

# Baptist News

A quarterly news letter of the  
COUNCIL OF BAPTIST  
CHURCHES IN NORTH  
EAST INDIA

The Council comprises  
Assam Baptist Convention,  
Arunachal Baptist Church  
Council, Garo Baptist  
Convention, Karbi Anglong  
Baptist Convention, Manipur  
Baptist Convention and  
Nagaland Baptist Church  
Council.

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## Editorial Column



***"A thief comes only to rob, kill, and destroy. I came so that everyone would have life, and have it in its fullest"*** - John 10:10 (CEV).

No human being who is empty can ever see the bright side of life. However, emptying oneself for the sake of others is where fullness of life is. A dead man can never experience the beauty of life because death does not conquer life. Indeed, there is only one true death i.e. Christ's death for the whole humanity and resurrected on the Third Day that conquers death. Remembering the "Death and Resurrection" of Jesus Christ is another opportunity to grasp and apply it in life. Can anyone achieve the fullness of life without being living a Christlike life?

The cross is the ultimate test for Jesus. In our life, it seems that death is hardly the go-to topic of our common conversation, but death is the everydayness. We try to do a healthy diet, exercise hard, do anything to put off the inevitability of death and aging, but life is uncontrollable. Death is a fact of life, and so is suffering.

There are different kinds of death one can experience in life – a broken relationship is one form of death; a sudden termination of employment is another; how about our frustrated feelings when we fail to do something we are passionate about? Losing hope is a death, as well.

Ever since we were born, we are dealing with this reality of death and suffering throughout our lifetime. Here is what Jesus says to us: "Very

*truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life" (John 12:24-25).*

*Jesus is speaking of death as the means of gaining life. If the grain does not die, it remains barren, but if it dies, it bears fruit. The true life springs forth out of death. Clearly, he talks about the necessity of His death here, and he addresses this with double amen – very truly!*

*Grain can never fulfill the law of its being if it does not go through the process of death, burial, and reproduction in resurrection. The visit of the Greek in the passage (John 12:20-33) alludes to the Lord's harvest, also, which becomes multiplied in the ages to come as a result of Jesus' being obedient unto death.*

*Who is Christ to you that you believe in? What is salvation? Is it something for the distant future? If not, what does it have to do with us here and now? Christ's death on the cross reveals in the light by the power of the Holy Spirit the Father's glorious power that lifts us. And, we are given a very special name called Christian. We are of his seed.*

*A positive thinking cannot renew our hearts. A cosmetic surgery cannot revive the aging cells. Any human work cannot help to restore our relationship with God. But, the friendship with Christ in our pilgrimage, as Lazarus had, is what makes all the difference in our lives. His death has redeemed us. As he was resurrected, we are also resurrected.*

*It is possible to doubt. Why no miracles when we suffer? Where is Jesus who raised Lazarus? When our troubles overwhelm us, our path laid out for us seems to lead us to our demises, there must be another way. Yes, we should look upon the cross.*

*The cross is not for the dead Jesus. The cross is for the resurrected Jesus. This is why we need to look at the cross all the time.*

*When things are going well, we must look at the cross and praise the Lord. When things are fuzzy and we feel lost, also we ought to look at the cross and put our hopes in the Lord, so that we will be raised by Him. We are all on the way to the tomb just as Lazarus did, from dust to dust. But we will be redeemed by Christ just as Lazarus was raised from the tomb. When things seem to frustrate us, and when our prayers go unanswered, we need to be able to trust in God's invisible hands working in our lives. Our ultimate hope is in Jesus. Resurrection is not something far off. We are brought from death to life when we believe in Jesus Christ.*

*The theme; "Pressing towards the Fullness of Life" has to be understood on the basis of Love, sacrifice, faith, action and commitment. The greatest love that we find in John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" is where the Kingdom of God starts. Thus, Love should be the thing that should benefit others. To love wholeheartedly in the service of God, to be surprised in serving with thanksgiving are the fruits of the fullness of life. Sacrificing one's own comfort zone and taking up the sufferings for the cost of service to others is the principle.*

*A Spirit filled life covers the entire arena in processing the true deserved life. The fullness of life thus comes from the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, our Lord. We live the fullness of life by facing deaths and sufferings for the sake of Jesus Christ and always for others!*



Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi  
Editor, Baptist News

# Material Growth without GOD

Gen. 13:1-18

Wati Longchar (Taiwan)

*Finally, Abram said to Lot, "Let's not allow this conflict to come between us or our herdsman. After all, we are close relatives! The whole countryside is open to you. Take your choice of any section of the land you want, and we will separate. If you want the land to the left, then I'll take the land on the right. If you prefer the land on the right, then I'll go to the left. Genesis 13:8-9.*

We feel happy when we get more money. We always celebrate with material growth. Richness is considered as God's blessings. In a PTCA (Program for Theology and Cultures in Asia) workshop in Chiangmai, Thailand, in 2012, a Chinese economist spoke about the fast-growing Chinese economy. He said that China economy is growing very fast, but unfortunately WITHOUT GOD. He said that by 2000, China aimed that there should be something – it could be a pen, a spoon, an umbrella, a pair of shoes, or even a Christmas tree, or something "Made in China" in every home in this world. He said that China achieved that goal. By 2010, China aimed that there should be something – it could be a shirt, a toy, under garments, a burse, a cup, a lighter, a torch light, a scissor, a knife etc "Made in China" in the hands of every person living in this world (from infant to older person). He said that China achieved that goal. By 2020, China wants to ensure that no human beings can survive in this world without depending on MADE IN CHINA. He asked, "do you think it is almost achieved?" He said that growth is very fast, but without God and it

is very dangerous. China wants to ensure that there is an outlet in every town and city in the world to sell their products. Today Chinese business establishments are found all over the world. I went to Tonga, a small country in Pacific Island. Even there I saw many Chinese shops. The present trend of economic growth, not only in China, but also the whole world is very dangerous. We do not care anything except growth and expansion of market. This is called material growth without God.

Economic growth is the goal of all governments. We measure the success of our government in terms of economic growth. No economic growth means failure of government. Human beings always want to have more and more. We are never satisfied. We always aspire for the best; we desire to live a very comfortable life and enjoy all luxuries. For the sake of economic growth, we sacrifice family and human relationship. We go up to the extent of killing people. In newspapers we read stories of brothers and brothers fighting each other for ancestral property, sons killing father for the sake of property, daughter killing parents for the sake of property. We hear many stories of extortion, corruption, cheating and robbery just to meet the demand of our wants. This is called material growth without God.

We have also witnessed powerful countries attacking, bombing, and killing of many innocent people, making many people homeless in many countries, especially in the Middle East countries. The war continues even today. We have also abused land and its resources. We have controlled and dominated the environment. Mining companies are extracting, raping the land and its resources without respect and care. Our future generations are at threat. The whole planet is dominated and threatened by human wants of wealth. This is called **material growth without God**.

Gen. 13: 1-18 describes a dispute between uncle and nephew over the land and its resources primarily because both wanted to increase their property. A very surprising story and decision! Abram (who later became Abraham) suggested SEPARATION, thinking that peace and harmony would prevail between him and Lot and their laborer if they are separated. They decided to SEPARATE from one another just for the sake of wealth. Can separation bring peace and harmony? Is separation solution for

peaceful co-existence? There is no lasting peace and harmony without love, care and acceptance. Lot's father, Haran died early. Lot's uncle Abram and Sarah took care of him as their son. Lot travelled with them to Egypt. He obeyed them, followed them and lived as one family in love and care. Lot also took care of his uncle's livestock and other properties. Gradually, Lot also became rich owning a significant share of livestock and other goods. Abram and Lot started quarreling because the land was not enough to feed the large number of animals. The home became a place of fighting. Their workers also started fighting. The increase of wealth made them to fight, lost trust and finally decided to separate. We see here the desire to multiply one's wealth became the source of suspicion, mistrust, fighting and jealousy that led them to separation. Very interestingly, Abraham who is older, guardian of his nephew Lot suggested for separation! Lot, who is supposed to give preference to uncle as per the tradition, chose first the plains of Jordan breaking the traditional cultural norms. Both broke cultural norms and gave more importance to wealth than family bond of loving relationship. We see here the separation of a family – east and west directions, a direction never to meet again, just because they want to have more and more. They chose to sacrifice family, love, solidarity, and care for the sake of material growth. It is called material growth without God. We need to ask serious questions to ourselves - what do we choose today? Wealth or family? wealth or love and care? Wealth or human solidarity? Wealth or integrity of creation?

