

## **The Antithesis of Christianity and Politics in Nagaland**

Has Christianity failed the Nagas? According to the 2011 census, 87.93% of the Nagas are Christians in Nagaland. Baptist is a major denomination in Nagaland. However, irrespective of denominations, Christian believes in the risen Lord Jesus Christ as the Saviour and the Bible as the Word of God. History tells us that Christianity came to Nagaland in the mid-nineteenth century with the arrival of the American Baptist Missionaries. Along with the emergence of Christianity, it has brought a drastic transformation in the field of social, political, education and economic, culture and religion, etc.

Cultural practices such as head-hunting were eliminated. Ethnic conflicts, wars, clanism, tribalism, bribery, etc were curtailed and good qualities such as forgiveness, peace, and reconciliation were sown in the Naga's soil. This is the reason monoliths of peace and reconciliation could be seen in many of the Naga villages. The sudden outbreak of Revival Movements has also brought thousands of lives to Jesus Christ.

Before the emergence of the British rule and the subsequent entry of the American Baptist missionaries Nagas lived in their village. They had their laws, customs, and way of governance. The village was the only political and social structure. They were well organized to fight and stand against any outside forces. However, with the emergence of Christianity, a new political structure came into being. There was a paradigm shift in the governing system from the traditional Naga society into a modern society. People started to cooperate with different tribes thereby, breaking the bond of enmity and hatred. A new administrative system came into being in the form of towns and cities. Thus, Naga adapted to the modern political system where they exercise their rights and duties for the desired leadership and governance.

Over time, the political scenario of Nagaland deteriorated from bad to worse. The evidence could be seen with our own naked eyes. It is an ugly truth that is seen every day. If one is allowed to comment regarding the political situation in Nagaland, I believed every individual would have unending words to speak. In the recently concluded election campaign, the Chief Minister of Assam Shri Himanta Biswa Sharma stated that Nagaland still does not have any medical college neither in Dimapur and Kohima the capital of Nagaland. It is very heart-wrenching to see Nagaland State being compared to Karbi Anglong district. I believed this has opened every eye of the cabinet ministers and politicians in Nagaland. This is an open challenge and needs to be taken seriously.

The developmental work in Nagaland is very pathetic. Most of the projects undertaken are either half-done or abandoned due to misused of funds. According to the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) reports highlighted that 399 projects were lying incomplete as of 31st March 2020. The National Highways and the various roads that connect to different towns and villages are pathetic. Dimapur the only metropolitan city in Nagaland lies in a desolate state due to the poor road condition. It has become a city of potholes. Private houses are mushrooming, shining and glittering standing proudly and magnificently. But, just outside the gate awaits long stretches of potholes road.

Individuals, students' bodies, and various organizations kept condemning the government for practising bribery, injustice, and nepotism. Students kept pressuring the government for not releasing their scholarships on time. Backdoor appointments are growing at an alarming rate in the government offices, and various other departments. Meantime, the government employees are murmuring, protesting against the government for withholding their salaries for months.

According to District Employment Officer (DEO), Nagaland has one of the highest unemployment rates in the country with 92,302 unemployed youth having registered by January 2022. However, the actual number of unemployed youth could be much higher or even double those registered. Thus, many educated youths get involved in intoxicated kinds of stuff and antisocial activities out of frustration and depression.

Politicians are busy campaigning for the upcoming NLA election in 2023. They are busy building their ground by playing a blaming game. They keep stating that Naga Solution is arriving soon only when the election is imminent. Flying from Dimapur to Delhi has become a political propaganda. Meeting after meetings but barely seen any fruit. The constant meets between the Government of Nagaland and GOI seem futile. It has created more division than unison.

The Church keeps pressurizing the public and the Government for a clean election but sadly, politics is played even inside the church. Nobody knows deep within when the voting is done. Many tend to vote for their own family, relatives, and community irrespective of what the candidate is like. Alas! Many will still fall for the petty bread and butter provided in the election. Church Buildings, Bible Colleges, and Prayer Centers are mushrooming in every nook and corner but sad to see the society left in desolation. On Sunday, people flock to Church carrying a big Bible and dress beautifully. They clap their hands and sing, dance and pray and cry. But, in the next following days, they go back to their same old nature. No changes could be seen in the family and society. Bonhoeffer writes, "The world belongs to Christ, and only in Christ is the world what it is. It needs, therefore, nothing less than Christ himself. Everything would be spoiled if we were to reserve Christ for the church while granting the world only some law, Christian though it may be. Christ has died for the world, and Christ is Christ only in the midst of the world." Therefore, it is high time to retrospect ourselves where we have gone wrong and amend it before it is too late. God has blessed the Nagas with rich land, cultures, languages, etc., but it is heartbreaking to see ourselves being divided politically, economically, and geographically.

If we profess ourselves as Christians and Bible believers, we ought to adhere to the biblical teaching. Bible says "No man can serve two masters" (Matthew 6:24). People who long to be rich soon begin to do all kinds of wrong things to get money (I Timothy 6:9-12). Do not store up treasures here on earth where they can erode or may be stolen (Matthew 6:19-21). Keep your life free from the love of money (Hebrew 13:5-6). Dishonest money dwindles, but whoever gathers money little by little makes it grow (Proverbs 13:11). Therefore, as Christians, it is necessary to be the 'salt of the earth' and the 'light of the world' (Matthew 5:13-14). We must defend the rights of the poor and the needy (Proverbs 31:8-9).

Therefore, Christianity and politics must be in conformity and uniform with the biblical teachings. They are inseparable. We cannot claim to be a good Christian while deviating from the Christian truth. Our lifestyle, action, and beliefs should be intertwined and coordinated together. They must not contradict one another. We are not worthy to call ourselves Christian while acting and behaving like a crafty devil. Nagaland is known as a Christian State and the tagline goes "Nagaland for Christ." Let us all strive to live together in the likeness of Jesus Christ and be the "Salt" and "Light" of the World.

Paul N Rengma (Former General Secretary, NSUB)