



The Lure Of Political Forgiveness In Naga Conflict: A Study Of Factionalism And Political Contestation Between Nnpngs And NSCN-IM.

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Abstract: Conflicts among Naga factional groups arise mainly because of their contradiction or clashing interests over some reasons specifically for their self-interests and different perceptions of bringing a solution to the Naga political movement. There had been many bloodsheds and violent clashes and conflicts among Naga factional groups over the years and these factional killings and conflicts had brought disunity and distrust among them which had also led to the rise of factionalism today in the Naga society. Unless the conflicts are resolved or for that matter unless peace is promoted and prevailed among them, there will be a continuous rise of factionalism.

There are many innovative ways to promote peace among the conflicting parties but one of the most important ways of promoting peace is reconciliation. However, to work towards reconciliation among the conflicting parties, they would have to forgive each other based on their past violent clashes and conflicts. Therefore, both 'forgiveness' and 'reconciliation', which form the two interrelated variables in the study are important factors in innovating and promoting peace among the conflicting parties or for that matter even between two conflicting individuals. In the context of the Naga conflict, the requirement for political forgiveness is the need of the hour.

Index Terms Conflicts, Forgiveness, Reconciliation, Peace

Introduction:

The idea of Forgiveness is mostly relevant in the domain of Philosophical and Theological concepts. However, in the contemporary context, the idea of Forgiveness has become elemental to the inquest of transformation of Political forgiveness. Political Forgiveness can be understood as a transformative justice reassuring political remittance. Political forgiveness advocates interpersonal forgiveness or forgiveness of political confrontations of group against the group or nation against the nation. Political forgiveness also refers to the process of reconciling among political groups and actors that have experienced or encountered conflict and oppression among them. If we closely examine political forgiveness, it employs the observers to endorse it despite the emotional allure. Political forgiveness not only advocates forgiveness in a political context but also beyond the issue of moral defensibility and interpersonal forgiveness in the aftermath of political violence. Although there have been objections against the mixing of Forgiveness and Politics in recent years, but there also has been a thriving force in the study of the interface between forgiveness and Politics and the possibility of forgiveness and politics. There have been theories that propounded for understanding and applying the concept of forgiveness in the political realm. To substantiate this, Shriver, who is considered the father of Forgiveness in Politics, stated, "Forgiveness in a Political Context, then as an act that joins moral truth, forbearance, empathy, and commitment to repair a fractured human relation".¹ This explains that Forgiveness involves moral truth, which implies a primary concern and judgment that wrongs, injustices, or violence have been committed. It also indicates that forgiveness requires perseverance from revenge; involves empathy for the wrongdoers' humanity as well as seeks to restore a fractured

¹ W. Jr. Donald Shriver, *An Ethic for Enemies: Forgiveness in Politics*. New York: Oxford University, 1995

relationship. Another substantial example is the account of Political forgiveness given by Peter Digeser who delineates the following elements that comprise Political forgiveness. According to Digeser, Political Forgiveness presupposes a relationship between at least two conflicting parties where the relationship is marked by a moral, legal, or financial debt owed by one group to another and given the fact that it depends on the appropriate person or groups having the authority to forgive each other and also where political forgiveness involves the restoration of relationships between the conflicting parties or groups.² As much as the attributes or characteristics of Forgiveness such as resentment, repentance, remorse, compassion, confession, empathy, absolution, etc., fit perfectly in the theological and philosophical realms, they equally fit in the political realm too. There had been political conflict between the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-IM) and other factional groups which are collectively known as the Naga National Political Groups (NNPGs) in the Naga political movement mainly because of their self-interests, ideological differences, dictatorships, and other reasons. The conflicts between them had caused violence and clashes in the past claiming the lives of many lives. This paper seeks to argue that both the conflicting groups need to understand and incorporate political forgiveness with each other. Only then they can attain their goal of achieving their political aspiration.

Conflicts between NSCN (IM) and NNPGs in the Naga Political struggle

Sixteenth Point Agreement and the Shillong Accord by some Naga nationalists is considered as the root cause of the Confrontations and conflicts among the Naga factional groups and particularly between NSCN-IM and NNPGs today. These historical agreements are deemed to have sown the seeds of confusions, suspicions and inter-factional killings and violence among the Nagas and eventually the divisions among the Naga factional groups sprung up. Gradually the contestations among the Naga Factional groups had grown and the internal conflicts and confrontation continues. Both NSCN-IM and NNPGs is considered to have fallen into accusation games in order to achieve their political aspiration. At present, one of the conflicting reasons between the two is the separate ongoing negotiations with the Government of India (GOI) which eventually had led to the signing of two separate agreements by each group i.e the Framework Agreement (FA), signed between NSCN (IM) and Government of India (GOI) on 3rd August 2015 and Agreed Position (preamble) signed between NNPGs and Government of India (GOI) on 17th November 2017. The signing of separate agreements by each group with the Government of India (GOI) has eventually led to the eruption of contestation between them and brought the peace dialogue to a standstill. These separate negotiations with the Government of India (GOI) by both the groups have also fostered a room for animosity, and distrust between the two.