“Separation” means rejection, exclusion and denial. It is saying No to peace and harmonious relationship. Separation is not solution for peace and harmony. It creates more hatred and violence. Material growth is seen everywhere. We are surrounded by temptation of desire to have more and more. God has blessed us with countless resources in the universe for our sustenance and growth. We need to overcome greed and un-ending desires for the things of the world. Let us love our family members, neighbours and fellow human beings rather than the things which can never satisfy us. Let us commit and dedicate to choose God's way:

Let us choose solidarity, but not separation

Let us choose protection of life and family, but not rejection

Let us choose to promote trade and economic co-operation on the basis of equality and sharing of life and resources, but not unjust trade and manipulation

Let us choose mutuality of support and respect to one another's life, but not exclusion and condemnation

Let us choose sanctity of human life as well as the entire God's creation, but not exploitation.

Let us choose love, care and acceptance, but not hatred.

May God give discernment to choose God's way. Amen



### **Missionary Training Program**

**Date : 14 - 30 May 2019      Venue : CBCNEI Campus**

#### Who can join:

1. Those preparing to be missionary
2. Those already in the field

#### Topics to be covered:

1. Missionary Call
2. How to prepare to go to mission field (self, wife and children)? Planning.
3. Evangelism: Process and methods
4. Cross cultural communication (CCC): Adaptation
5. Ministry Strategies: How do we go in and live in mission field?
6. Mission: witnessing unthreatening way
7. Interpersonal Relationship: Team work
8. Christian Home: Testimony
9. Leadership skill

Training fee : ₹ 5,000/- per person

Free : Lodging and food

Seats : Only 20 seats, first come first serve.



# *Baptists Through the Centuries: A Review*

*Dr. Atola Longkumer, SAIACS, Bangalore*

*The Gospel in the World: International Baptist Studies (2002)*, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from 1730s to 1980s (1989)* are important and earlier books edited/authored respectively by David W. Bebbington. *Baptists Through the Centuries* follows the excellent historical analysis books that the Baptist historian Bebbington has written to the delightful education of many. The author sets out to “address the question of who Baptists have been over the four centuries of their existence” and “it tries to take account of ways in which they adapted to the societies in which they lived as well as their central practices.” These primary objectives of the book are fulfilled with a beautiful narration marked with erudition and precision of a judicious historian.

Book ended by introductory and conclusion chapters, *Baptists Through the Centuries* presents the history of Baptists beginning with its roots in the Reformation and spreading beyond the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Britain and North America to include the growth of Baptists around the world, not least the Global South, where significant communities of Baptists are found in the third millennium.

David W. Bebbington, Professor of History, University of Stirling, Scotland, brings his years of academic expertise in crafting this readable narration with insightful details of Baptist history. In seventeen chapters, the author presents the growth, distinct theological identities including controversies surrounding these and practices of Baptists beginning in Britain and North America spreading worldwide. While the earlier chapters take a linear

historical approach, the later chapters address themes that have been crucial in the formation of modern Baptist identities and often not without controversies. For the thematic presentation of Baptist history Bebbington includes: theological polarization among Baptists, Social Gospel, Racism among Baptists, Women in Baptist life, Ministry and Sacraments, Religious Liberty and Foreign Mission. Baptists today are found in almost every continent with communities of diverse linguistic groups. The chapter on the Global Spread of the Baptists presents the growth and the reasons behind the global spread of Baptists. Bebbington lists migration, personal mobility, influence of literature, inspiration from other Christians (for example, Methodist mission work inspired Baptist mission in the Canterbury plains in the South Island). Chapters on Baptists in Latin America, Nigeria and the “Naga Hills” account particular regions and their Baptist identities.

*Baptists Through the Centuries* is a concise history of Baptist in just 300 pages. Conciseness is achieved by eschewing elaborate details giving the book both its strength and weakness. The book is written in accessible prose with each chapter providing a list of recommended further readings. A list of illustrations provides interesting lens to some of the events described, an index, and notes in each chapter are further helpful references.

