



**NAGA**  
**PEOPLES**

*Movement for*

**HUMAN RIGHTS**



## *A Bird's Eye-View* of the **NAGA STRUGGLE**

**N**agass are Indigenous people with a population of more than 4 million spread across their ancestral homeland along the Patkai Range that lies between the Longitudes of 92.5 East and 97.5 East and Latitudes of 23.5° North and 28.5° North.

Nagass were Independent peoples and self-governed like the ancient Greek city states living in small republics till the British invasion and occupation of their land beginning from 1832. By 1879, the British had conquered a good part of their land. The larger part of their homeland remained free and un-administered and was controlled by Nagass themselves. This is still true today as far as the Eastern Nagaland lying in within Myanmar (Burma) is concerned.

On January 10, 1929, the Nagass submitted their first written statement for Independence to the British Government's Simon Commission, demanding that Nagass be left alone as it was when Britishers first found them on their departure from the Indian sub-continent. Later in 1947, on the eve of the British Government departure from India, the Nagass declared





their Independence on 14<sup>th</sup> August 1947, one day before India declared her Independence as the Nagas sensed that their people and land were going to be left to the mercy of India.

To the tragedy of the Nagas, the departing colonial British Government handed the Nagas to the independent India notwithstanding the expressed will of the Nagas to be left alone for them to self-govern as in the days of old. The arrogant India claimed Nagaland as part of their new nation saying that the Nagas were too small and too poor to govern themselves.

Upholding the principles of peaceful approach despite the odds, and, to demonstrate to India and also to the world that under no circumstances our people would live under India, a Naga National Plebiscite was conducted on May 16, 1951, where 99.9 % voted for Independence. This outcome was made known to the world and a copy was sent to the United Nations Office. Thus, when India imposed its first Indian Elections in 1952, all over India, Nagas completely boycotted the Indian imposed elections and continued to live and govern themselves according to their traditional and customary way of life, on the principles of non-violence, non-cooperation and to assert the Independence of the Naga Nation.



A picture of the Plebiscite of May 16, 1951 where an old man is seen putting his thumb print on the Plebiscite Papers.

Following this political assertion, from 1953 onwards, India began the process of militarization and military occupation of the Naga nation with their policy to crush what they called "rebellious Nagas" by engaging its draconian law called Assam Maintenance of Public Order (*Autonomous District*) Acts of 1953. In March 1953, Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Prime Minister of India, and U Nu, the then Premier of Burma, met at Kohima and arbitrarily divided the Naga Nation between them. Thence, the genocidal acts of the Indian Government upon the peace loving and simple Indigenous Naga population began unabated for over a decade. Every possible inhuman acts were inflicted upon the Nagas where children, women, elderly people were not spared.

To limitlessly arm its genocidal military, in 1958, the Indian Parliament enacted the most draconian law called the Armed Forces (*Special Powers*) Act of 1958, giving unlimited powers to the Indian Military to arrest, search or seize without warrant and to "shoot and kill" anybody on mere suspicion with full legal immunity.

Throughout the next decade, the Government of India was engaged in strengthening its invasion and military occupation by enacting "laws" to neutralize the political assertion of the Naga people. In 1962, the Nagaland Security Regulation was enacted to hunt down Naga leaders and activists and also to restrict any kind of people's movement. And on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 1963, a part of the Naga homeland was declared a State within India through a so-called 16-Point Agreement which was purportedly agreed

in 1960 between the Government of India a few elite Nagas.

But this tragic situation in the Naga homeland did not go unnoticed. Empathizing the sufferings of the Naga people, groups and individuals from home and far began to broker for peace. Thus, in 1964, Ceasefire (*which later will be referred as the First Cease Fire*) between the Government of India and the Federal Government of Nagaland (FGN) was agreed by both and declared. This Cease Fire provided a window for a political dialogue between them. Unfortunately, no tangible solution could be agreed as the coercive Government of India failed to appreciate and understand the will and aspiration of the Naga people.

The First Cease Fire was unilaterally abrogated by the Government of India in 1972, to introduce more punitive law called the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act. Side by side, the State of Nagaland which used to be under the Ministry of External Affairs, unlike any other states in India, was unceremoniously brought under the Ministry of Home. And during the period of 1975-1977, almost all the Naga leaders including students and youth were systematically arrested and imprisoned without any trial under the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA).

The political and armed conflict continued unabated with every conceivable human rights violations taking place all over Naga areas where the innocent civilians, women and children faced the brunt of Indian Military onslaught. Later, even the mighty Indian army Generals conceded moral defeat and admitted that "Military Solution is not Possible".



In the summer of 1997, on July 25<sup>th</sup>, after long parleys between the Naga leadership and the Government of India, another ceasefire was announced by the Prime Minister of India, Mr. I. K. Gujral in the Indian Parliament at New Delhi and by the Chairman of the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN), Mr. Isak Chishi Swu, from the Hague in The Netherlands, which came into effect from the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 1997, based on the following three principles;

- i) That the talks will be held without any conditions,
- ii) That the talks will be held at the highest level (*i.e. at the Prime Ministerial level*), and
- iii) That the talks will be held in a third and neutral country.

It is now 22 years, that talks have continued without any "logical conclusion", much to the discredit of Indian leaders who have the disgrace of back-tracking on their commitments. It is noteworthy to state that the Government of India has in writing, "Recognized the unique history and situation of the Nagas" during one of the talks held at Amsterdam, in The Netherlands, on July 11, 2002. This admission came after more than 50 years of protracted war. What most importantly still remains is the translation of this documented recognition to political reality. A new vista was opened when on August 3, 2015, the "Framework Agreement" was signed as the final step towards mutually agreed and accepted political settlement. So also another agreement which recognizes the "right to self-determination" of the Naga people was signed on the 17th of November 2017 with the Working Group of 6 Naga



3<sup>rd</sup> August 2015 After Signing of the Framework Agreement



National Political Groups. But this too appears to be dragging through an already addressed and accepted "symbolic issues".

Thus, the search for dignity, political peace and recognition of the inalienable rights of the Naga people trudges on.

We appeal for solidarity to every peace loving people and nation in our search for a Just-Peace and dignity.

We firmly extend our support and solidarity to all our struggling Indigenous peoples across the world for establishment of Just, Equal and Dignified human society.

### "KUKNALIM"



## Nagas have every right to be Independent

"... I believe in the brotherhood of man, but I do not believe in forced unions. If you do not wish to join the Union of India, nobody will force you to do that. The Congress Government will not do that. I will come to the Naga Hills; will ask them to shoot me first before one Naga is shot"

Mahatma Gandhi  
July 19, 1947





## **NAGA LABOUR CORPS** Contribution

"The gallant Nagas whose loyalty in the meets of depression times of invasion never faltered. They refused to aid Japanese in any way or betray our troops. Their active helps to us was beyond value or praise. Under the leadership of devoted British Officers and some of the finest Indian Civil Service, in whom they had complete confidence. They guided our columns, collected information, ambushed enemy patrols, carried our supplies, and brought in our wounded soldiers under heaviest gunfire and then being gentle men they refused all payment. Many British and Indian Soldiers owed his life to the naked and head hunting Nagas, and no soldiers of the fourteenth army, who meet them never think of them, but with admiration and affection."

- *Field Marshall Sir William Slims*

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