CHAPTER- THREE- INTEGRATION OF NAGA TRIBES AND SHARPENING OF NAGA'S POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Various Naga tribes who migrated from the central Naga area finally settled around the areas of the northeastern frontier of Assam in B.C., remaining confined to the territories which they occupied within. Having no relative and appreciation with the Ahom kingdom, there is no documentary proof until the time of the Ahom kingdom to prove the recognition of boundaries and contacts. However, according to the documentary proof by the Ahom kingdom, it is certain that some of the Naga tribes were known to the Ahom kingdom.

The close association of the Naga with the culture, followed by the Naga's isolation but very related to the Ahom, is seen in the Naga's culture. The close association of the Naga with the Ahom related to the Naga's culture, followed by the Naga's isolation but very related to the Ahom, is seen in the Naga's culture.

Arrival of the British led to the decline of the Naga's integration and isolation. The British ruled the Naga area as a part of their empire and implemented various policies that led to the decline of the Naga's integration and isolation. Subjugation of various Naga tribes and incorporation into the British Empire led to a sharp reduction in the Naga's political consciousness. The British rule introduced a new type of administration and replaced the traditional Naga's pattern of rule. The British state took over the administration of the Naga Hills, adopting a new type of rule, which was inherited from the British and Naga's concept. The confinement of the Naga to their limited area and the
Various Naga tribes, who migrated from the central Asia and finally settled in the hill areas of the northeastern frontier of India in B.C., remained confined to the territories, which they occupied without having any relations and rapprochements with other peoples for centuries. It was only in the thirteenth century that some powerful Ahom rulers established some sort of relations with the Naga tribes living nearby the border of the Ahom kingdom. There is no documentary proof other than the Ahom Buranji (an account of the Ahom rules) to present a detail account of relations of the Nagas with the Ahoms. However, according to the accounts maintained by the Ahom rulers it becomes oblivious that some of the Naga tribes had come in close contact with the Ahom people and used to go to Assam for commercial purposes. It was the British rulers who, in fact, by penetrating into the frontier of Assam had subjugated the war-like hill tribes settled in the northeastern frontier. The arrivals of the British in the land of the Nagas, in 1834, marked a turning point in the Naga’s political, socio-economic, cultural and religious life. Subjugation of the Nagas and integration of their territories to the British rule not only broke up the prolonged Naga’s isolation but also resulted in unification of the various disintegrated Naga tribes. The close association of the Naga people with the foreigners enabled them to learn a new culture, follow a new civilization and opt for new political organisations.

Arrival of the British and Christian Missionaries in the Naga Hills marked, in fact, a turning point in the Naga’s integration and growth in their political consciousness. Subjugation of various scattered Naga tribes and integration of their territories to the British rule resulted in unification of the disintegrated Naga tribes on the one hand, and sharpened their political consciousness on the other. The British rulers established in the Naga Hills uniform type of administration and forced all these tribes to live under a single pattern of rule. Historic move of the British towards the frontier of Assam opened a new chapter in political history of entire Northeastern frontier of India. The British rulers indoctrinated the Naga people with a new type of rule, which was beyond the existing Naga’s concept. The confinement of the Nagas to their limited small world and their
prolonged isolation from the rest of the world was first time fully broken by the British rulers who ventured to break through the hitherto forbidden land of war-like Naga tribes. No doubt, the Naga warriors applied their full physic with dauntless courage to resist the British advance in their land, but their conventional weapons and traditional strategy of warship could not face the mounting British force with the result that the entire Naga territories soon fell within the British control. Thereafter, the western Baptist Christian Missionaries having the support of the British Government entered into the rough and rigid mountains of the Naga Hills with the marked objective to indoctrinate the animist Nagas with a new religion that was Christianity. The mild and friendly approach and tolerable behaviours of the Missionaries and their helpful and sympathetic attitudes towards the semi-civilized Naga people paved favourable circumstance for the growth of Christianity among the Nagas. The entire inimical attitude of the Nagas towards their own people began to reduce with the spread of new religion and religious education. Thus the close contact of the Nagas with the British rulers and the Christian Missionaries changed the whole matrix of the traditional Naga concept and their socio-religious fabric. Their political consciousness, which was parochial and limited before the arrival of the British, began to expand.