The book will be a valuable source for anyone interested in Baptists history and its distinctiveness across the globe. Theological libraries, church libraries, mission organizations and World Christianity will all find the book resourceful.

*A History of a Global People* (Waco, Tx.: Baylor University Press, 2010). Pp. xii + 315. \$39.95.

David W. Bebbington.



# Pressing Towards Living the Fullness of LIFE

*Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi, General Secretary, CBCNEI*

## **Introduction**

“Pressing towards the Fullness of Life” (John 10:10) is the theme of the 69<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India (CBCNEI) which will be held at Diphu Baptist Church under Nihang Karbi Baptist Association of the Karbi Anglong Baptist Convention from 26-28 April 2019. Living the fullness of life in the family, church and society are important topics for us to consider. What is the fullness of life is real question for all of us to find the answer.

Do we find life a real joy or a terrible burden, or drudgery? For many of us, life is really a chore. It is not only one of suffering but often a vain suffering. Why is it that some of us are so negative about life? If we find that we have no life in us and that we wish we don't have to live on, then it would seem that our faith in Christ is in vain, as St James tells us in chapter 2:14-24,26 reading. That kind of faith does us no good and therefore cannot save us as it does not give us fullness of life as promised by the Lord. Hence, this quest for life is important. How can we find life?

## **What the fullness of life actually means**

What would the fullness of life entail? It means fulfilling our physical, material, emotional, aesthetic and spiritual needs. To live the fullness of life is more than just acquiring wealth, status and power. It means to live a meaningful and purposeful life. Here the meaning is spelt out in terms of being contributive towards others, especially in love and relationships. The purpose would entail immediate, long term goals and the ultimate goal in life. There is no life, even if we are rich and successful in worldly terms, if there is no love and respect in our lives, when we have no friends and no one whom we can share our love. Life is also not full even if we

have good friends, unless we find a purpose for living, now and hereafter. That is why it is necessary that we know our final destiny as well.

The fullness of life is the theme of CBCNEI Annual General Meeting based on John 10:10 which says, "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." The purpose of Jesus' coming is to give us the fullness of life. In the first place, Jesus warns against trying to find life through the way of the world. Many are caught in the rat race of acquiring wealth, money, power and status. Some think that fullness of life is to eat, drink and be merry all the time. Others think that life is to look good, attractive and are obsessed with external beauty and care for their bodies. To think that these will give happiness is an illusion because many are consumed by what they consume. The warning of Jesus is clear. "What gain, then, is it for a man to win the whole world and ruin his life? And indeed, what can man offer in exchange for his life?" (Mark 8:34-9:1). One must not be deluded by the world because what the world can offer is external happiness, not the happiness of the soul. The world might be able to satisfy the body but not the spirit. We are not mere body; we have a soul, a heart, and a mind that desires to be satisfied.

### **The Paradox of Life**

So how can we acquire life? The paradox of life is that life cannot be acquired directly. Life is given to us as we expend that life for others. It is a by-product of something else. Indeed, the more we try to acquire life, the more it escapes from us. This is what Christ meant when He said, "For anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it." Life is ours only when we give ourselves away in love and service. If Jesus lived the fullness of life, it was because all through His life, He was a man for others. He lived for God and for His people. Jesus did not live for Himself. He went about doing good, focusing on others' needs rather than His own. Forgetful of Himself, His own thoughts were the sufferings of His fellowmen. He came to proclaim to them the mercy and unconditional love of His Father, whether by words or deeds. Indeed, those people who are rich and successful know that what give them the greatest joy are not

pleasure and power but service and love, especially to the poor. As a consequence most truly successful people give a great portion of their time and wealth to the development and cause of humanity.

That is why securing life cannot be a goal in itself. The truth is that we have been deceived by the world. We are told from young that we need to have goals in life. Life for many is a whole series of ambitions. Once a goal is reached, another goal is set. And so, we are told first to study hard, get a degree, find a good job, then a good spouse, a big house, a luxurious car, etc. But if we are so busy pursuing the goals of life, we will never be able to enjoy and taste life itself. With that kind of thinking, we will always be anxious to prove ourselves. And like others, we are so caught up with our projects and ambitions that we have no time to really live. If all we do each day is seen as nothing more than a means to achieve some goal, then we can say that life is really difficult and work becomes distasteful.

