

## CHAPTER-III

### NAGA-KUKI CONFLICT: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

This chapter provides an overview of the history of ethnic conflict that has plagued in Manipur for many years. It would provide an important background as the violence and conflict in the past and at present were inseparable from the process of being a tribe and their ethnics as a chosen identity. The ethnic conflict between the Naga and Kuki in 1992-97 will then be discussed as one of the driving forces behind the issues of land, underground movement, and their identities. The background of this ethnic conflict is quite detailed in scope and focus on culture that is one of the driving forces of this ethnic conflict. This chapter also examines the prolonged history of ethnic conflict between the Naga and the Kuki, the causes and consequences, their conflict perspectives and also their ancient cultures of headhunting that contributed to the occurrence of the past and present of ethnic conflict. Finally, this chapter also presents the initiatives and steps taken by the Christian missionaries (Church leaders), non-government and government agencies for peace construction and rehabilitation process.

Manipur state consists of diversity of ethnic groups in the North East India. It has witnessed many conflict between different ethnic groups. The most important conflict in the state is the Kuki-Naga conflict. Both the Nagas and Kukis are the combination of many tribes. The relationship between these two ethnic communities Nagas and Kukis began since they came into contact with each other in the present habitation in North East Indian. These two ethnic groups were known for their headhunting habit and warlike activities, they not only practice wars and conduct raids on the outsiders but also *inter-region*, *inter-tribes*, *intra-tribes* and *inter-villages* wars and raids prevailed. There were many illustrations from different parts of people that Naga-Kuki feud is not of recent origin.

#### PRE-COLONIAL AND COLONIAL PERIOD

Until the outbreak of first Anglo-Burmese war in 1824, the north-eastern region was independent from any other alien forces. However, the outbreak of first Anglo-Burmese war, the Britishers' made an attempt to expand colonial towards east. Since Assam was a gate way to north-east, the first casualty was Assam and soon British invaded the fertile land of Brahmaputra and Surma valleys. However, in the case of Manipur, the signing of the Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826 has become a significant entity for the British (Vivek, 2005). No doubt the Britishers' get a

momentum in the region and triggered a series of events and leading to changes. The Britishers' planned to incorporate in the region of its colonial domain was very crucial and to open up the vital alternative land transit route to Burma, which eventually it became a part of the British overseas empire. With the extension of colonial domination to the kingdom of Ahom a gradual process set into motion with the subjugation of the Naga tribes in the hills region like, Lotha Nagas in 1875, Angami Nagas in 1878-80, Ao Nagas in 1889 and to Kukis in the Lushais Hills on northern Burma in the year 1871.

The narration on the migration of the Naga and Kuki have similar and as well as variation. Many studies state that Kukis were in power in many of the hill areas of Manipur in eighteen century onward (Vaiphai, 1995). However, the Kuki are late migrants (sometimes in the late eighteen/early nineteen century) to Manipur and originally were inhabitants of northern parts of Myanmar in Chin and Lushai Hills. Kukis are nomadic tribes in nature who were recruited by the Manipuri King for their armies because of their reputation of being good in fighting. Being nomadic, they did not own land but later settled alongside the Myanmar border and others settled in Naga villages, which later become a base of contentions between Nagas and Kukis later a problematic to the Naga which they took up the tilling of land that they leased from the Naga. "In 1840, McCulloch, the then Political Agent, purposely adopted the policy of allowing the settlement of Kukis on the front lines and even among the Naga. The double purpose of the Kuki settlement in and on the frontiers of Manipur was that the warlike Kukis had to act as a buffer, first against the Burmese and, second against the recalcitrant Nagas and Lushai tribes" (Dena, 1999). There were many Kukis settlement on the frontline of Nagas settlement, Kukis has to act as a buffer to control the Naga. They control the neighbouring Naga villages, settled disputes among the Nagaland to stop them from inter-village and intra-village killing, and mutual headhunting during 1840. This has created a discontentment of the Naga against the Kuki during the said period of time.

**Table No. 3.1. The loss of Kuki and Naga during colonial period**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of person killed</b>
1880	52 (Men, Women and children)
1892	286 (Men, Women and children)

Source: Aheibam K. S. (2008). *Ethnicity and Inter-community Conflicts*. New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House.

The relationship between Kuki-Naga worsened during the colonial rule. The Kuki-Naga relationship suffered a major impediment during the Kuki Rebellion (1917-1919), which broke out when the British intended to send labourers from Manipur hills people for employment with their army in France. However, some Kuki chiefs objected to it and rebelled against them. The Kuki rebellion 1917-1919 was known in the oral history of the Tangkhul Naga as a 'dark period', thus, the Zeliangrong Naga in Manipur was the most affected during rebellion. In these attacks, hundreds of men, women and children were killed. During the rebellion, the British government failure to protect the Zeliangrong Naga people and their villages that witness the Kuki rebels and Zeliangrong Naga warriors clash in the several villages and suffered death and casualty, it was alleged that 174 Nagas were killed. As a retaliatory move, the colonial official took punitive measures against the Kuki and recruited Nagas to suppress the rebellion.

“By the end of April 1918, a series of brutal outrages were committed on their surrounding villages by the rebels and in the next three month 19 villages were raided with the loss of 193 persons killed and 26 missing. The causes of some of these raids were old feuds. In October 1918, 20 Kabui Naga villages were raided and burned with a loss of more than 85 lives. These raids were mostly carried out by Tindong chief of Layang who declared war with Kabui Nagas in retaliation against the latter's raid on the Natjang Kuki village. No wonder the Kabui Naga rebellion in 1930-32 was directed both against the British and Kukis” (Dena, 1991).

The Zeliangrong Naga non-cooperation movement was first with British government in the year 1930, the then Jadonang a leader of movement instructed that all the Zeliangrong Naga villages to stop paying taxes to the British government (Kamei, 1991). The Zeliangrong people were not paying taxes either in the form of rupee nor furnished a coolie since the occupation of the state in 1891. Much had been said during the Kabui (Zeliangrong) Naga rebellion in 1930-32, was the first anti-British colonial and the Kukis, but according to the Annual District Administration Report (1930-1931), the main objective of the non-cooperation movement was to make war, first on the Kukis and secondly on the British Govt. that has witnesses suffered both the communities. Since the British government failed in providing protection to the Zeliangrong Nagas people and their villages during the Kuki rebellion, “this policy was regarded by the Nagas as the policy of appeasement of the Kukis and complete neglect of the Zeliangrong Naga people” (Kamei, 2009). The valid cause of the Kuki and Zeliangrong Naga conflict lay in the question of identity, land and old feud. The old Kuki immigrants who came in the post fifteenth century period had come to stay among the Zeliangrong Naga villages. But the new migrants since the

nineteenth century disrupted their land and forest based shifting agriculture economy. Instead of one group there were two groups of tillers of the land.

Moreover, the spread of Christianity was a major cause of concern for Jadonang and Gaidinliu, though almost all the tribals have now embraced Christianity. Jadonang and Gaidinliu rose in revolt against the British in 1930, which may be termed as revivalist movement of the Zeliangrong Naga. The imposition of the new religion and practices over the traditional beliefs, and practices were the main reasons for Jadonang and Gaidinliu to rise in revolt against the British. The movement took a semi-military, semi-religious and semi-political in character. The movement, however, was finally subdued with the capture of both Jadonang and Gaidinliu. Jadonang was sentenced to death by Higgins, the then Political Agent of Manipur and the sentence was carried out on August 29, 1931 at Imphal. Gaidinliu was arrested on October 17, 1932 and sentenced to life imprisonment but later released after Independence.