Since it was the British rulers who sharpened the political consciousness of the Naga people and it was the British rule which integrated various Naga tribes, it would be convenient to have a cursory views of relations of the Nagas with the British. After taking over Assam the British Indian Government had decided in principle to consolidate the British authority all over the plains of Assam and to befriend the hill peoples so long as they did not create troubles to the British interests. While annexing Cachar to the British rule in 1832 and in 1839, the Government had realised the significance of the frontier areas in the interest of the British at least for protection of the British Empire in India. Though the Government’s standing policy was not to interfere in the internal affairs of the Nagas, the existing situations compelled the Government to penetrate into the areas of the Nagas and subjugate them. According to Mackenzie, the British were “brought into contact with Angamis... by the acquisition of Cachar with its hill territory running up between the
Aangami hills and the Khashi Hills... the very confines of Nowgong.”¹ The British wanted a safe and secured frontier on India’s northeastern border. They also wanted to have influence and control over the Himalayan territories from Tibet to Myanmar. The snowy Himalayas was itself a strong barrier against the invaders, no doubt, but logistics and stratify demanded that the territory south of the Himalayan watershed should be in the control of the British because they had already spread their foot in Assam. The Government was aware of such reality. Since the Naga hills were on the southern side of the Himalayan watershed, it lied in the logic of circumstances that the British Indian Government had to have control over this area. Again, the frequent raids on the plains people of Assam by the Nagas also compelled the British Government to establish their control over the Naga Hills. The Government tried to befriend the Naga chiefs in the beginning but such move did not yield desired fruits. So they adopted the policy of sending military expeditions to subdue the Nagas. That is why the Government despatched at least ten military expeditions to the territories occupied by the Naga people between 1839 and 1850. Moreover, the Government also wanted to have topographical knowledge of the areas. Hence the team to measure the areas was also despatched along with the military troops.

One of the most pertinent factors, which compelled the Government to occupy the Naga territories, was a need of a direct route from Assam to Manipur for developing commercial relations with the Manipuris and for protecting their commercial interests in Upper Cachar, North Assam and Myanmar also. It was not possible until the Nagas would have been subjugated. This is evident from the statement of Mackenzie, which inter alia said, “The importance of opening up a direct communication between Assam and Manipur was at that time much insisted upon, and it was in the course of exploration directed to this end that we first came into contact with the Nagas of these hills.”¹ To fulfil this task Captain Jenkins and Pemberton along with seven hundred Manipuri soldiers and eight hundred collies were sent from Manipur to Assam in January, 1832. Another factor, which compelled the British Government to occupy the Naga territories, was to protect the king of Manipur from establishing his hold over the Naga people. Substantiating this fact

Mackenzie writes "Facts came to the light which made it clear that the object which Gambhir Singh (king of Manipur) had in his view was the permanent conquest of the Naga Hills... and the Government began to feel uncomfortable in prospect of Gambhir Singh's operation." As a result the British troops were sent to the Naga territories with the purpose to subjugate the Nagas.

THE BRITISH EXPEDITIONARY FORCES IN NAGA TERRITORY

After the annexation of North Cachar to the British district of Nowgong in January 1839, the Government directed E. T. Grange, the Sub-Assistant to the Sub-Commissioner of Nowgong, to make an investigation into the causes of the Angami raids and to punish the chiefs of the two war-like Naga villages Khonoma and Mozema. Consequently, Grange marched to the Naga area with an expeditionary force and succeeded in persuading the Naga chiefs to stop raids and plunder of Assam. He opened a new way from Chumukedima to Dimapur. It was discovered that the main cause of the Naga's raids was a trade in slavery which was done to the inducement given by the Bengali traders. Grange, thereafter, recommended for setting up a military post at Chumukedima. However, the Government did not accept the recommendation of Grange. Captain Jenkins, the Commissioner of Nowgong, was also in favour of annexing the Angami territory to the British rule. But the proposal of Jenkins was also rejected. However the Government permitted to set up a new post in the area of the Angamis. A study of correspondence between the local British officials and the Government reveals the truth that the former were insisting that the Naga areas adjacent to the borders of Assam should be brought under the British control while the former had no intention to interfere in the affairs of the hill peoples. But keeping in view the consistent pressure of the local authorities, the Government, however, permitted Grange to select a suitable place in the Angami area to set up the military post. Thereafter, the British officials was permitted to enter the hills and make leisurely and, if possible, friendly progress from village to village conciliating the chiefs by personal inter-courses."