Some weeds grown between the NSCN(IM) and NNPGs today are unpleasant root of Tribalism, spearheading rise of Factional groups, self-indulgence, self-interests, lust for money and power etc. These concerning issues have become the deadlock between the two conflicting group and a blockade to reconciliation among them. It is argumentative to learn that the intra-factional killings in the past had sowed the seed of disunity among the Naga factional groups which resulted in distrust among the Naga Nationalists and resorted to formation of many more factional groups today in the Naga society. The multiple failed Naga peace talks with the government of India is considered as another factor for the distrust and disunity among them. This has led to the rise of many Naga factional groups today which was uncalled for. Tribalism have erupted ever since the split of National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN).

Ever since the Naga Political movement started, the main objective of the movement was to achieve the political aspiration of the Nagas. Likewise, both the conflicting group i.e. NSCN (IM) and NNPGs have been formed as political groups with the main objectives of achieving their political aspiration. Although both the groups are abided by the same objective, yet, their ideologies differ. While NSCN(IM)'s ideology focuses on Socialism, equality of all Nagas and do away from economic exploitation and protects the line of Nagas' Sovereignty. NNPGs on the other hand was formed to stand united under an interim platform while it also welcomes the rest of the Naga political groups on board and seeks a political solution for the Nagas which will be acceptable and honourable to the Nagas. The NNPGS ideology also focuses on Naga customary laws as they believe that Nagas is known for their customary laws that have been passed down till today and this cannot be hampered throughout their negotiations with the Government of India (GOI) and therefore, NNPGs urges that it should recognize Naga customary laws. The differences in their ideology also invites a room of doubts and distrust as NSCN (IM) focuses on socialism and NNPGs focuses on customary laws. There had been much internal violence between them because of their selfish interests but also at the same time because of their differences in ideology and determination.

Today, the Naga nationalists (Naga Factional groups) have been dived into a turmoil of factional rivalries instead of being united and coming together to negotiate the Naga protracted political issue with the

² Peter Digeser, Political Forgiveness, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001

Government of India (GOI). The splits and the rise of many factional groups have become the phenomenon that created more roadblocks to reconcile among the Naga factional leaders. This disunity and the rise of many factional groups leave many civil Nagas disappointed, and the young generations are frustrated as they do not foresee a solution for the Naga political issue. Consequently, the Nagas in general have been spending their goodwill and efforts in reconciliation that attempts to unite all Naga factional groups. Although civil society organizations (CSOs) like Forum for Naga Reconciliation (FNR) have sought to serve as facilitators of reconciliation in the hope of increasing understanding, resolving differences, and fostering a spirit of being open to compromise, the real meaning of reconciliation is yet to be understood by the Naga leaders and therefore it does not help in resolving their differences. Through the initiative of FNR's reconciliation process, Violence and factional killings among the Naga Factional groups have been reduced but reconciliation among them is yet to achieve. Reconciliation, thus, can be achieved only when the conflicting group i.e NSCN(IM) and NNPGs takes into consideration of Political forgiveness among themselves.

The lure of Political Forgiveness in the Conflict between NSCN (IM) and NNPGs

Forgiveness is considered as the fundamental principle of reconciliation in Human societies. However, resolving past conflicts may never be facile; it must follow the process of forgiveness and thereafter a true repentance must be realised which will gradually achieve reconciliation. As in the context of Nagas' i.e. a conflict between NSCN (IM) and NNPGs, there is a need for Political forgiveness for them to achieve reconciliation among themselves and achieve their political aspiration. Considering Forum for Naga Reconciliation (FNR)'s efforts of reconciliation process, to some extent, Naga factional groups have reduced to their inter-factional clashes or fratricidal killings. In FNR's reconciliation process although forgiveness had been taken place in an individual level, yet Political forgiveness has never been incorporated. The forum was formed with the hope of reconciling the entire Naga factional groups to come together as one and solve the Naga political issues. Eventually after the formation of the Forum for Naga Reconciliation (FNR), the inter-factional and clashes have decreased in Nagaland and peace has been established to some extent. Through the Forum for Naga Reconciliation (FNR), the Naga political groups have been upholding their commitment to refrain from violence against each other.

