my goal and concern in undertaking this "*pen journey*" into the war torn history of our national politics.

I also wish to thank all the Editors and staff of Nagaland Post, North East Herald and Nagaland Page for featuring most of these articles in their papers over the span of two years. It was through them that I had been able to introduce my concerns and thoughts to the general Naga public.

Kaka D. Iralu