1 Ibid
2 V. Elwin, Nagas in the Nineteenth Century, op. cit., p.152
3 A. Mackenzie, History of Relation of Government with Hill Tribes of North East Frontier of Bengal, op. cit., pp.106-07
The objective behind friendly relations with the Nagas was the “advancement of the commerce of the frontier” and to settle “any obstruction to a trade that the agents of Marwari may bring” to the notice of the Government. 1 Conforming the truth H.K. Barpujari stated that “to serve the interests which were extension of revenues and police jurisdiction and the speculation of European speculators beyond the border areas, peace mission followed one after another to conciliate the tribes.” The result was heartening because even the valiant Angami chiefs entered into agreement acknowledging the authority of the Government, agreeing to pay tributes and assuring to abstain from internecine feuds.2 According to the agreement the river Dhansiri was recognised as the boundary line between the British district of Assam and the Angami Naga tract. A salt depot was established at Dimapur at the request of the Angamis. Thereafter the process of sending expeditions into the Naga territories to map up the areas continued. The relations of the British with the Nagas improved. The Nagas “promised not to molest their neighbours in future... to abstain from plundering, excursions and cutting heads of the Nagas of other clans, to refer all disputes to the British authorities...to pay annual tribute as a token of allegiance to the British Government.”3

The agreement was good and meaningful to the British but the Angamis hardly honoured it. They resumed their old activities and dared to kill the British security personnel posted to their areas. They also assassinated several civilians coming down from the hills. As a result, the British Government on the recommendations of its officials posted to Assam decided to send punitive expeditions to teach the Angamis a lesson. Thereafter, the British forces began to enter into the Naga territories with a mind to subjugate the Nagas. Though the Nagas produced tough resistance to the British advance, they could into face the British forces for long.

THE POLICY OF NON-INTERFERENCE

The Kikerima battle fought between the Naga warriors and the British security force where heavy loss was incurred on the British side, the Government thought to withdraw its activities from the Naga Hills. Though the local officials wanted to nib the trouble in bud

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2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
by occupying the Naga territories, the Governor-General, Lords Dollhouse, noted on 20 February 1850:

"I dissent entirely from the policy of taking possession of their hills and establishing of our sovereignty over savage inhabitants. Our possessing could bring no profit to us; and would be costly as it would be unproductive."1

Thereafter, the Government abandoned the policy of interference and withdrew the troops posted and deployed in the Naga areas. This policy, in fact, emboldened the morale and courage of the Nagas. A question may be raised here as to whether the decision of the Government to abandon the policy of interference in the Naga affairs was good. The answer is that the step of the Government in this regard was not based on the farsightedness as the coming years proved the futility of the policy of non-interference. The policy resulted in the loss of the British prestige on the one hand, and emboldened the Nagas to resume their unlawful activities on the other. The Naga's raids on the plain areas increased, and they committed not less than 22 raids on the British subjects after adoption of such policy. Nearly two dozens of the people were killed and more than hundred were taken captive by the Naga raiders. From 1854 to 1865 there were nineteen incidents of raids and plunder by the Angamis where numerous British subjects were killed. Thus during the phase of non-interference the whole British territories adjoin to the Naga hills became disturbed areas so long as the Government maintained the policy of non-interference.

Keeping in view the deteriorating situation day after day, the British local authorities began to pressurise the Government once more to be tough towards the Nagas and abandon the policy of non-interference. Lieutenant Gregory, the Officer-in-Charge of North Kachar reported the Government that" unless he was allowed to adopt more vigorous measures than were permitted to his predecessors, he could not guarantee the safety to his sub-division"2 Sir Cecil Beadon, the newly appointed Lieutenant Governor in 1866, who believed in active forward policy was of the view that "in the course of a few years Assam would be divided amongst the Bhutias, Abors, Nagas, Garos, Mishmis and other wild tribes" in absence of the British interference. He further reported, "If petty outrages were

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1 Cited in A. Alemciba's A Historical Account of Nagaland, Kohima, 1972, p.58
allowed by withdrawal of the British from the frontier, they (British) would soon find
themselves driven out of the Province.”¹ Apprising the Government of the exciting anarchy
situation near border of Assam due to frequent Naga’s raids and interventions, sir Cecil
recommended the Government “to reassert our authority over them, and bring them under
a system of administration suited to their circumstances and gradually to reclaim them
from the habit of lawlessness to those of order and civilization.” But the Government was
not yet ready to abandon the policy of non-interference. However, the concerned officials
were allowed to provide protection to the British subjects from the Naga’s raids and
intervention.