## **POST-INDEPENDENCE**

Until Moreh incident in 1993, there were no major conflict between the Kuki and Naga since independence. Moreh, a small town in Manipur is the epicentre for resumption of conflict between the Kuki and Naga over the land and territorial control of the commercial hub in Moreh, which is considerably trafficking drugs, small arms and Chinese goods for sale in Indian markets.

In 1990s conflict between the Kuki and the Naga broke out in the border town of Moreh is generally seen as the site from where Kuki-Naga clash began in 1992 and led to retaliation and counter retaliation in the southern parts of Manipur. In addition, Moreh is strategically important for many insurgent groups of the North-Eastern region in India, for many of their training camps lie across the border in Myanmar with the local militia. Moreh Town is inhabited by many ethnic groups, on one side (the south) by Kuki-Chin groups, and the other by Naga (the Maring, Anal and Tangkhul tribes) and the town has always been something of a disputed territory. The Nagas claim it as their tradition land, but the population of the town is not principally Naga. Instead, it is Kuki, but also comprises Tamils as well as some Marwaris and Punjabis who moved there for commercial purpose. Moreh had been in the control of the National Socialist Council of Nagalim-Issac and Muivah (NSCN-IM) for whom it was also a lucrative source of taxes levied on commercial and residential dwellings that the group collected to use for their activities. In the Kuki terminology, what the Naga called tax collection was simply another name for extortion, and for enriching their coffers and the Kuki saw no reason why they should have to help in doing this. They began therefore to oppose Naga attempts to collect taxes, and to levy their own taxes,

and some of this opposition also took a violent turn. Propaganda that the NSCN was determined to driving out of Kukis from Moreh also helped to fuel anger against them. The violence, once begun, dangerously out of control, moving from Moreh to spread other parts of district in Manipur, with both tribes at attacking each other and that can be described as process of ethnic cleaning.

Both tribes/ethnic groups (Kuki and Naga) claim there are several clashes in Moreh Town, in these clashes the Kuki counter served a Noticed *Quit Naga* in Moreh in May 1992. The Kuki claim is different they cite an incident on 12 May of that year in which two Kukis, Holkhojang Hoakip and Lhunkhothang Tongkholun were killed by Naga insurgency group in Chandel district. Another death was of a school teacher and social worker, Onkholet Hoakip in few days later. As the Kukis claim all of these killings took place in the heart of Kuki land. This is where NSCN-IM had the effrontery to demand tax from Kuki villages. Meanwhile, member of the Tangkhul community at Moreh were found to clandestinely engage in providing information to NSCN-IM. They also served as collectors of tax from Kukis, etc. The Kukis did not want to harass the Tangkhul public, but such arrogant activities were intolerable. After a few months later, in Zoupi and other Kuki villages under Tamei Sub-division, the UNC (United Naga Council) served a Noticed *Quit Kuki* and these quit notice must certainly have exacerbated this.

**Table No. 3.2. Estimates of the Kukis and the Nagas killed, injured and house burnt down during Ethnic Conflict (1992-1997)**

Sl.No	Year	Killed		Injured		House burnt	
		Kuki	Naga	Kuki	Naga	Kuki	Naga
1	1992	11	02	22	26	Nil	11
2	1993	261	60	68	72	2144	1365
3	1994	95	67	49	28	262	425
4	1995	65	44	39	43	404	653
5	1996	32	21	18	15	61	127
6	1997	06	13	09	13	Nil	Nil
<b>Total</b>	-	<b>470</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>2870</b>	<b>2582</b>

Source: Report from UNC, Manipur 1992-1998.

## NATURE AND CAUSE OF ETHNIC CONFLICT BETWEEN NAGA AND KUKI IN MANIPUR

### Land holding system of Naga and Kuki

A Land ownership is a key factor over the ethnic conflict in the north-eastern region India especially in the state of Manipur. The ownership and claims over land and territory are related to the issue of identity and territoriality in the state. For example, the Sadar Hill Sub-division in Senapati district is pre-dominant by the Kuki tribes, however, it is a crucial portion for the Naga and Kuki. The Naga has been opposing the Kuki's claim for the formation of a Sadar Hill district right from the creation of Manipur (Hill Areas) District Council (MDC) in Manipur. As the Naga argue that the Kukis are later migrants and intruder in the Senapati district so they cannot claim for full-fledged district, and that Nagas are the original inhabitants of the hills, and the Nagas are inhabitant in the region from the time immemorial. On the other hand, the Kukis claims that all the Kuki lands are God gifted to Kukis including Sadar Hill.

However, the territorial claims of the Kuki include the districts of Churachandpur, Chandel and some portions of Tamenglong, Senapati and Ukhrul, whereas the Naga are dominant in the districts of Tamenglong, Senapati, Ukhrul and Chandel. Thus, the Kukis and Nagas have overlapping and conflicting territorial interests over all the hill districts of Manipur, except Churachandpur. However, the territorial claims of the Kuki overlap the territory of the Naga in Manipur. This overlapping territorial interest has brought the two communities engage into a conflict for so many years.

In the Hills district of Manipur, there are broadly two property systems, based on their ethnic features that govern land ownership in Hills district of Manipur. Each system has its own enforcement mechanisms as well as systematisation of rules and norms. In Manipur the tribal community owns most of the hill areas (90 per cent) of the land, but not by the state. The Kuki and Naga both have a system of community ownership governed by unwritten customary law and tradition. There are, however, two fundamental differences between the Naga and Kuki, in the case of the Naga, the tiller or direct producer has inalienable occupancy and inheritance rights for every community, which cannot be superseded by the Chief alone. Meanwhile, in the case of the Kuki, the village land belongs to village chief and chief has power over land use and access. The Naga community enjoy the rights of inheritance and occupancy and every village has more than one clan. They have a three-tier system of land ownership by clan, village and private. The Kuki-Chin-Mizos have a more semi-feudal system of landownership with built in disincentives against private or farm investment. The Kuki families are far more at the mercy of their Chief, who often tends to be autocratic and arbitrary.

In the Naga areas the land holdings are under the control of the village administration, which exercises executive, judicial and administrative autonomy. The Naga Chief is bound by the advice of the village elders and council. This is not necessarily important for the Kuki villages where the Chief is seen to be more arbitrary in exercising his authority. However, in doing so even he is bound to take the village elders into confidence. Again, though both tribes/ethnic groups own village lands, in Naga villages, individual households have land tenures and can sell land to anyone from their own villagers although transactions with other community outside the villagers are restricted. In the Kuki villages on the other hand, no individual household can lay claim to any land. The Chief distributes this land to village people for paddy cultivation, and in return the latter have to give a portion of their paddy to the Chief. In the pre-British period this system was maintained through the autonomy of the village councils and jhum was the main sources of cultivation with a fallow cycle of about 5 to 8 years. Immigration and encroachment on land are sensitive issues, meantime, struggle to acquire the land amidst changing land and depletion has translates into ethnic conflicts.