Consequently, if we want to find life, we must not harbour such ambitions because we only postpone life to live in the future – a future that can never be realized. Within this context, we can understand why Jesus told His disciples that if they want to find life, they must renounce themselves and follow Him. In other words, we must empty ourselves of our goal-orientated thinking so that we can begin to live moment by moment, enjoying and relishing whatever we are doing without being too worried about the future. Only by living as fully as we can in this moment and finding meaning in what we do, especially ‘wasting’ time in relationships, can it then be said that we already taste the power of the Kingdom in our life, here and now. The happiness of life is to be found in the journey itself, much less at the end. For this reason, heaven is a dynamic experience because no one can totally know God and understand the mystery of God. It is like an abyss that is unfathomable. It is like a relationship. There is so much to unravel and discover even in our best friend or spouse, although we might have known each other for years. Once a friend told me and said, “I have lived with my wife for the last 25 years and yet there are many things I do not really understand her.”

This does not mean that we are called to live aimless lives. Not to be

obsessed by the goals we set before us does not mean that we drift through life without purpose and motivation. Such an attitude would be irresponsible and would lead to lethargy, boredom and meaninglessness. Indeed, some of us feel so secure in our iron rice-bowl, which is a Chinese term used to refer to an occupation with guaranteed job security, as well as steady income and benefits, whether at work or at home, that we do not feel the need to improve ourselves and our work. We fall into complacency doing the same thing every day, following the same routine, without any enthusiasm or motivation, doing the minimum and haphazardly as well. As a result we live a half-fulfilled and mediocre life. In order to live a fulfilled life, we certainly need some kind of goals, but these must not be taken too seriously. The goals that we set before us are simply means to give us some orientation and direction in life. But happiness is not to be found in the goals themselves. It is the living out of the life in the process that we become truly alive.

What then is this “aimless goal” that can truly give us life? Simply this: to empty ourselves in love and service for others. It is when we forget about ourselves and begin to be other-centered that we find life a real joy. The joy comes in losing ourselves, for when we lose ourselves, we no longer worry about ourselves, since our focus is on others. The joy and meaning of living therefore is found not within ourselves but in living for God and for others. As we empty ourselves for the service of the Church and humanity, we become more human and come to realize that at the end of the day, what we value most is compassion, kindness, charity, love and relationship. Whether we are entrepreneurs, workers, professionals, politicians or religious, it is immaterial. Whether we are happy or not depends on whether we see what we do as being our unique contribution to the building of God’s Kingdom and not just technological advances or economic development, but seeding and growing the gospel values among our fellowmen. When we see our work as a service to humanity, as opposed to it being purely a technical and economic engagement, we will feel empowered because then everything becomes meaningful.

### **Faith in God Alone is Useless**

For this reason, St James tells us that life is ours only when faith is worked

out in deeds. Faith in God alone is useless unless this faith is lived out in love and charity, for even “the demons have the same belief, and they tremble with fear”. St James says, “Do realize, you senseless man, that faith without good deeds is useless. You surely know that Abraham our father was justified by his deed, because he offered his son Isaac on the altar? There you see it: faith and deeds were working together; his faith became perfect by what he did” (James 2:14-24,26). If Abraham lived the fullness of life, it was not simply because He believed in God but because He lived out his beliefs by surrendering his life completely to the Lord, allowing Him to lead him each day to the day when God would fulfill the promises made to him and his descendants.

Living for others and for God, of course requires sacrifice and pain. The psalmist tells us “happy is the man who takes delight in the commands of the Lord” (Ps. 112:1). What is this command if not to renounce ourselves and take up our cross and follow after Jesus? This is what Jesus expects of us as His followers. We are called to renounce ourselves and share the burden of Jesus in reaching out to humanity. The irony of Christian life is that we find happiness in pain. The world fights shy of pain, believing that pain and suffering take away life and happiness. But Christian life comes to the fullest when we share in the sufferings of others, doing what we can to alleviate them, for by so doing, we learn how to love and grow in compassion and solidarity with God and our fellowmen. The Christian message remains that it is through the cross that we find the fullness of life.