POLICY OF GRADUAL EXTENSION OF THE BRITISH
AUTHORITY IN NAGA HILLS

Despite the unwillingness of the Government to extend its authority towards the
frontier areas, the pressure exerted by the local authorities compelled the government to
rethink its stand regarding the hill peoples of North East. The Governor-General sought
permission of the secretary of state of India to shift the British headquarters from
Chumukedima to Kohima.² Lastly the Government became ready to change its policy and
a new administrative zone was created in 1866 at Chumukedima comprising of the entire
Angami areas and the areas lying west of the river Dhansiri.³ John Gregory was made the
Deputy Commissioner of his zone. Thereafter, Manipur Government was asked not to send
any expedition to the Naga Hills in future. With a view to having topographical surveys of
the Naga Hills the Government despatched several survey parties along with military
expeditions despite the Naga’s hard resistance. On the other hand, the Nagas observing the
British new policy of interference increased their hostile activities against the British.
Since the Government was fully determined this time to occupy the land of the Nagas at
any cost, the Secretary of state for India, considering the demand of the governor-General
of India, allowed to shift the British headquarters from Chumukedima to Kohima. Thus
Kohima became the British headquarters in March 1879.

The establishment of the British headquarters at Kohima in 1879 irritated not only the
Angamis but other Naga tribes also who were very much vigilant about the British advance

¹ Ibid.
² Foreign Political Proceedings, April, 1877, No. 86
³ Ibid.
into the frontier of Assam. The Government with a view to extending its influence directed the troops to move towards Wokha, the land of the Lothas. The Angamis who were fully determined not to surrender the British, went preparing a war.

They smuggled a large number of firearms and collected weapons like spears, daos, bows and arrows in large quantity. When this news reached to the British officials, the Deputy Commissioner, Damant himself went to the area to investigate the matter. When he was to enter in the fortified Naga village, a Naga sentry cut him down into pieces and the escorting party of the Deputy Commissioner, being afraid, fled away. Thereafter the Naga warriors soon attacked the British armed post at Kohima. Thousands of the Naga warriors took part in the attack. It is said that the Naga warriors would have got control over the Kohima post by killing all soldiers there, but luckily the reinforcement which arrived from Manipur at the nick of time saved the lives of the British soldiers and others who were living at the post. Now the question, which began to irritate the British mind, was how to deal with the Angamis. It was not only the question of the British prestige but also the British security. Hence Brigadier General Nation, who was an expert in dealing with the hill peoples, was entrusted with the task to teach the Naga rebels a bitter lesson. General Nation along with his big-armed party reached Khonoma on November 17, 1879 where the Nagas were expecting the punitive party. This time also the Naga warriors faced the British troops with great courage and bravery, no doubt, but it was impossible for them to defeat the mighty British force.

Johnston who had physically taken part in the Khonoma battle, appreciating the courage and valour of the Naga warriors, wrote, "The Nagas met us with heavy fire showers of spears and stones. One of the spears struck Forbes and Redge was badly wounded in the left shoulders by a fire and shot at ten places." The Naga warriors left the battlefield, no doubt, but causing great harm and loss to the British party. They killed three British officers and forty-four rank and file were either killed or badly wounded.

The victory of the British at Khonoma marked the end of serious trouble and hostility in the Naga Hills. The Government, thereafter, set up some more military posts and formed the Naga Hills District comprising the areas from Burail on the south to Nowgong on the

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2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
north. The formation of the Naga Hills district was a remarkable landmark in the political history of Nagaland. A boundary line for the new district was drawn, but in the words of Sir Robert Reid “It was impossible to draw a line as the boundary of our area of control and to say that we should be blind and deaf to all that went on across that line. Trans-frontier Nagas raided our administered villages. The latter are involved in dispute with the former, headhunting and massacres go on just across the border and under the very nose of our officers. In such conditions local officers inevitably, and with reason, clamoured for a forward policy.”