There are many cases of inter-village disputes between the Naga and the Kuki over land has reported, and it has been in existence long before the eruption of the 1992 clash. Here some example, The Kadi village is a Liangmai Naga village has a boundary dispute with Gelnhal village a Kuki village. Similarly, the Tapon Liangmai Naga village also has land dispute with the Chalwa Kuki village. Even in study area, according to Mr. Tanlubou, the Village Chairman of Tamah village, that Tamah village has its boundary and land dispute with neighbouring village of Govojang (Kuki village) long before the eruption of 1992 conflict, and the case is still pending with the Guwahati High Court. According to Mr. Lalgoumang, Village Chairman of Lansan, a Kuki village at Tamei sub-division of Tamenglong district of Manipur, also had village boundary dispute with the neighbouring Liangmai Naga village, Lamka. After a clam of about a decade, tension was brewing again in November 2011, between the Kuki and the Naga over land disputes in the vicinity of Chawangkining village in Senapati district. Chawangkining is a Liangmai Naga village situated along the IT road. The Naga allege that some Kuki people under the protection of armed groups they are encroached the land and started construct the houses, and that the areas is belong to Liangmai Naga in the vicinity of Chawangkining village. However, Kuki Inpi, Sardar Hills President Chungkam Hoakip claim that the area was belong to Kuki, they left the area during the Naga-Kuki conflict, and now they returning to the area after Supreme Court rejected

the case filed by the Naga. Meantime, the Naga People's Organisation (NPO) is urged the government of Manipur to settle the matter.

### Ethnic Identity

The most significant bone of contention between the Naga and Kuki is identity issues. No matter how small or big, every ethnic group of Manipur wanted to protect, preserve and cherish their identity at all cost. Many tribes have a socio-political organization working for the consolidation of linguistic-cultural unification. For example, the Tangkhul Naga Long (TNL) was formed in 1929, the Zeliangrong Union (ZU) in 1947, Vaiphei National Assembly (VNA) in 1947, Paite National Council (PNC) in 1949 and the Mao Union (MU) in 1971.

In the last few decades, the name *Naga* and *Kuki* have become the core subject of ethnic *re-alignment and re-groupings* since the term *Naga* and *Kuki* are purely based on nomenclature. Nine Tribes such as the Anal, Chiru, Chothe, Koirang, Maring, Mayon, Monshang, Lamkang, Tarao, once designated as *Old Kuki*, have now assimilated with the Naga tribes. Among the Kuki there have been movements to distinguish the *Old* from the *new* migrant with the numerically stronger Thadou attempting to establish their cultural dominance. In fact, since the creation of the *Schedule* of recognized tribes there has been considerable flux in nomenclature, tribal group formation and self-identification. There are many cases of tiny ethnicities associating themselves with one or the other of the major groups, or demanding changes in nomenclature and recognition of their separate status on the basis of language and other traits. There are 21 Kuki tribes, and the Kuki union was founded in the year 1948, with the Kuki Inn as its office at Imphal. Some of the Kuki brethren agreed upon the use of Thadou language because they are large in number, so agreed to use the Thadou language as for recorded and printed. However, some prominent leaders of the Kukis object to use of Thadou dialect as a common language and they demanded either in Manipuri or English since they couldn't understand Thadou fully. Others insisted on retaining the Thadou dialect as the sole Kuki language because of their population in large and the positions they held in society. In reaction to this attitude of the leadership, the other tribes left the union and formed a new group for their own. Today the Kuki nomenclature stands alone with the Thadous (Rebecca, 2008). At the same time, a large scale migration of the Thadous in present Manipur had created discontent among the brethren of Kukis like Paite, Simte, Zou, Vaiphei, etc. for fear of being outnumbered. Intra-Kuki resentment arise out of the dominate attitude of the Thadous is believed to be the prime factor behind the Kuki-Paite clash in 1997.

## Naga Identity

Before the word *Naga* emerged they were a conglomerate of different tribes engaged in bitter inter-tribal warfare. The British brought them under the rubric of what today is the *Naga* identity. The Britishers brought many changes in the age-old traditional Naga society especially in the field of education and religion. The Naga, were not subjected or required to pay any house tax before the establishment of the British rule, since the Maharajaj's of Manipur or any alien forces were not conquered.

As the name *Naga* ethnic identity is a generic term applied to a number of sub-tribes, who were otherwise known by different names in India and Burma. Therefore: in Arunachal Pradesh (Nokte, Tangsa, and Wancho), in Manipur (Anal, Chiru, Chothe, Inpui, Koireng, Lamkang, Liangmai, Mao, Maram, Maring, Mayon, Monshang, Poumai, Rongmei, Thangal, Tangkhul, Tarao and Zeme) in Nagaland (Angami, Ao, Chang, Lotha, Khiamniungan, Konyak, Pochury, Phom, Rengma, Sangtam, Sumi, Yimchunger) and in Burma (Chirr, Htangan, Kharam, Khiamniungan, Konyak, Laihe, Lainung, Makuri, Nokho, Nokte, Para, Rangpan, Tangkhul, Tikhir, Yamchunger). The origin of the generic term *Naga* is shrouded in mystery. Till today there is no definite answer to this question of the origin of the name *Naga*. But many prominent scholars have put forward different views as to the origin of the name *Naga*. Some philologists suggest that the term *Naga* derive from a Sanskrit word *hills man* and others from a word meaning *naked people*. There are hypothetical studies regarding its origin, viz., the *Nanga* meaning *paucity of cloth*, hypothesis of Shakespeare (1914), Reid (1942), William (1841), Johnstone (2002) and Dun (1981), the *Naka* meaning *pierced ears*, hypothesis of Shimray 1985). "Whatever may be the origin of the name *Naga*, but it is widely accepted that the name was given by the people of Brahmaputra and Barak valleys" (Kamei, 1995). With the consolidation of British colonial and spread education and Christianity, the use of the name *Naga* has been popularized and consequently accepted by these sub-tribes. However, in Manipur the use of the name *Naga* among the tribes, who are now identified as *Naga*, is a Britishers phenomenon. Though the British had used the name to identify and classify the tribes of Manipur, it was not very popular and the Naga identity was in flux even in the mid of the 20th century.

Nagas people live in Manipur hills since time immemorial. There are three ethnic groups viz., Meitei, Naga and Kuki in Manipur state. Nagas are the second largest group in the state. There are 18 Naga sub-tribes in Manipur. They are: Inpui, Liangmai, Mao, Maram, Poumai, Rongmei, Thangal, Tangkhul, and Zeme. According to John Shakespeare, the old Kukis clan are;

Anal, Chiru, Chothe, Koireng, Lamkang, Maring, Monshang, Mayon and Tarao. There was a deep internal crisis of identity amongst the Kuki-Chin speaking tribal population. A number of the bridge-buffer communities that were oscillating between the Naga and the Kuki constellations were assimilated to the Naga fold by the Naganisation process and they joined the Naga movement. Subsequently, using the name of Naga among these sub-tribes has been popularized after the British colonial.