## **Conclusion**

To me the fullness of life is to walk like Jesus; to live for others and to fulfill what the father willed. This life is not the abundance of wealth, power and luxury but to use all our wealth, position and talents for others. That it is through bearing the cross daily that we experience and live the fullness of life. This is really satisfying and fulfilling. Let us move forward and press on towards this kind of life that is so fulfilling and satisfying in the midst of pain and suffering.



## Satribari Christian Hospital (SCH)



*as reported by Dr Lucita Momin, Medical Secretary, CBCNEI*

In 1926 a group of Missionary Nurses from the American Baptist Women's Missionary Society established **Guwahati Women and Children Hospital**, which has become the oldest Hospital in the city of Guwahati. Miss Miller Marvin the first Missionary Nurse started providing Hospital care to the patients. At the same time, she started training local student nurses. In 1961 the Hospital was re-named as **Satribari Christian Hospital** which is known till the date.

The Hospital pioneered in starting nurses training, first of its kind in Assam in 1927, when the first batch of four nurses were admitted and the first graduate nurses came out in 1930. Today we have full-fledged Nursing School affiliated to Train Nurses Association of India (TNAI). The Hospital which was originally established for the care of the Women and Children has now 105 beds with all the major departments like Medicine, Surgery, Obstetric and Gynaecology, Pediatric, Eye, Laboratory with 3 (three) Units – (Pathology, Biochemistry and Microbiology).

In between, in 2010 July, Satribari Christian Hospital was handed over to 4B Healthcare Company for better management. Unfortunately, 4B Healthcare Company could not come up to the expectation. So, in 2016



from 1<sup>st</sup> April CBCNEI took it over. After CBCNEI took over, it is found to be in a very poor condition. We lost our own good faithful Nurses to the private hospital around Guwahati. Finance was in a poor condition, poor maintenance etc. Last two years, Satribari Christian Hospital management team had to face lots of challenges.

Now slowly SCH is standing up from the crawling stage and moving ahead. Though there are lots of developmental works to be done, I believe with God's help and guidance, Dr. John Ritchi N. Sangma and his team is carrying out out the responsibilities that are on their shoulders. Yet there is some unstable financial situation but are manageable. I would like to share a brief report of SCH after CBCNEI took over in April 2016:

1. Pending payments of Consultants, Advocates, Gratuity, Provident Fund, Suppliers etc. are initiated.
2. Streamlining of accounts is in process.
3. Water Supply: For many years the hospital and the residents of the entire campus were suffering because of the lack of proper water supply due to high iron and clogged pipes and leakages from the age-old GI pipes. The entire pipes were changed to CPVC. Two numbers of Iron Removal Filters with water chlorination were installed.
4. Geriatric Ward: No. of beds have been decided to increase from





12 to 17.

5. Renovation of few Private rooms and old staff Nurses Hostel is done.
6. Six new cardiac monitors were purchased.
7. The entire leaking roofs over the chapel, Private Wards, Male Ward and the Female Wards were changed.
8. A new 4 bedded Auxiliary Nurses Midwife (ANM) Hostel have been constructed.
9. Hostel with 28 capacity Nurses, Warden's accommodation was constructed.
10. Street lights were provided to light up the entire campus at night.
11. SCH got permission from Nursing Council to increase the seat from 20 numbers to 40 seats and for the first time we have taken 40 students in September 2018 in first year batch.
12. CBCNEI also noted with approval the permission for the upgradation of the **School of Nursing to the College of Nursing.**
13. Two units of Duplex quarter have been constructed by the CBCNEI through the partnership with the builders.

14. Satribari Christian Hospital was awarded the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cleanest Hospital in the city after Narayana & Ayusundra Hospitals.
15. A new Dental Unit Eastern Corridor Group was approved by the CBCNEI and outpatient Department Treatment (OPD) section with X-ray opened on 23.02.2019.

These are the achievements but there are still more to be done.

We, SCH are trying our best to remain highly motivated both mentally & spiritually to deliver the services and restore back the lost glory of Satribari Christian Hospital though there is a strong tendency both from within and without to do away with our institution... may the purpose of our Hospital be fulfilled... to God be the Glory!!!