The Government’s policy of armed twisting created fear in the mind of the Nagas and at the same time the policy of friendly gesture towards the Naga villages by visiting the people sobered down the wrath of the Nagas. Moreover, the efforts of the committed western Christian Missionaries who had entered into the hills with a zeal to spread Christianity among the Nagas, also helped a lot in befriending the Naga people and making them cooperative towards the British authorities.

The areas of Mokokchung and Tuensang were still out of the newly formed Naga Hills district. The tribes living in these areas were not yet under the control of the British. Hence the Government applied its strength to bring those parts under its control. To achieve the purpose the Government despatched several military expeditions and survey parties to these areas. The Naga tribes like the Ao, Chang, Sangtam, Yimchang, Phom, Konayak etc. living in these parts had been maintaining their separate sovereign village states. Though they disliked the British interference, due to their limited strength and disintegration they could hardly oppose the British penetration into their land for long. As a result the British Government established its suzerainty over these peoples without much resistance and fight. Firstly, Mokokchung was made as a separate Sub-divisional headquarters, and by 1908, the entire hills areas between the Dikhu and Sarai rivers comprising Borjan, Waekchung, Wanchang and Liankha was annexed and put under the Mokokchung Sub-division. Thereafter, the efforts were applied to subjugate the tribes living in the Tuensang area. Since Tuensang area, which lay in extreme northeast touching the boundary line of Myanmar, it was essential for the Government to bring this area and

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1 Robert Reid, History of Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam (1843-1872), Shillong, 1942, pp. 100-02.
2 Accounts of Province of Assam, Shillong, 1903, p.77.
the people of the area under the British control. Hence vigorous efforts were applied for subjugation of these people. Thus by 1922, the process of integration of the British rule in the Naga Hills was completed when whole of the Tuensang area was included in the British rule.

**ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE NAGA HILLS**

The British Government had occupied the Northeastern frontier not for the people who were living there, but for the safe and secured frontier in the interest of the British Empire. After the subjugation the problem was to divide the areas into administrative units for the convenience of their administration. When the Government found the Naga tribes responsive to the British rule, the Government, keeping in view their nature and habits, passed the Inner Line Regulation in 1873 which empowered the Lieutenant Governor of Assam to establish Inner Line according to which no British subjects could go beyond a certain frontier that was drawn along the foothills of the North-eastern and south-eastern border of the Brahmaputra valley. The hill tribes inhabited the area beyond the Inner Line where the Government did not want to apply complicated civil rules. The territories, which came under the Inner Line, were treated as the territories of out line. Thus the Inner Line separated the hill tracts of North East India from the district administration of Assam awarding the hill peoples special status. This Regulation empowered the Government to make summary legalisation and also the power to frame rules for the tribal peoples according to the need and circumstance.1

The district of Naga Hills was already constituted in 1861 but it was made over to the charge of the newly appointed Chief Commissioner of Assam in 1874 only. In the beginning, the Government wanted to bring only strategic area of the Naga Hills under its control, but keeping in view the reports of the officers posted in the Naga Hills, the Government brought the entire territory of the Naga Hills under the British rule. Even after creation of the Naga Hills district, there were some more villages, which were out of the British control and influence. The local British officers had been putting constant pressure upon the Government to annex such villages falling in the Sema area and in the trans-Dikhu area to the British administration. It is evident from the writing of the Chief

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Commissioner of Assam who wrote to the Government "We shall have no real peace until we have absorbed the whole hill areas between this and the Chindwin. This can be done gradually and economically. As it is the huge area of uncontrolled hill country between Assam and Burma, is an anomaly."1 Thereafter the letter was sent to the Secretary for State stating that "The Naga Hills district was in frontier area and the officers of this state control the tribes just across the frontier, the line of control should be extended." Thereafter, permission was granted to include all these areas of the Naga Hills which were yet beyond the British control.2