### Rise of Naga nationalism

The rise of Naga nationalism can be traced back to the first half of 20<sup>th</sup> century. The *Naga Club* was formed in the year of 1918, with the joined efforts of those who are returned from France and including Naga national worker, villagers' and headmen. In 1929, Naga Club submitted a historical memorandum to the Simon Commission in Kohima, wherein the Naga were demanding for excluding them from the 'Reformed Scheme' of India, and asked to leave them alone like they were before. With the formation of Naga National Council (NNC), the rise of nationalism took an anti-British and India. the first Naga conference of its kind participated by various Naga tribes from Manipur and Tuensang were present as a observers at Kohima in May 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> 1950 under the aegis of NNC to settle on various issues once for all and for the national struggle of the Naga people. The Naga Nationalism also rises like others part of India and they develop the concept of Naga nation that they were never dreamt that the struggle would be in reality. The famous Naga plebiscite was conducted by NNC in the month of May 1951, for the Naga spirit of independent, and was accepted without any objections from any quarters and it became binding on all Naga tribes in India and Burma with their tacit support to the Naga national struggle. Moreover, the leaders of Naga People's Convention (NPC) held at Kohima in 1957 demanded for integration of the Naga area. This was followed by Mokochung Convention held in 1959. NPC unanimously resolved to urge the Government of India to integration of the Naga areas adjoining the state of Nagaland and to fulfil the aspirations by the Naga people.

The British imposed oppressive measure on the Naga, which seriously affected their livelihood. Jadonang, a young social and religious reformer was a pioneer freedom-fighter, born in 1905 at Kambiron, a village situated in the western Naga Hills, revolted against the British rule and launched a political movement to bring about political liberation by driving away the British who are regarded as outsiders. Jadonang and his follower mobilised villagers on the movement to overthrow foreign rule and establish *Naga Raj* (Kamei, 1997). Jadonang was arrested and tried on

serious charge including rebellion, and murder of Manipuri traders. On 27<sup>th</sup> August 1931 he was hanged at Imphal by J.C. Higgin, one time Political Agent of Manipur.

Rani Gaidinliu, a Jadonang's trusted lieutenant, took over the reign of Jadonang movement after HaipouJadonang was hanged. She's also a revivalist Naga social reformer and freedom fighter like her mentor (Jadonang). Rani Gaidinliu had associated with him at the early age of 13. She was born on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> January 1915 at Nungkhao village in Tamenglong of Manipur state and she was the third daughter of eight children of Lotthomang and Kalotlenliu. (Kamei, 1991) wrote socially it was the integration of the three Naga kindred tribes (Zeme, Liangmai and Rongmei) known as Zeliangrong. She did not like any alien religion, she wanted to preserve the traditional Naga culture and her religious system is which reformed religion of her people is known as *Raka* meaning *not impure*. Her political plan was translation of Jadonang's idea-establishment *Naga Kingdom*. Gaidinliu went underground to carryout direct rebellion. She moved eastwards and reached the edge of the Angami country, and her influence also reached the Maram, Mao area in the northern of Manipur, even in Kohima the head quarter of the Naga Hills. She was arrested by Captain Macdonald from Pulomi village in October 1932. After she was released from jail in 1947, the Naga Integration Central Committee (NICC) appointed her as an Action Committee Members. Rani Gaidinliu actively involved in politics and work for the upliftment of her people till her last breath.

There was a political movement to consolidate the Naga of Manipur in order to bring together Naga people separated by colonial boundaries. The Naga National League (NNL) was formed headed by Athiko Daiho, in September 1946. The Manipur Maharaja and his durbar administered the valley areas. The Naga league categorically asserted that they will not remain in Manipur since the Manipuri Maharaja had never conquered Nagas and declared that it would be impossible for the Naga to preserve the best of their culture, tradition, customary laws and political practices. The movement also boycotted of the preparation of the electoral rolls in the Naga areas and the election to the first Legislative Assembly of Manipur in 1948. The Naga inhabited areas of Manipur was tacitly legitimized for the first time when the Indo-Naga Cease-fire was extended to three present district of Manipur namely; Senapati, Tamenglong and Ukhrul in 1964.

However, all efforts has been made and launched for unification of Naga inhabited areas of Manipur with Nagaland but the final settlement have yet to come. Continuing the demand for unification was brought into the sharp focus following the establishment of the National Socialist

Council of Nagalim (NSCN) hegemony in 1980, and subsequently NSCN (Isak-Muivah) has bridged the Naga aspirations for unification in some parts of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, and Manipur with Nagaland. As the NSCN (I-M), have become the backbones of the Naga populace who influence the Naga across Manipur with the strategy of NSCN (I-M) to engage the Government of India through peace overtures and extended cease-fire from 1997 and till date, in all the Naga inhabited areas of Manipur. NSCN (I-M) mobilized the Nagas of Manipur through powerful Naga social organizations like United Naga Council (UNC), Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR), All Naga Students' Association, Manipur (ANSAM) and Naga Women's Union, Manipur (NWUM). In fact the question of unification has put the Naga of Manipur in a dilemma due to delaying the outcome of peace dialogue between Government of India and National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN-IM).

Thus, the Naga nationalism in Manipur has two dimensions. Initially, it started against the Indian rule and the Kuki. However, in the later stage, especially after the dominance of NSCN (I-M), the aspirations of the Naga of Manipur have tagged with the goal of unification of Naga as professed by Political movement, Naga social organisation, Students organisation and underground movement.

### *Kuki Identity*

James Johnstone, one time political Agent of Manipur, described the Kuki as a wandering race consisting of several tribes who have long been walking up from the south (Johnstone, 1896). They were first heard in 1777 during the Governor General ship of Warren Hastings, when these tribes frequently attacked the British subjects in Chittagong (Gangte, 1993). They were, however, heard in Manipur in between 1830 and 1840. In 1845, their large scale migration caused anxiety to the Naga inhabitants of the hill people (Johnstone, 2002). In order to bring a solution to the problem, Mc Culloh, the then Political Agent of Manipur, allotted land and settled them down in such a manner that they act as guards on exposed frontiers. Following Mc Culloh's policy, in 1855 the British Government settled a large colony of Kukis to the east of North Cachar and beyond the Langting River to act as a barrier against the Naga raids in North Cachar (Ray, 1990).

The term *Kuki* also like a *Nagageneric* term applied to the various sub-tribes, viz., Gangte, Guite, Hmar, Paite, Ralte, Simte, Sukte, Thadou, Vaiphei and Zou, etc. In Manipur, they were known as *Khongjais* (called by Meitei) before the use the terminology *Kuki*. However, it is still not known for certainty as to the origin of the generic term *Kuki*. There are many views regarding

the origin *Kuki*, but here put forward three points (i) the word applied to a cliff 'kuchti' (Nehkholun, 1993), (ii) it is derived from the Baluchistan word *Kuchis* meaning *wandering people* and (iii) it is derived from the English word *Kooky* meaning *peculiar or unusual people* (Prim, 1995). Though no definite answer is found as to the origin of the term Kuki, but it is widely accepted that it was given by the outsiders.

