NAGA SEPARISM AND INDIAN RESPONSE

When Indian nationalist elite in 1947 failed to avoid the British India’s decision to divide the British India into two parts namely India and Pakistan, the Indian nationalist elite has taken the responsibility of political power from the British and seek to make up a powerful country in India. During this period, India has also made an effort to bring all the post-colonial linguistic, ethnic, religious, cultural, and tribal communities, which are living in the eliminated and partly eliminated parts of British India into one common nation, which is known as Indian Union. By applying iron and blood policy, India tried to compel all the native ethnic group of people to join federal state of India. The Nagas, which were treated as one of the isolated tribes by the colonial leaders’, oppose to accept the assimilative practices of the Indian state. Nagas did not believe that neither by consent nor by accession did they become a part of Indian Union (Nag, 2002:28-30).

Based on their divergent cultural identity and unique history the Nagas raised the right to self-reservation and unique history. At the initial year of Indian independent, Nagas were no violent against the Indian Government regarding their demand of separate sovereign state. However, when they realized that Indian Government has not positively respond to their demand they stated violent path and used arms to get their demand fulfilled. Indian Government before 1962 did not pay much attention towards North East area and it was the war with China where they realized the importance of this North East periphery areas. Likewise, in 1963 Nagaland State was created to pacify the Naga demand but this political settlement creates more political problem because many Naga tribes remained outside the Naga state for example there are Naga inhabited areas
in Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh (Mackenzie, 1994:55). Nagas were expected that like other ethnic groups in the North-East the Naga riot would be easily restored by the Indian armed forces. However, contrary to the prospects of Indian leaders, the Naga’s fight for separate state raged for more than six decade.

The Indian Government realized their own limitations of counterinsurgency strategy in the Naga Hills and attempted to negotiate peace with the insurgent groups. Because of some attempts there was cease-fire agreements with Isak-Muivah (IM) faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) in the year 1997 and later negotiated a similar cease-fire agreement with the Khaplang faction of NSCN in 2001. Recently on August 3, 2015, Union Government under the leadership of Modi signed a Peace Accord with NSCN (IM), Naga Civil Society, Naga Student Union, and Naga State Government. However, the Accord is not made public.

With this background, in the present chapter attempt has been made to study the causes which are responsible for the failure of earlier inventiveness taken by the Government to solve the Naga problem and discuss the various methods which will helpful in resolving the debatable issue of Naga separatism.

Over the period, different scholars have defined the origin of the Word ‘Naga’ differently and it has been a source of much debate among different scholars and researchers. Still there is no mutual consent among the researchers on the explanation of the word Naga and world itself is shrouded in mystery. The word Naga is a broad word and included a group of near about thirty tribes not of only Nagaland but also some parts of Manipur, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and parts of Myanmar. Thousand years ago from east region Naga tribes were migrated in the above given
areas. Although most of the Naga tribes have common cultural but one can noticed difference in each Naga tribes languages, and social and political institutions (Raile, 2013:30). Before the entry of British, most of the Naga tribes except Angami, Sem and Tangkul were engaged in rice cultivation institution. There is no common practice among the Nagas to hold private property. During the same time, there is not central political authority, which should listen the grievances of the Nagas. In modern times, such type of central political authority is known by the name of state. Before the entry of British, most of the Nagas adopted the practices of hunting and shifting cultivation (Jacob, 1990:30). Among few of the Naga tribes headhunting was seen as widespread practice.

For a long period, British have not shown any interest regarding the extent of their ability to control the Naga inhabited Hill part of the North East. For their self-motive and for seeking profit Britishers were mainly interested in extending the area under tea plantations in the plains. Because of more tea plantations in the plains areas, British made direct conflict with the Naga tribes. Many Nagas have started resisting against British movement; Nagas also conducted raids and looted the tribes in plain areas. When Nagas also killed many British subject then British stared to set up outpost to control furious Nagas. Britishers used Kuki tribe against Naga tribe. This means British adopt mixed policy against the furious Nagas. First was the set up of outpost and the second was the use of Kuki tribe against Naga tribe. The next step what the British was followed is that they want to keep away Naga tribes from the plain areas. Because they were aware about the fact that Naga tribal people not want to mix up with other tribes and in order to avoid confrontation, British introduced Inner line Regulation. Even today passes are required which are issued by state government authority to enter their state. British made very less efforts to economically uplift the Naga tribes. Their social life of Nagas was very
much influenced by the missionaries. The social life of Naga was improved with the expansion of education and they become civilized and they came out from inter tribal rivalries like mutual respect, coordination etc were seen in their behavior.