Once the British occupation was consolidated completely in the Naga Hills by bringing all the tribes under the British influence, the question of administrative management for the hills people was discussed at Kolkata by the higher British authorities. The pattern of administration what the government decided for the Naga Hills was quite different to that of the plains districts of Assam. Keeping in view the nature and history of the Naga tribes, introduced minimum administration. The Government thought of doing little interference in the internal affairs of the hill tribes. In the beginning the government did not want to disturb the village organisation and their customary laws and practices. To protect the hill tribes of North East the Government had already established Inner Line that prohibited free entrance into the hill areas. In due course of time the Government set up some subdivisional headquarters beside the district headquarters and appointed more officials to administer the Naga people. The district headquarters comprised of the Deputy Commissioner besides a number of other officials to assist the Deputy Commissioner. There was a time when the Nagas opposed the British authority by tooth and nail. Such behaviour of the people soon changed due to cooperative and sympathetic attitude of the Government servants who were posted to the Naga Hills areas. They all were asked to be friendly to the Nagas. As a result the Naga people came close to the British rule and authorities. Stating the changed behaviour of the Nagas, Field Marshal William Slim stated, "These were the gallant Nagas whose loyalty, even in the most depressing times of the invasion (Japanese invasion during the second World War) had never faltered... They guided our columns, collected information, ambushed enemy patrols, carried our supplies

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1 History of he Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam, op. cit., pp.130-33.
2 Assam Secretariat, Political A,1908, Nos. 322-34.
and brought our wounded under the heaviest fire and thus, being the gentlemen they were often refused all payments."¹

Prior to the passing of the Assam Scheduled District Act, 1874, the administration of the Naga Hills was under the jurisdiction of Lt. Governor of Bengal who was the agent of the Governor-General of India. He used to govern the Naga Hills through the Chief Commissioner of Assam and his Assistants. After the passing of the Assam Scheduled District Act, 1874, the Chief Commissioner of Assam assumed full responsibility to rule over the Naga Hills.² The objective of the Act was to provide for the administration of the 'underdeveloped tracts'. Thereafter, the Assam Frontier Tract regulation, 1880 and 1884 enabled the Government to administer the Nagas in a simple and more personal manner by virtue of enactment relating to elaborate codes of law, the code of criminal procedure and the civil procedure. The Government of India Act, 1919, further categorised the Naga areas within the Naga Hills district as 'Backward Tract' and the Governor of Assam was authorised to rule this tract as the Agent of the Governor-General with the responsibility of bringing the inhabitants of the said tract under the close administrative control. Thereafter the Act 1935 of the Government of India classified the Naga Hills district along with the Lushai Hills and North Frontier Agency as 'Excluded areas' of the Government of Assam. As an Excluded area the Naga Hills district came under the direct charge of the Governor who administered the district through his deputy Commissioner sitting at Kohima.

Thus it is very much obvious that the British succeeded in integrating the Naga tribes and bringing them under the direct British rule despite hard opposition of the Nagas. After the completion the process of integration and establishment of settled district headquarters and sub-divisional headquarters in the Naga Hills, the Government soon adopted the policy of "friendly intercourse with the Chiefs with a purpose to win over their support and to heal up the wounds of the Nagas. The Government asked its officials to establish friendly relations with the Nagas by visiting their villages and giving them "good advice for the peaceful settlement of any disputes that might have come up, and sometimes

² Home Department. Political A, February 1874, Nos. 379-80.
distributing presents, just to keep the Nagas in good spirit." In this pursuit the Government appointed Gaonburahs and Dubashis by prescribing certain monthly salaries for them.

The Gaonburahs, Dubashis, teachers, small rank Government servants and educated Naga people were the first who came in close contact with the British Government. The pastors of the Churches also got the opportunity to obtain direct favour of the Government. They all received maximum sympathy and favour of the government. Their wrath against the British began to recede and they became the true supporters of the Government. They all began to appreciate the British rule. Thus the Nagas soon forgot the bitterness and enmity against the British Government in due course of time.