### Rise of Kuki nationalism

The rise of Kuki nationalism also started like the Naga, initially through mobilization of the Kuki brethren against the British and Naga. The anti-British composition of the Kuki in Manipur hills can be described into three dimensions. Firstly, the administration of hill areas of Manipur was directly under the State Durbar, who was a British subject. The Kuki chief was assisted by Manipuri *lambus* (peon) in the affairs of the administration. These *lambus* who were mere peons and interpreters assumed much authority during the British rule. This hurt the sentiments of the Kuki chiefs who were individualistic persons and used to consider themselves par with the Maharaja of Manipur. Secondly, the economic condition of the Kuki was not better off, since they are mainly depended from the mere agricultural product and with the imposition of house tax and the obligation of free labour which they disliked. Thirdly, the Kuki were obligated to send to France as Labour Corps during the First World War, much against their will. Then the blow came when the government gave a second calling for such recruitment. This time the Kuki chiefs did not give in easily to the British and they resisted all forms of British action towards recruitment, this incident which is popularly known as *Kuki Rebellion* (Singh, 1992). This anti-colonial struggle had smoother the relationship of the Kuki brethren across the villages and brought the Chiefs closer to each other. Thus the Kuki identity was also widened.

When the British rule nearing to an end, all the Kuki brethren hurriedly formed the Kuki National Assembly (KNA), in October, 1946, to persuade the cause of the homeland for Kukis. However, their aspiration became faded with the merger of Manipur into the Indian Union in 1949. Though, the Naga and other tribal groups in the North-East region getting their own homelands, the young generations of the Kuki became restive. The sense of desperateness was looming day by day with the NSCN winning ground in the hills of Manipur since 1980 and the Naga demand for unification becoming louder and reality. With the dominance of the NSCN (I-M) and their influence since 1988, the Kuki have come to realize a serious threat to their livelihood in the coming days. In this situation the realization without a well-demarcated homeland the future of the Kuki is destined to be doomed and dawned. With the failure of both the

Kuki National Assembly (KNA) and Kuki National Organisation (KNO) to address the cause and concern faced by the community has led to the formation of many Kuki underground organizations.

At present there are series of Kuki militants' organisation coming up on the line of ethnic nationalism. They are: Kuki Revolutionary Army (KRA), Kuki National Organisation (KNO), Kuki Independent Army (KIA), Kuki Defence Force (KDF), Kuki International Force (KIF), Kuki National Volunteers (KNV), Kuki Liberation Front (KLF), Kuki Security Force (KSF), Kuki Liberation Army (KLA), Kuki Revolutionary Front (KRF), United Kuki Liberation Front (UKLF), Hmar People's Convention (HPC), Hmar People's Convention- Democracy (HPC-D), Hmar Revolutionary Front (HRF), Zomi Revolutionary Army (ZRA), Zomi Revolutionary Volunteers (ZRV), Indigenous People's Revolutionary Alliance (IRPA), Kom Rem People's Convention (KRPC) and Chin Kuki Revolutionary Front (CKRF) fighting for their political aspiration. However, demand for Kukiland called *Zalen-gam* meaning *land of freedom* was spearheaded with the formation of underground organization called Kuki National Organisation (KNO) and its armed wing Kuki National Army (KNA) in 1988 under the leadership of Pu Thangkholun. Likewise, Nehlun Kipgen, also formed the Kuki National Front (KNF) in 1988 with the objective of carving out an autonomous 'Kukiland' under the Constitution of India (Kipgen, 2006).

Thus, the Kuki nationalism, developed during the colonial rule in the north eastern hills region of British India, was consolidated through anti-British rebellion during 1917-19. However, the Naga-Kuki conflict in 1992-1997 has led to the further inspiration of the Kuki nationalism and became stronger. Further, the Kukis political mobilization through KNO pushed support of a 'Kuki homeland' has transformed itself into a nationality movement. Thus, the Kuki nationalism is an outcome of the search of the Kuki for the homeland of their own. In fact, the demands for 'Kuki homeland' and 'unification of Nagas' are mutually exclusive. This has given rise to a serious inter-tribal hostility between the Naga and Kuki. The public sentiments of the Kuki were also severely hurt as the state of Manipur has politically failed to protect the lives of the Kukis on the wake of the Naga-Kuki ethnic conflict in 1992. However, the rise of Kuki nationalism, thus, stands aloof in an amazingly complex situation and wanders into the wrongpaths of militancy in search of a homeland for their own.

## **ROLE OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY AND VOLUNTARY ORGANISATION (NGO)**

The church, strong in this region with the majority of the Naga and Kuki people having converted to Christianity, was instrumental to some extent in attempting to ensure peace in certain pockets or in restoring broken ties in others, and instances it proved effectual in the wake of conflict. Christianity first came to Manipur in the late nineteenth century. By the end of the twentieth century both Nagas and Kukis had largely been converted to Christianity. Initially, slow and difficult, the work of converting both sets of animistic tribes to Christianity gradually gathered momentum.

At present more than 90 per cent of Nagas and Kukis are embraced in Christianity. Wherever they live and work, the Church is a strong presence in daily life. Its influence runs deep in all community organizations, whether it is the local youth club, village council, or sports meet, or student conferences, or women's conferences, or any functions and festivals. There is a way in which the Church and community overlap in civic and social life among the Naga and Kuki of Manipur. Given this, it is important to ask what kind of role the Church played in helping to maintain and build peace in times of trouble or conflict. However, given the importance of the Church in all aspects of community life, it is surprising to see how attentive it has been when it comes to peace making in 1992-1995 violent clashes between the Kuki and Naga broke out in Manipur. Although around two decades has passed since the violence or conflict in the region, and some semblance of peace has returned at least between these two groups which without Church leader intervention nothing can be possible. But the memory of violence and conflict persists, and the change in people's lives is a long standing issues.

During the conflict, the government agencies also did a significant work for the both communities. When the conflict escalated the government security forces deployed mostly in the affected areas, and setting up rehabilitation camp for the affected villages, rehabilitate the people who lost their family members and properties and provide adequate compensation to thousands of displaced victims. At that juncture, some voluntary organizations (NGOs) also came to help the people affected by the conflict in rehabilitating process.

## **GENERAL PERSPECTIVES OF CONFLICT**

In studying ethnic conflict, one cannot but look at various issues which exhibit as many problems that could possibly appear in the discourse of collective conflict. The table No. 3.3 describes the general perspectives of conflict and personal experience of the respondents which portrays the present situation in the whole community. It is evident that majority of the

respondents (88.6 percent of Nagas and 83.3 percent of Kukis) from both the community felt that inter land dispute is the main reason for the conflict while few respondents (11.4 percent of Nagas and 16.7 percent of Kukis) doesn't know the actual reason for the recent conflict between the two communities. With regard to interpersonal and community relationship, 41.4 per cent of the respondents from Naga community and 70.8 percent from Kuki community reported that there is a cordial relationship before the conflict while 58.6 percent of the respondents from Naga and 29.6 percent from Kuki community reported that the relationship is not cordial before the conflict. Majority of the respondents from Naga (82.0 percent) and Kuki (91.6 percent) community reported that both the community are evenly responsible for the conflict against each other while 18.0 percent of the respondents from Naga and 8.4 percent of the respondents from Kuki reported that state government is responsible for the conflict.