One Naga political development took place in the form of establishment of Naga tribe council. These tribal councils started appealing to the British Government and the Indian political elites that they were never part of the Indian union, it was the Britisher who rules over us, and when British would leave India, they would enjoy a same state of nature as they were before British rule. The political elite ignored their demand after India got its independence. The Naga Akabr Hydari Accord (See Appendix-1) in 1947 was signed between Nagas and Union Government of India. Now this nine-point agreement was not mentioned in the constitution of India and Naga felt laid down. Now Naga had not shown interest in political elites of India. In that sense they did not took part in first General elections, which was conducted in 1952. Now this proved to be a big jolt to the union Government of India because a small ethnic group was stuck to the demand of independent sovereign state.

The Angami Zapo Phizo met Mahatma Gandhi in July 1947 and put forward their demand for Naga sovereign state. Mahatma Gandhi assured them that the Naga had the full right to get independence if they think that they are not part of India. Phizo thought that soon Naga would become a sovereign state and they declared their independence on 14, August 1947. Political leaders did not show much interest to Naga to celebrate their independence because they were busy for making the constituent assembly and 562 princely states have been included in the Indian union (Changkri, 1998:29).
Apart from these above discussed measures, the British also adopted various hard remedial measures in opposition to Nagas. At the end of the nineteenth century, British suppressed the Naga conflict and fully control the Nagas. Gradually, in order to establish authority over Nagas British set up administration in the districts of Naga Hills. British want to avoid direct interference in the matters of Naga Hills, therefore, British have handover some of political powers to the village headmen, which would be, act as British authority (Sema, 1991:29). Another important initiative taken by the Britishers to guide the administrative and civil matters of Nagas, which was primarily based on Naga tradition, is the set up Naga Hills Tribal Council. When the Britisher realized that running up of administration in these areas is very expensive and not economically feasible and put financial burden on them, and then British started to move away from the border areas occupied by the Nagas like Tuensang and Tirap frontier parts of Naga Hills. On the one hand, Britishers have not paid much attrition to bring any improvement in the social and economic conditions of the Nagas while on the other hand Christian missionaries who have full right to spread Christian religion among all the Naga tribes had made efforts to establish modern administrative, educational, and political institutions in Naga Hills. Because of the efforts of the Christian missionaries, there was a birth of educated class in the Naga Hills (Shakespeare, 1998:9).

The new emerging educated class, which had no roots before the beginning of twentieth century, made effort to think how the collective interests of all the Naga tribes can be promoted. Near about three thousand Nagas who went to France as a labor crops and in the First World war they saw that there was war among different countries they got the impression of a separate state and when they come back they formed the Naga Club in 1918 with the collective efforts of new emerging educated class and the
Government officials. This was a new political development in the Nagas. Anyone could become member of this club irrespective of any tribe.

The appointment of Simon commission was the new political reform in the British India. The Naga Club submitted a memorandum to the Simon commission. In this memorandum, Nagas express their desire that they would never become the part of India when British leave the India. The Government of India Act 1935 after the submission of memorandum chooses the Naga Hills district to give the place of excluded area. In the excluded area Nagas spent their life according to their traditional ways and there was little interference from the federal government (Routray, 2003:16).

The term excluded area had gave the impression among the Nagas that they are not the part of British India and in this way the idea of separatism appeared in the minds of Nagas.

One of the most important point, which one can be understand here is that the Nagas which were in the 19th century struggle ferociously adjacent to the British, gradually start to recognize the British Governance. For Nagas it was very difficult to accept that they would be the part of the sovereign union state of India when India got independence from British (Misra, 2000:59). A group of leaders of NSCN were of the view that Nagas have different historical as well as cultural background so they should be granted freedom and gives the status of sovereign state when India become free from Britishers.