The Forum for Naga Reconciliation (FNR) has built an opportunity to enhance freedom of movement and freedom of speech and expression and has contributed towards improving relationships between the Naga nationalist group and the public. There has been a reduction of fear and suspicion among the factional groups as well. It seems to appear that the Forum for Naga Reconciliation (FNR) has taken the opportunity to reach out to all the Nagas of young, men, women, rich, and poor to give the reconciliation of the Nagas one decisive push no matter how hard it is or how exhausting the process may seem to be. Despite the positive path that the Forum for Naga Reconciliation (FNR) has taken in the initiative of reconciliation in the Naga political movement, the Naga factional group leaders are still confronted with a polarizing situation of power politics, self-preservation, and exclusiveness. This threatens to demoralize the Naga spirit and obstruct Naga reconciliation. FNR however despite the initiative taken for Reconciliation within the Naga factional groups, could never be implemented because FNR has lacked in incorporating the idea of political Forgiveness in the reconciliation process within Naga Factional groups. Forgiveness is an important variable in trying to truly understand the reconciliation process. Regardless of what situation might have given rise to conflicts within Naga factional groups particularly NSCN(IM) and NNPGs that required reconciliation it also has to incorporate the principles of Political Forgiveness that demand peace, empathy, sacrifice, compromise, compassion, respect, and above all moral values. So, it is considered that the reconciliation process by FNR did not work out as the idea of political forgiveness was not focused.

Many of the reconciliation processes in the world had been extracted from the South Africa and Rwanda Reconciliation process. Reconciliation has become an important context that holds a special place in Human rights talks and lectures mostly in today's democratic countries, particularly within transitional institutions set up for reconciliation in South Africa and Rwanda such as TRC in South Africa and Gacaca Courts in Rwanda with values that are emphasized in both institutions and considered successful at some point in time. The reconciliation process in South Africa particularly opens a way for the citizens as to how to deal with the past that is through forgiving on a personal level, forgetting, and moving on but again on the other hand it was also to catch the culprits of the apartheid and hang them. But what seems to be invariably missing in the Reconciliation process in both countries is the component of Political forgiveness. The same is true with the case of FNR's initiative of the reconciliation process in Nagas' context where it missed out on incorporating Political Forgiveness.

Therefore, what FNR can bring new dynamics to the Naga reconciliation process is the inclusion of Political Forgiveness which will promote a durable peace within Naga factional groups and a lasting solution to the Naga Independence movement. Both NSCN (IM) and NNPGs at present must also consider their political

reconciliation through forgiveness which may help them to rekindle their relationships and come together as one Naga to solve Naga Vexed political issues. The NSCN (IM) and NNPGs once and for all can move from the blame politics and empathize with bringing a true reconciliation between them.

Conclusion

The conflicts between NSCN (IM) and NNPGs are yet to be resolved because they are so much diverged to power politics, self-preservation, and exclusiveness. And as long as the lure of Political Forgiveness between NSCN (IM) and NNPGs or for that matter among Naga factional groups are incorporated, the conflicts, and differences can never be resolved within them. As Thomas Hobbes' State of Nature states Individuals are opportunists and so even the Nagas' leaders are opportunists and they do not care about the mutual benefits but only for their selfish interests. Only when they give up on power politics and Selfish interests, reconciliation and Forgiveness will prevail within Naga factional groups. The Naga factional groups if at all they are not surrounded by certain discourses and self-indulgent, then it would not be difficult to go beyond finding a peaceful reconciliation within themselves. When they have powerful warring discourses, it is less able to sufficiently imagine the peaceful means necessary for dealing with conflicts. The more conflicting group understands and appreciate the nature of both peace and conflicts at the individual level as well as at the societal and national level, the better their chances of rooting Nagas' society and cultures in peacefulness. It can also be seen that the conflicts between NNPGs and NSCN (IM) are all about the Framework Agreement by NSCN (IM) Versus the Agreed Position (Preamble) of NNPGs which they have been propounding on print and social media alone and the public had been reading every day. Today it may be just on paper or social media platforms but behold it may become a real-time chaos and bloodbath amongst the Naga people if the two conflicting parties don't find a common table to come together as one. The Naga leaders need to think beyond their selfishness, greed, and self-righteousness and do the needful for the good of the Nagas in general they not only need to overcome security dilemmas in general but also to go through a process of Reconciliation incorporating Political Forgiveness. Through forgiveness and reconciliation, it will help them to sincerely demonstrate that exercising their sovereign rights can complement and not harm the interests of each other.

In today's generation, many nations as well as individuals are mostly determined to reconcile and follow the peace process to resolve any issues without violating human rights. Therefore, as in the Nagas' context, the conflicting party NSCN (IM) and NNPGs should ponder on the need to come together and resolved to work together for the welfare of the Nagas as well as to bring a solution for the longstanding vexed Naga issue. They also need to transcend the differences amid the statements in the peace talks initiated with the Government of India (GOI). The tendency to adopt the idea and practice of political forgiveness might seem to be simply natural and well-meaning thought in the aftermath of internal conflicts and violence among the conflicting groups but it also involves more than a convergence of spontaneous and well-intentioned thoughts. The Nagas as in particular, the NSCN(IM) and NNPGs should counsel about forgiveness to reconcile them from the internal conflicts. Naga factional group leaders must understand what kind of society they are creating for themselves and their children and grandchildren with every national group and political party self-righteously marching under the banner that reads, "My way or no way," and expects the people to march under its flag. At this juncture, there is a need for the Nagas' conflicting groups to critically look at their own space and learn to appreciate it and enshrined within it rather than fighting among themselves for money and power Politics.

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