**Table No. 3.3. Distribution of respondents by general perspectives of conflict**

<b>General perspective of conflict</b>	<b>Naga</b>		<b>Kuki</b>	
	<b>No of respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>No of respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Inter land dispute</b>				
Yes	133	88.6	60	83.3
No	0	0.0	0	0.0
Don't know	17	11.4	12	16.7
<b>Relationship before the conflict</b>				
Cordial	62	41.4	51	70.8
Not cordial	88	58.6	21	29.6
<b>Responsible for conflict</b>				
Others community	123	82.0	66	91.6
State government	27	18.0	6	8.4
<b>Tradition enmity /Identity</b>				
Yes	93	62.0	31	43.1
No	23	15.4	14	19.4
Don't know	34	22.6	27	37.5
<b>Role of militant group</b>				
Yes	67	44.6	54	75.0
No	15	10.0	6	8.4
Don't know	68	45.4	12	16.6
<b>General look of the people</b>				
Supportive	90	60.0	52	72.2

Force to support	17	11.4	7	9.7
Not supportive	4	2.6	0	0.0
Indifferent	39	26.0	13	18.1
<b>Policy and regulation of the government</b>				
Yes	14	9.4	0	0.0
No	59	39.3	21	29.1
Don't know	77	51.3	51	70.9
<b>Effect of development activity</b>				
Yes	142	94.6	72	100.0
No	0	0.0	0	0.0
Don't know	8	5.4	0	0.0
<b>Relationship between individual, group &amp; community</b>				
Much better	31	20.6	21	29.1
Somewhat better	90	60.0	39	54.1
No change	28	18.7	12	16.8
Much worse	1	0.7	0	0
<b>Role of missionary in recent conflict</b>				
Reconciliatory and peace	116	77.3	41	56.9
Appeal to govt. for assistance	34	22.7	31	43.1
<b>Govt. programmes</b>				
Deployment of security force	109	72.7	37	51.3
People to people interaction programme	41	27.3	35	48.7
<b>Role of agency in solving the problem</b>				
Govt.	0	0	0	0
NGO	100	66.7	33	45.9
Both govt. and NGO	50	33.3	39	54.1
<b>Means adopted to resolve</b>				
Dialogue between the two community	65	43.3	27	37.5
Redrawn existing boundary	35	23.3	0	0
Separate administration for both the community	50	33.4	45	62.5
<b>Present economic blockade and social unrest would escalate the tension</b>				
Yes	137	91.3	29	40.2

No	1	0.7	23	31.9
Don't know	12	8.0	20	27.8
<b>Total number of respondents</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field survey

Regarding traditional enmity between the community or identity, 62.0 percent of the respondents from Naga and 43.1 percent of the respondents from Kuki said that there is traditional enmity between the two communities which lead to the conflict, 15.4 percent of the respondents from Naga and 19.4 percent of the respondents from Kuki said there is no relationship between traditional enmity and the recent conflict while 22.6 percent of the respondents from Naga and 37.5 percent of the respondents from Kuki said they don't know whether the traditional enmity or not which leads to the recent conflict between the communities. There is also involvement of militant group in the conflict and it is evident from the table that 44.6 percent of the respondents from Naga and 75.0 percent of the respondent from Kuki reported that there is a role of militant group in the recent conflict, 45.4 percent of the respondents from Naga and 16.6 percent of the respondents from Kuki reported that they doesn't know whether there is an involvement of militant group while 10.0 percent of the respondents from Naga and 8.4 percent of the respondent from Kuki reported that there is no involvement of militant group in the recent conflict. Overall 60.0 percent of the respondents from Naga and 72.2 percent of the respondents from Kuki reported that people from the community are supportive for the recent conflict, 11.4 percent of the respondents from Naga and 9.7 percent of the respondent from Kuki reported that people are forced to support the conflict, 26.0 percent of the respondents from Naga and 18.1 percent of the respondents from Kuki reported that people are indifferent for the recent conflict while only 4 respondents from Naga reported that people are not supportive for the recent conflict.

With regard to cause for conflict, few respondents (9.4 per cent) from Naga community reported that policies and regulation of the government are the main cause for the recent conflict. 51.3 percent of the respondents from Naga and 70.9 percent of the respondents from Kuki community reported that they doesn't know whether the policies and government regulation are the main cause for the recent conflict while 39.3 percent of the respondents from Naga and 29.1 percent of the respondents from Kuki community reported that it is not the policies and regulation of the government are the main cause for the conflict between the community. Majority (94.6 percent) of the respondents from the Naga community and all (100.0 percent) the respondents from the Kuki community reported that the recent conflict have affected the developmental

activities while 5.4 percent of the respondents from Naga community reported that they are not sure the conflict has affected the developmental activities in the region.

With regard to the relationship between individual, group and communities in the recent conflict areas, 60.0 percent of the respondents from Naga community and 54.1 percent of the respondents from Kuki community reported that it is somewhat better, 20.6 percent of the respondents from Naga and 29.1 percent of the respondents from Kuki community felt that the relationship is much better, 18.7 percent of the respondents from Naga and 16.8 percent of the respondents from Kuki said there is no change in the relationship while only one respondents from Naga community reported that the relationship between individual, group and communities have become much worse.

It is evident from the table that there was role of missionary in the recent conflict and 77.3 percent of the respondents from Naga community and 56.9 percent of the respondents from the Kuki community reported that reconciliatory and peace is the role undertaken by the missionaries and 22.7 percent of the respondents from Naga community and 43.1 percent of the respondents from the Kuki community reported that missionaries took initiatives in appealing to government for assistance for the conflict affected areas.

To improve the stability and security in the conflict areas government have to take some initiatives. 72.7 percent of the respondents from Naga community and 51.3 percent of the respondents from Kuki community reported that government should deploy security forces to improve the stability and security while 27.3 percent of the respondents from Naga and 48.7 percent of the respondents from Kuki community reported that government should encourage people to people interaction programme to bring in the normality in the conflict affected areas.

Both government and non-government or volunteer organisation (NGOs) played a role to solve the problem, it is evident from the table that two third (66.7 percent) of the respondents from Naga community and 45.9 percent of the respondents from Kuki community reported that non-governmental agencies played a major role in solving the problem while one third (33.3 percent) of the respondents from Naga community and 54.1 percent of the respondent from Kuki community reported that both the government as well as non-governmental agencies played a major role in solving the problem. The means adopted to resolve the problem shows that 43.3 percent of the respondents from Naga community and 37.5 percent of the respondents from the Kuki community opined that the dialogue between the two communities would resolve the problem, 33.4 percent of the respondents from Naga community and 62.5 percent of the

respondents from Kuki community opined that separate administration for both the community would resolve the problem while 23.3 percent of the respondents from Naga community alone opined that redrawing of the existing boundary would resolve the problem between the community.

Regarding present economic blockade and social unrest, 91.3 percent of the respondents from Naga community and 40.2 percent of the respondents from Kuki community reported that it would further escalate the tension among the communities, 8.0 percent of the respondents from Naga community and 27.8 percent of the respondents from Kuki community reported that they are not sure the present economic blockade and social unrest would further escalate the tension among the communities while 0.7 percent of the respondents from Naga community and 31.9 percent of the respondents from the Kuki community reported that present economic blockade and social unrest would not further escalate the tension among the communities.