In 1946, NNC appealed the British rulers and the Indian authorities to separate the Naga from India. The prominent leaders of NNC refused the idea of British officials and higher Indian authorities who were of the view that Naga tribe is a small and unorganized community, therefore, it is good for Nagas to be remained a part of independent India. One of the outcome
of enormous efforts and talks of Indian Government and NNC leaders was Nine Point agreement which was signed by NNC leaders and Indian Government in June, 1947 (Singh, 2001:14). This agreement is also know by the name of Akaabr Hydari Ali Nine Point Agreement. In June 1947, Akbar Hydari Ali was the Governor of Assam and he argued that subsequent to 10 years of agreement Nagas will get the right to decide future.

The Ninth clause of the Nine Point Agreement was much controversial from the Naga side as well as from the point view of Indian Government. It is because of the reason that on the one hand Indian thought that there might be negotiation and Nagas would be agree to join Indian constitution. On the other hand, Nagas felt that after ten year, they become free and they will declare their sovereign state (Zhimomi, 2004).

Most of the literature from Naga side indicated that Indian Government had accepted the demand of separate sovereign Nagaland state. Indian Government felt that in the ten year period sixth schedule should be included in the constitution and Naga problem would be solved through negotiations.

Angami Zap Phizo explained the ninth clause of the Nine Point Agreement in that sense that the Naga have the full right to became politically independent after ten years. In 1947, most of the leaders of NNC met with Mahatma Gandhi and he gave an assurance to the Nagas that he would prevent the Indian Government to adopt the convincingly policies to integrate the Naga into Indian union. NNC declared Independence to Naga one day before the Indian independence that was 14 August 1947. Indian political elites paid less attention towards this reaction (Nag, 2002:38).

At the time of making of constituent assembly many ethnic groups from North-East like Mizo, Garos were invited to participate in the debates
of constituent assembly. At that time, Nagas were refused to participate and stated that they were not Indians, so they are not supposed to take part in the making of the constitution.

Phizo said that both Nagas and India hardly knew each other and we have nothing in common. The Government of India made special provision for North East India under sixth schedule. Sixth Schedule (See Appendix-VII) related with tribes of North East. It gives direction of local autonomy and for constituting regional and district councils and gives instructions to Governments to share the revenue with the local councils (Goha, 2008:266).

The first Parliament election was held in 1952 and Nagas did not take part in these elections. All this irritates especially to the then Prime Minister Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru and he expressed his views regarding the creation of a separate state. He said that such a small population could not survive without India’s support. In order to curb separatist movement in Nagaland Armed Force Special Power Act (See Appendix-V) was introduced by the Parliament on September 11, 1958 and it was first implemented in the Assam region of North-East. It was an initiative taken by the Indian Union Government and it is considered as a powerful measure for the state as well as for the Central Government to act against those who challenge India’s political and territory integrity. This Act in order to maintain law and order in disrobed areas grant special powers to the armed forces (Navalakha, 2003:683-685).

Due to the fear of Indian Army, many Nagas went underground. Indian army started brutal methods to create fear among the people of Nagas. A large number of houses were burned, many Nagas were torched, women were raped etc. T. Sakhiere one of the prominent leader of Nagas felt that violence would not become the solution of Naga problem and
Nagas would not able to fight back Indian army because now India emerged as a super power.

In August 1956, the debate was extended in the Lok Sabha in order to study the situation of Naga Hills. In 1960, sixteen-point agreement (See Appendix-II) was signed between the Union Government of India and Naga People’s Convention under the leadership of then Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru. In this agreement, Tuensang Area, which was part of North East Frontier (NFC), was included under the Naga Hills District. In this agreement, Indian Government also proposed that the Parliament of India would not pass any law, which would affect the social, religious and customary interests of Nagas (Sareen,1980:76). Naga Hill district came under ministry of external affairs and local self Government was established in Naga Hills.

T. Sakhiere tried to make some negotiations with Indian Government regarding the problem of Naga. He was murdered because of the misconception of many hardcore underground Nagas. They were of the view that T. Sakhiere was an agent of Indian Government.