The education, which was introduced in the Naga Hills by the Government and Christian Missionaries in the beginning, had the marked objective “to use educated class as a link between the ruler and the ruled”. A survey of the growth of Christianity and Christian education in the Naga Hills reveals the truth that the Missionary people faced not only topographical troubles and inconveniences in spreading new faith in Nagaland but also encountered with tough resistance of the indigenous people who were not ready to abandon the religious faith what they had been carrying from time immemorial. They opposed new religion because they were persistently asked to part with all their old culture and follow the new European culture. According to Ganguli with the permission of the Government the Christian Missionaries under the leadership of Dr Clarke, a devoted Missionary took exceptional trouble despite hard opposition “to spread the teaching of the Christian religion among the Naga people” and to “bring them to the enlightenment of knowledge through education.” Dr Clarke knew how to pacify the people and win over their support. It was he who introduced Christian literature in Nagaland. With the advance of the British rule in the interior of the Naga Hills the number of Churches in the villages increased. The revival services became an effective means to attract more and more people to new faith and new way of life. Troup conversions multiplied the number of the Churches and followers. The Ao people were the first to adopt the new faith and take active part in Church services. By 1947, the membership of the Churches in Nagaland
rose to 15734, and in 1949, it became 20593. During sixties of the last century a strong mass awakening was started to cover all Naga tribes. This move increased the number of Churches and their followers in Nagaland enormously.  

According to Mar Poger “One of the main reasons for the growth of Church in India was not the conversion of the few people here and there... but mass movements towards Christianity.” The Naga Hills, which came under, the British control became a verging place for the Missionaries. The arrival of the British in the land of the Nagas and annexation of the Naga territories to the British rule broke up the prolonged isolation of the Nagas on the one hand, and spread of Christianity and baptism of the Nagas to the new faith ended most of the blind, injurious and harmful superstitious faiths and practices of the Naga people on the other. The Christianity appeared among the Naga people as a new light that showed the Naga people the life of civilization and moulded them towards the road of humanism.

Change is a constant process. Naga society changed where old things were replaced with new one. New faith and new philosophy ended “evil practices by teaching the Nagas how to live together in peace, love and tolerance with one another as good neighbours... Christianity served as inward machinery which brought modernization, western ways of life, education, the renaissance of Nagaism and unity among the Nagas.” Education in Nagaland began with the efforts of Missionaries. They played greater role in modernizing and upgrading the view-points of the Naga people by setting up modern educational system. According to Visier Sangyu “Among the various operative forces which penetrated the North-East region with the British entrance, ecclesiology has played a very important role in the entire process of the modernization of the Angamis.” The Nagas boys and girls availed the opportunity to attend schools and learn new things. Through various Biblical conferences, prayer services and annual conferences the Christian Missionaries taught the Naga people to look into the advance of the world in science, technology, education etc. and asked them to overcome traditional prejudices. They also

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3 Asoso Yonuo, The Rising Nagas, op. cit., p.120.
made them to understand the futility and meaninglessness of the wild faith and wild behaviours. They introduced them with the vast world and encouraged them to join the advanced people for their better future both in this world and in the world of almighty.

Thus Christianisation of the Nagas was a process that created everlasting impact on the Nagas as a whole and their traditional and vogue animistic beliefs and wild behaviours began to disappear. Christianity in Nagaland ushered in a more orderly life, reasonable faith and broadened future. The educational institutions began to produce several educated Nagas who began to differentiate their past and future and choose to advance their career in various branches of learning. Technical education opened up new opportunities for the Nagas. Education and religion liquidated all the outdated taboos in the Naga society and trained them in the new path of progress. With the help of education realisation came that full devotion to education was the only way of development and such educational facilities were possible only with association of the Missionaries. It was new institutionalised educational system and close association of the Naga people with the western people, which opened a new chapter in the History of the Nagas. Education and their contact with the Europeans sharpened their parochial attitude and broadened their way of thinking. The world with which the Nagas were introduced was far greater than the world in which they had been living. The educated people took the lead to mould the Naga society towards universal pattern getting inspirations from the Europeans. The education increased the mobility of the conscious Nagas and brought them in close contact with the Indians and the Europeans both. Their conceptual outlook developed to a great extent. Education provided the Nagas the vision with which they could shape a civilized society of their own. The rule and administration provided by the British Government brought various Naga tribes under a single administrative patterns where they learnt how to live together forgetting their past differences and enmity. They were no more barbarous or semi-civilized. They learnt civilization. Their philosophical concept had changed and their social behaviours had improved. They had understood the futility of superstitions.