With regard to co-associates of conflict perspectives in terms of land dispute, traditional enmity or identity and role of under grounds by background characteristics, Table No.3.4 shows that, among Nagas who are above 40 years of age, males, married, literates, involved in farming, shifting (jhum) cultivation, belong to BPL family, larger family size (above 5), monthly expenditure of the family up to Rs.3000, don't have any savings and those doesn't have any debts largely feels that land disputes, traditional enmity or identity and role of under grounds are the main reasons for the ethnic conflict than those who are up to 40 years of age, females, single/widow, illiterates, involved in non-agricultural occupation, wetland cultivation, belong to APL family, lesser family size (up to 5), monthly expenditure of the family above Rs.3000, have some savings and debts. A similar sensitivity is evident from the Kuki community with regard to conflict perspectives in terms of land dispute, traditional enmity or identity and role of under grounds by the background characteristics except for type of cultivation where people from Kuki community feels that both wetland and shifting cultivation has been affected due to land disputes, traditional enmity or identity and role of under grounds.

**Table No. 3.4. Conflict perspectives by background characteristics**

Back ground characteristics	Conflict Perspectives					
	Naga			Kuki		
	Land dispute	Traditional enmity/ Identity	Role of UG	Land dispute	Traditional enmity/ Identity	Role of UG
<b>Age</b>						
Up to 40 year	38	22	17	29	15	26
Above 40 year	95	71	50	31	16	30
<b>Sex</b>						
Male	127	88	63	55	28	49
Female	6	5	4	5	3	5
<b>Marital Status</b>						
Single/widow	7	5	4	5	3	5
Married	127	88	63	55	28	49
<b>Educational Status</b>						
Illiterate	28	20	14	21	11	21
Literate	105	73	53	39	20	33
<b>Occupational Status</b>						
Agriculture	82	60	39	49	27	45
Non-agriculture	51	33	28	11	4	9
<b>Family Size</b>						
Up to 5	54	34	25	24	12	20
Above 5	79	59	42	36	19	34
<b>Types of Cultivation</b>						
Shifting (jhum)	128	88	65	7	5	2
Wet land /Both	5	5	2	53	26	52
<b>Family Status</b>						
BPL	114	79	58	57	29	53
APL	19	14	9	3	2	1
<b>Expenditure (INR per month)</b>						
Up to Rs.3000	92	64	45	51	27	51
Above Rs.3000	41	29	22	9	4	3
<b>Savings</b>						
Yes	57	42	30	16	8	10
No	76	51	37	44	23	44
<b>Debts</b>						
Yes	51	30	23	26	14	25
No	82	63	44	34	17	29
<b>Total</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>54</b>

Sources: Based on field survey

Further to understand the independent effect on conflict perspectives by background characteristics a logistic regression model was used (Table No. 3.5). The results portrays that among Naga community there is no significant differences in terms of conflict perspectives by background characteristics such age, sex, educational status, family size, type of cultivation and family's monthly expenditure while there is significant differences in terms of occupational status, family status, savings and debts. It indicates that Naga people who engage in non-agricultural activities likely to feel more conflict perspective in terms of traditional enmity and identity than people who engage in agricultural activities (0.078  $p < 0.010$ ), people who are above poverty line (APL) likely to feel more conflict perspective in terms of role of undergrounds than the people below poverty line (BPL) (0.031  $p < 0.05$ ) and people those who have savings as well as debts in Naga community likely to feel more conflict perspective in terms of land dispute than the people who don't have any savings and debts (0.048  $p < 0.05$ ; 0.076  $p < 0.10$ ). Similarly among Kuki community there is no significant difference in terms of conflict perspectives by background characteristics such age, sex, educational status, occupational status, family size, family status, family's monthly expenditure, savings and debts while there is significant differences in terms of type of cultivation. It indicates that Kuki people those who engage in both wetland and shifting cultivation likely to feel more conflict perspective in terms of traditional enmity and role of undergrounds than the people who engage only in shifting cultivation (0.083  $p < 0.10$ ; 0.091  $p < 0.10$ ). From the above results it is understood that both Naga and Kuki community doesn't differ significantly in terms of conflict perspectives by background characteristics except a few since both these communities were equally affected by the riots of ethnic conflict.

**Table No. 3.5. Results of logistic regression of conflict perspectives on selected background characteristics among Naga and Kuki community**

Predictor Variables	Naga						Kuki					
	Land dispute		Traditional enmity /identity		Role of Undergrounds		Land dispute		Traditional enmity /identity		Role of Undergrounds	
	OR	Sig	OR	Sig	OR	Sig	OR	Sig	OR	Sig	OR	Sig
<b>Age</b>												
Up to 40 years	0.759	0.669	0.534	0.137	0.568	0.175	1.201	0.856	1.023	0.977	3.990	0.137
Above 40 years (RC)												
<b>Sex</b>												
Male (RC)												
Female	0.487	0.544	1.413	0.697	1.803	0.448	2.302	0.999	2.691	0.338	8.194	0.999
<b>Education Status</b>												
Illiterates	0.537	0.401	0.597	0.274	0.846	0.709	0.821	0.849	1.072	0.932	4.653	0.129
Literates (RC)												
<b>Occupation Status</b>												
Agricultural (RC)												
Non-agricultural	0.595	0.676	0.409*	0.078	1.664	0.293	0.241	0.160	0.438	0.337	3.982	0.331
<b>Family Size</b>												
Up to 5	0.220	0.215	0.825	0.604	0.882	0.721	1.964	0.428	1.134	0.838	0.595	0.490
Above 5 (RC)												
<b>Types of Cultivation</b>												
Shifting (jhum) (RC)												
Wet land/both	1.264	0.999	9.251	0.999	0.664	0.674	0.000	0.999	0.162*	0.083	6.691*	0.091
<b>Family Status</b>												
BPL (RC)												
APL	1.757	0.642	1.404	0.606	0.619**	0.031	2.905	0.679	7.165	0.187	0.071	0.120
<b>Expenditure (INR per year)</b>												
Up to Rs.3000 (RC)												
Above Rs.3000	0.939	0.923	1.186	0.691	1.104	0.815	0.223	0.167	0.430	0.315	0.462	0.386
<b>Savings</b>												
Yes	4.195**	0.048	1.556	0.371	1.352	0.258	2.184	0.509	0.670	0.611	0.281	0.187
No (RC)												
<b>Debts</b>												
Yes	3.374*	0.076	0.631	0.325	1.114	0.828	0.927	0.921	1.065	0.916	1.137	0.879
No (RC)												
<b>Constant</b>	3.654	0.397	2.876	0.023	0.741	0.495	2.266	0.999	4.241	0.240	0.323	0.454
<b>Number of cases</b>	150		150		150		72		72		72	
<b>-2 Log likelihood</b>	94.18		184.18		202.17		53.99		91.47		58.82	
<b>Nagelkerke R square</b>	0.150		0.130		0.036		0.236		0.123		0.392	

Note: RC – Reference category; \*\*p<0.05; \*p<0.10

### Selected case study

Here selected of the case studies from the victims of ethnic conflict in the study villages and are discussed to understand the impact of Naga-Kuki conflict in the state of Manipur.