## NEWS CAPSULES

### **One-day Comprehensive Development Consultation Meet:**

Council of Baptist Churches in North East India (CBCNEI) in collaboration with Church's Auxiliary for Social Action (CASA) has organized a one-day Comprehensive Development Consultation meeting at Solmari, Nasiriba Bhawan in Goalpara along with the representatives from target villages on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2018. Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi, General Secretary of CBCNEI, Rev. Kabisinpou Gangmei, Development Consultant of CBCNEI, Mr Lesehu Meru Senior Coordinator of CASA-NEI and the State Coordinator for CASA-Assam attended the meeting. They spoke on the aims and objectives of the Project with a strong statement, that the project is solely based on its objectives and there was no any hidden agenda to do with different aspects of the life of the people there.



## Retreat: Lewis Memorial Student Ministry

Lewis Memorial Student ministry organized two days retreat program from 30<sup>th</sup> November - 1<sup>st</sup> December 2018, on the theme; '*Hunger for Reality*'.

The Speakers were Prof. Souraw Roy and his wife Sentila Roy. The participants were fed with the different insights through different topics like, *Bible studies, personal counseling, learning through play*. The program was successful by God's Grace where many of them dedicated their lives to Jesus. Ten boys from Lewis Memorial participated in the All India BIBLE QUEST organized by India Campus Crusade for Christ on 26<sup>th</sup> Aug'18 and received certificates.

Two boys attended *Ecumenical Peace consultation & worship* from 29-31 Oct'18. Apart from hostel's programs some of the boys attended church youth camp and sports ministry.



## Reaching Guwahati City, our New Vision:

By the grace of God, in partnership with Garo Baptist Convention, we have started our focus in Guwahati city. There are over 60 churches, fellowships and mission organizations based in Guwahati, yet not many are focusing effort to reach the city. It has been almost 200 years since missionaries came and started mission work in Assam, and though Christianity has spread across Assam, Guwahati city has not been impacted.



We believe this is our collective responsibility to share the love of God to those who don't know Him yet. As per Government record on Guwahati City Religion 2011, Hinduism is the majority religion with **84.74 %** and followed by Islam with approximately **12.45 %**. Christianity is just **0.93 %**. Therefore, the Mission Department is taking up this challenge to reach this city. This will also be part of our Urban Mission Strategy Development for urban mission.

Mr Natyananda Nath and his wife have been appointed to be the first family to work under this vision.



### **Manipur Baptist Convention Quasquicentennial Celebration:**

The Manipur Baptist Convention celebrated its Quasquicentennial from 5-7 February under the theme: **"Celebrating the Mighty Acts of God"** at the Indoor Stadium, Khuman Lampak, Imphal. The speakers for the celebration were; **Rev Dr Don Ng**, the former President of the American Baptist Churches (ABC), USA, a retired pastor of the first Chinese Baptist Church, San Fransisco. and **Rev. Edwin Lam**, President Asia Pacific Baptist Federation (APBF). The monolith of the 125 years celebration was inaugurated and dedicated by the General Secretary, Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi.



### **New Project Office setup:**

A new Project Office of the CBCNEI Relief and Development Unit was set up in Bhalukdubi, Goalpara in a rented house to monitor the project work closely in that areas.



### **Cluster Project meeting**

A Cluster Project meeting was conducted on 26 - 28 February organised by the Relief & Development department of CNCNEI. Various orientation were given on aims and objective of the Project and the need to form Community-Based Organisation for smooth execution of the Project's activities towards fulfilment of its aims.



## Missionary care Training:

Feeling the need to train our mission leaders, especially Association Mission Secretaries on Missionary care, a two-day training on how to better care our Missionaries was conducted during 12-14 February at CBCNEI campus. During the training, we were able to reflect the areas where we fall short in caring for them. We realized that we have not cared enough for our missionaries, and we pledge that we will treat them with dignity and value their service.

All together 55 Mission Secretaries and pastors attended the training program. The participants



also came up with recommendation for our churches so that our missionaries will be better taken care in order that they will remain effective in their calling.

### Statement from the participants:

We acknowledged we have not cared enough for our missionaries and evangelists.





We realized the need to care for them because;

1. We want them to remain healthy and effective in their work.
2. We value the work of the Missionaries
3. They are there on our behalf.
4. We are required to care pastorally for those who are at warfront.
5. They are the most unwanted people in the area where they are working.
6. We don't want them to suffer for the work they have chosen on our behalf.