Nehru got convinced when some elders of Nagaland met him. They said that give us a state then the entire problem will be solved.

In 1963, Nagaland state was formed. After the creation of Nagaland State many tribal’s groups were affected. At that time, Indian Government has two options: First was to form Union territory and second was to create separate state of Nagaland. Union Government chooses second option because political elite believed that after the creation of separate state of Naga, they would pacify the Naga separatist. Here union Government conducted one mistake that was they did not settle the boundaries according to the proportion of the population and this led many Nagas tribe outside the Nagaland territory. All this creates one more political problem
that is demand of greater Nagaland. But the creation of Nagaland state did not bring any fruitful results because underground Nagas stuck to the demand of separate sovereign Naga State (Sahni, 2001:23).

In 1964, the year after the creation of Nagaland state, the first ceasefire agreement was signed between NNC and union Government of India. From this, one can get the idea that, India needs ceasefire agreement with the NNC members because many members of Naga trapped to the demand of sovereign Naga state. In 1966, revolutionary Government of Nagaland was established against the failure of peace talks under the leadership of Phizo. Phizo visited China, Pakistan and Myanmar in order to get support in form of arms, training and financial assistance. Over the years, China, Pakistan, and Myanmar provide support to the separatist Nagas for their strategic and related purpose. When these issues came in front of Indian Government banned Federal Government of Nagaland and NNC. After the period of 1972, Indira Gandhi Government has rehabilitated all the border tribal zone areas into union territories. Such type of actions was put into practice not only in the areas where guerilla movement was high such as Mizoram but also in those areas where demand for autonomy had not get momentum such as Arunachal Pradesh (Ghosh, 1982:97).

In 1975, President Rule was imposed in Nagaland state. During this period, Indira Gandhi had offered a great opportunity to Naga separatist in the sense that except sovereignty take whatever you want. This offer has not given by any Government till date.

In November 1975, Shillong Accord (See Appendix-IV) was signed by the underground Nagas and Union Government of India. Factionalism started within NNC because of the reason that many members were against the Accord and others were favored it. During this time Thvigalong
Muivah who was the right hand of Phizo and he was China. When he came back in Nagaland he out rightly rejected the Shillong Accord and said that the acceptance of Shillong Accord means to sell Naga people and freedom (Baruah, 2004:148).

This Accord divided the NNC into moderate and extremist ideologies. Muivah with Isik Swu. Both of them adopted the extremist path. Muivah approach to S.S Khaplang and they form their own party under the banner of NSCN in 1980. This group is emerged as one of the strongest separatist group in the whole North-East area. They stated giving arms training to other separatist groups of North East region. The Indira Gandhi Government has made mistake when the ceasefire agreement was extended only to the Nagaland but also to the Naga inhabited region. Before the Shillong Accord the Nagas fight for independence is knwwon as Naga Nationalism but after the period of accord this struggle is known as Factionalism.

Factionalism had been take place in NSCN. In 1988, Khaplang has formed its own party under the name of NSCN (K). The NSCN (IM) leaders were of the view that there is a lot of difference between the ideology followed by them and NSCN (K) and NNC factions. They expressed that NSCN (IM) is the only nationalist power which always gives importance to the interest of Nagas and NNC factions and NSCN (K) always promote those activities which adversely affects the national and social interest of Nagas. Therefore they considered NNC factions and NSCN (K)0 as anti-national and reactionary power. There was ceasefire agreement between the Government of India and NSCN (IM) in 1997 and with NSCN (K) IN 200. On 23 November NSCN (IM) agin spilt and formed NSCN (U) (Chandran, 201:124).
Till date there are 81 rounds of peace talks held between the union Government of India and separatist Nagas. None of the peace talks solved the prolonged Naga problem. There are number of reasons from both sides that are form the Indian union Government and Naga side

Under the leadership of then Prime Minister P.V Narshimam Rao, Indian Government adopted the policy of liberalization, Privatization and globalization. During this period, union Government realized the importance of economic development of North East region. The Indian Government started efforts in the form of communication, transport, and infrastructure development. Here one can point out that economic development is possible only when peace prevails in the North East area. India could improve its trade with China, Japan and other eastern countries via North East and they were of the view that North East is an issue of territory security rather than economic development.