Golkhomang, aged 50, lives in Lasan village. He was also one amongst the victims during Naga and Kuki conflict. Since his village was completely burnt down by Naga. He faced the same problem like others, losing house and properties. After that fateful night, he spent three days in jungle along with his family. Then, he came to the refugee camp, which was set up by the Indian army. He stayed in the camp for almost six month. Later on, he shifted to his own village i.e. Lasan village with the help of the Indian army. That time, he didn't have any means to meet daily needs. To some extent, the government agencies provided some GI sheet for construction of temporary shelter. During these days of stay in the village he was not able to find any job to fulfil basic needs. But at this juncture, his wife and children used to go for work as daily wage labourers to meet their basic needs, while sometimes without food for the family members. Further with little agriculture products from his land he used to send his wife and children to neighbouring village to exchange the agriculture products with rice, clothes and eatable etc. This situation continued for quite a long time. Later on, he started working as a daily wage labourer in the village and also in the neighbouring village. Further he actively engaged in agricultural work by cultivating banana and ginger plantation which give supplement to some extended. With all these continued efforts by him and his family members, the condition is better off when compared to the earlier days. But still he is struggling to reach the level which he was before the conflict.

Asoubou, aged 43, is a cultivator and he has three children and has few acres of land to cultivate at Tamah village. Normally he used to get at least twenty to thirty thousand rupees per year through cultivation. But when he was planning for harvesting, he couldn't harvest since his paddy fields were burnt by the Kuki militant group due to Nagas and Kukis clash. In that attack one person was killed and seven persons were seriously injures. Majority of the persons were managed to escape but some persons were caught in cross fire, since the attackers suddenly open fire from every corner. During conflict he struggled to get daily food particularly when his paddy field was burnt down completely. At present he is still engaged in shifting cultivation and during summer he used to work as a daily wage labourer.

Kamkholal, aged 33, from Lasan village, his family also one among the victims during Naga and Kuki ethnic conflict in 1993. His wife was killed by Naga and daughter got severe injuries on her chest and left the village due to fear of conflict. During that time he was in need of money for his daughter's treatment but no one supported him in the financial matter. But somehow he managed to borrow some money from his relatives and arranged for his daughter treatment. During the conflict period and for some time his family was in a pathetic situation without having enough food to live. After returning to his village he managed get back to normal condition by restarting paddy cultivation in his own field. Further he told that there are lots of people in other parts of hill area who are suffering from financial problems due to Kuki and clash. Government has not done anything for most affected victims who are living in interior Naga part of hill areas.

Paominthang, aged 50, belongs to Kuki tribe living in Lasan village with his son and two grandchildren. He was a migrant from neighbouring village Bochokphai before conflict. As narrated by him, his daughter-in-law was killed during the Naga-Kuki conflict while he also sustained minor injuries and his house was also burnt down by the Nagas. Moreover, when the conflict began in other parts of tribal areas the Kukis were easily accessible to them since the Lasan village is located at interior part of hill. One night suddenly a group of Naga people came to the Lasan village and attacked the whole village. Most of the houses were burnt down leaving behind one or two. Majority of the villagers of Lasan escaped and unfortunately some of them had been killed by the Nagas. It was really difficult to escape from the village since the attack was happened in the night, there were no lights around the village and moreover villagers were in deep sleep at that time. He said that *I never came across such a difficulty and sufferings in my life.*

Abonmai (name changed), aged 45, living with wife, two sons and a daughter has been living in the Tamah village for many years after his grandparent migrated to this village. In fact he was not affected during the time of Naga-Kuki ethnic conflict. But some of his relatives who live in Makui village were severely affected. They lost their houses and lots of food grain stored in their houses. They ran away from Makui to his house at Tamah village during conflict since they didn't have any other alternative. He kept them for two months in his house and provided them daily food and clothes etc. Later they went back to their village after the attack slowly reduced and came down to normal.

From the above case studies, one can clearly understand that how innocent villagers have suffered due to infamous Nagas and Kukis clashes. This conflict made them homeless for quite a long time even some people lost their house permanently while few couldn't return to their village. Besides, many of them who practised wet-land cultivation lost their valuable crops. Some of them transformed their occupation from agriculture to daily wage labour. Thus people lost their houses as well as their properties during these conflicts and it has affected them most. According to these villagers, Kukis were more affected than Nagas during this conflict, especially innocent villagers, and are still struggle to earn their livelihood.

## **SUMMARY**

Prior to arrival of the British Empire and Kukis, wars, raids and headhunting marked the condition of the region. Not only the Naga and outsider but also amongst the Nagas and such as at the inter-tribe, intra-tribe, and inter village level. Therefore, "in 1840, McCulloch, the then Political Agent, purposely adopted the policy of allowing the settlement of Kukis on the front lines and even among the Nagas. The double purpose of the Kuki settlement on the frontiers of Manipur was that the warlike Kukis had to act as a buffer, first, against the Burmese and, second, against the recalcitrant Nagas and Lushai tribes" (Dena, 1999: 2).

During the colonial period, the Kuki rebellion (1917-1919), also known as the Anglo-Kuki war has deepened the enmity between some section of the Nagas and the Kukis. The Zeliangrong Naga rebellion in 1930-32 was non-cooperation movement and the main objective was to make war first on the Kukis and secondly on the British Govt. has witnesses raiding of many Naga villages and the kuki villages.

In the post-colonial period, Naga-Kuki conflict in 1993-1997 also evident of identity, inter land dispute, tax imposed by underground groups and demand for homeland by various ethnic groups. In the present days, amidst the demand for the 'Alternative Arrangement' by the Naga of Manipur outside the state government, the Kuki also demanding statehood for the Kuki which has created more confusion among the different ethnic communities. Thus the historical overview describes there is a continuity in conflict between Nagas and Kukis and this has often viewed as a traditional enmity between them.

In addition the general perspective of conflict and personal experience of the respondents portrays the present situation in the whole community. Majority of the

respondents from both the community felt that inter land dispute, ancient enmity (issue of identity) was the main reason for the conflict. It is also reported that there was a role of militant group in the recent conflict, community are supportive and the main cause for the conflict is not because of the policies and government and the recent conflict have affected the developmental activities in the region. More than half of the respondents from both the communities reported that the relationship between individual, group and communities in the conflict areas are better now compared to the time of conflict. Majority reported that reconciliatory and peace was the role undertaken by the missionaries and they took initiatives in appealing to government for assistance for the conflict affected areas. In addition, both government and non-governmental agencies played a major role in diluting the problem and it is opined that the dialogue between the two communities, separate administration and redrawing of the existing boundary would resolve the problem. Majority of the people also opined that economic blockade and social unrest would further escalate the tension among the communities and reported that government should deploy security forces to improve the stability and security and encourage people to people interaction programme to bring in the normalcy in the conflict affected areas. From the historical view point the Naga and Kuki have shared similarities as well as unique identities (Tohring, 2010). A good relation between the Naga and Kuki is essential and necessary for both the communities. These communities should take decisions for their future and well-being and they should look at their culture, social practices, social and political organization and religion etc. of both sympathetically. The past experiences of unwanted tensions should not be repeated and should be a lasting lesson for the maintenance of peace and good will and healthy and warm relations in present and future. The government should take initiatives in developing strategies to overcome this problem with both communities involving and insurgency groups, and also should emphasize on the early achievement of genuine solutions acceptable to both community.