Teaching of Christian Missionaries and of educational institutions provided the Naga people vision with which they could shape a modern civilised society of their own. Their

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1 Joseph Puthenpurkal, Baptist Mission in Nagaland, Shillong, 1984, p. 121.
2 Ibid.
close association with the British rulers and adoption of the British rule that was imposed upon them, in fact, brought various Naga tribes under a single set of rule. Their new understanding, which they obtained due to adoption of Christianity and western philosophy of life, made them more alert and conscious about their future life. They began to think more seriously about their identity and search the ways and means to protect their cultural, social and economic interests. Their political consciousness developed. Political socialisation began even at the village level. All these happenings marked basic changes in political attitude and behaviour of the Naga people. These all resulted in unification of the Naga tribes, formation of political platform and calling of meetings and conferences to debate various issues including political one. More Nagas were incorporated in the services of the British Government. In the words of Philip “The people began to appreciate the existence of peace. Inter-village raids were considerably reduced and people began to settle down their differences peacefully. They could go to the field without fear of losing their heads. The trades between villages and the plains improved.”

It is true that the Christians Missionaries and British rulers played vital roles in changing the traditional set up of the Naga society and removing various evils that prevailed among the early Nagas. The British rulers unified the scattered Naga tribes by putting them under the single pattern of administration, no doubt, but by introducing new way of life mostly based on materialistic concept made the Naga people individualistic and selfish. Conversations of the Nagas into new faith also brought various Naga tribes together in the name of Christianity and Lord Jesus Christ, but at the coast of destruction of their age-old social and cultural values. Panger Imchen has rightly remarked, “Things began to change with mass conversions resulting in confusion, divisions and disunity.” Things began to move towards the light of the Gospel “which resulted in both a positive as well as a destructive effect on their old cultural heredity.” Describing the effect of new changes in Naga society Alemchiba noted, “Irrespective of the different political systems, levels of technology and economy, religious and cultural affiliation, we find today a general relentless taking place among the hill people... They are passing through a period of transition of their history, and in the process they are faced with a problem of readjustment to the new situation.” To quote Alemchiba once more,” The tendency (of the

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Missionaries and the British rulers) was to abolish abruptly the old things and substitute
individualism for the strong community feeling... The result was a conflict not necessarily
conflict of arms, but of culture.”

In the eyes of the Gospel any culture or society, both modern and ancient, are seen as
under darkness or under the devil’s government and any unchristianised country is termed
unsaved, unreached and devoid of the knowledge of the truth. The tendency of the
Christian Missionaries has been to establish supremacy of Christianity over other religion,
culture and civilization. They view other religions and culture as inferior and
undeveloped. Any one who does not accept Christianity is regarded as living under
darkness. They think that the real life is in Christianity and real way is to follow the
teaching of Christ. The Christian Missionaries took the Naga people as savage and found
them living under acute darkness. But it is not the real truth. The Nagas, though they had
no any institutionalised religion, they had the religious vision. They had the values also.
P.T. Philip has rightly observed that it were the British rulers seating in Assam who
encouraged the Missionaries to enter into the interior of Assam and prepare fertile
ground for moulding the Nagas towards western life and faith.

An overall analysis of the impact of the British rule and teaching of Christian
Missionaries on the Naga mind reveals the truth that they brought tremendous changes in
every aspects of the Naga’s life. They set up schools, prepare curriculum and produced local
teachers by giving them training. Their minds were transformed to a newer and richer life.
Once the Naga people caught the new way of life and thinking they never liked to return
back to their old set up. This indicates that the Nagas, though opposed the spread of
Christianity in their land, in the beginning, they happily accepted it after realising that
their old living style and thinking were far inferior to that of the present. Iralu while
appreciating the role of the Missionaries in Nagaland said, “If Christianity had not come to
Nagaland, things would be entirely different. Life, individually and collectively, would be
different.” People got a new consciousness where fear of raids, mass killings, distrusts
and constant restlessness faded and a new humanity was established where significance of

brotherhood was recognised. The Missionaries taught the Nagas not only the Gospels but also hygiene, temperance from heavy drink and chewing beetle nut. This brought a more clean life, a more meaningful and longevity to life. They brought medicines with themselves and helped the suffering persons. The new teaching offered the Nagas enough knowledge to understand the life from close angle and shape a bright future. The moral values and standards of the Naga people developed. Education sharpened their mental attitude.