However, Look East Policy bid not bring any fruitful results because till date there are strong separatist groups create hindrance in the economic development of North-East. As said above that only with peace economic development took place.

With the passage of time Naga Mother Association, Naga Student Federation, Naga Civil Society Group, Naga Church Association started putting pressure on the NSCN(IM) group to stop bloodshed and to adopt peaceful negotiations to solve the Naga issue within the Union Government of India (Das, 2002:21).

In 1997, under the leadership of H.D Dev Gowda, ceasefire agreement was held between NSCN (IM) and the Indian Union Government. One of the major step taken by the Union Government is to promote peace and economic, political and social development in this region Likewise, under the leadership of Vajpayee Government (in 2003),
he visited Nagaland and declared that union Government would make more efforts to end insurgency problem in the whole North East area. When United Progressive Alliance (UPA1) was formed in 2004 then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh sends invention to Isik Swu and T.H Muivah to settle the Naga Problem with the help of Government officials. No above efforts made by Indian Government from time to time have shown remarkable progress because Muivah was adamant on the demand of sovereign state (Piazza, 2009:411).

The moderate leaders in the Naga state are always in the favor of more regional autonomy and the social economic development of the Naga state. They realized that a separate sovereign state could not establish without the consent of union Government of India. They are also aware about the fact that if supposed sovereign Nagaland state would be created it cannot survive for a long period because there is too much tribalism in Nagaland and inter-tribal and intra-tribal warfare would be started. Moderate leaders started joining politics at the state as well as at central level. They became familiar with the working conditions of Indian democracy. They also realized that if the peace prevails in the state only then the economic, social, and political development took place.

Many Naga tribes were left outside the Nagaland State territory. The Naga tribes which were left outside the Nagaland State are settled in Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur. The question of included Naga inhabited tribes into the greater Nagaland would create another serious problem for India because none of these states are agreed to give even a single inch of land to greater Nagaland (Brass, 1974, 13-14).

In such a critical situation, we cannot hope for peaceful solutions for the Naga problem. Although there has been seen some racial and cultural similarities among Nagas but still there is lack of political identity among
them. From this it is clear that the concept of Naga identity is a colonial product and have not any historical background.

India has made following effort for the development of North East India region.

1. DONER (Development of North East Region) was established in 2001 by the cabinet level department of Nagaland.
2. Tax incentives are given to promote industries in these areas.
4. Look East policy was formed in 1991 with the objective of depolitic and economic ties of India with the countries of south East Asia
5. Development of railways and pipelines to link the region with other parts of the country
6. ISHAN Vikas scheme was introduced to the students and teachers
7. Recently, the Modi Government has announced the budget of 60,000 crore for development of region.

From the past experience of 16-point agreement and Shillong Accord it has been clear that Naga problem cannot be solved by considering only one group of Naga leaders or organizations. Need of the hour is that efforts should be made from both the sides it means from Indian side as well as from NSCN(IM) and other organizations instead of imposing one group’s will on the Naga people efforts should be made to listen opinion of all the Naga tribes and take action positively in the entire process of reconciliation.

Now a day’s Indian Government has realized that Naga problem cannot be solved only with military and monetary intervention. The changing social, political and economic scenario at the national as well as
the international level has compelled the Indian Government to adopt different measures to solve the more than sixty decades long Naga problem. The success of peace talks in solving the Naga problem will be possible only and only when Government take lesson from the mistakes of past experience and for meaningful results atmosphere of belief and self-reliance must be formed.

Following important issues must be considered to make peace talks successful.

1. The negotiation process as well as process of peace talks not to be influenced by the powerful actor for example state who always tried to push its own matters.

2. The unique history and tradition of Nagas must be considered and respected by the Union Government and other local level institutions in Naga inhabited areas and this one is the core demand of NSCN (IM).

3. A two to three year outline for disarmament of the armed groups must be exert by the Indian Union government in consultation armed groups and civil society themselves.