Therefore, we recommend the followings to our churches;

- To treat the Missionaries with dignity
- To consider them as fellow servants of the Lord
- To understand they are humans too, and have needs.



*There is only one happiness in this life,  
to love and be loved.*

**-George Sand**

## Human Trafficking Awareness Program, Moreh, Manipur:

CBCNEI in collaboration with Manipur Baptist Convention, organized the second Anti-Human Trafficking campaign at CBCA Centre Church, Moreh, from 26 - 27 February. Moreh is a commercial hub of Manipur bordering Myanmar which is fast becoming hotspot for transborder trafficking of arms, drugs and human. In February itself, 179 Nepalese including 149 women age between 20-35 years were rescued from being trafficked to South Asian and Middle-East counties. Altogether 107 delegates, church leaders, village chiefs, women & youth leaders from 14 denominations churches and government officials participated in the campaign. The program was facilitated by Rev. T. Karang, Secretary Development & Peace, Manipur Baptist Convention (MBC), and Mr. Babuna Dangmei, District Child Protection Officer (Tamenglong District) led the session on appraising current situation in state. Mr. Malthus D. Sangma, Secretary for Justice and Peace, Council of Baptist Churches in North East India (CBCNEI), led a brief session on legal provision in response to Anti-Human Trafficking, and Rev. Kabi Gangmei gave a theological perspective on Human Trafficking. In the end the delegates worked out their strategy and plan to combat Human Trafficking in North East India.



## **Baptist Youth Fellowship of North East India (BYFNEI):**

On 5<sup>TH</sup> of March, BYFNEI (Youth wing of CBCNEI) had its board meeting at CBCNEI, Panbazar, Guwahati. The following resolutions were passed by the members present:

- a. The annual planning for this year and pre-scheduled for the Youth Fest to be held on September, 17-19, 2020 at Tura, Garo Hills, Meghalaya.



- b. The next BYFNEI board meeting will be held on August 10-11, 2019 at Tura, during which the members will visit churches in and around Tura city and promote the Youth Fest 2020.



## **Consultation Review Meeting:**

The Justice & Peace Department of CBCNEI organized the second Consultation-Review Meeting on CBCNEI Anti-Human Trafficking Campaign on March 12. The meeting was held at CBCNEI office conference room, Guwahati with the representatives of 6 conventions along with researcher Mr. Arup Saikia. The representatives of the 6 (six) conventions gave a report on awareness consultation held earlier.

The overall purpose of the meeting was to review the progress of the campaign and plan the next step to be taken.



## The 39<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Karbi Anglong Baptist Convention (KABC):

The 39<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of Karbi Anglong Baptist Convention, (the apex body of the 13 Associations of major Baptist churches in Karbi Anglong, West Karbi Anglong, Amri Karbis Baptists of Kamrup district and Zemes of Dima Hasao), was held from March 15-17, hosted by Nabajyoti (Dubajan) Baptist Church under Dhansiri Valley Baptist Association. The theme of the Meeting was “**Faith and Action**” (James 2:17). The speakers were Rev. Davidson Ingti, General Secretary of KABC, Mr. Unique Terang, Mission Secretary of Nihang Karbi Baptist Association and Mr. Kamson Rongphar, Mission Secretary of KABC. Mr. Jeniwel Kro led the congregation in hymns.



## CBCNEI Leadership Consultation:



Nagaland Baptist Church Council (NBCC) hosted CBCNEI Leadership Consultation from 15-16 March. Dr James David Das, Mr Dipak Kumar Nayak and Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi were the

resource persons. About 30 participants attended the consultation.



### Dorcas Compassion Home:

Dorcas Compassion Home is a ministry undertaken by Manipur Baptist Convention (MBC) Women Department for the last 12 years. This is a ministry of compassion where HIV+ve widows are taken care of. This ministry helps them for their wholistic development in their life through trainings on skill development, personality development, Bible studies, dry food & nutrition supplies etc. so that the marginalised and destitute women shall live with dignity and hope. Ms Tingneilhing Kipgen, Women Secretary, MBC took these women for exposure trip to Shillong and Guwahati from 22 - 25 March. These women also visited the office of the Council at Guwahati on March 26. You are humbly requested to pray for these women and Dorcas Compassion Home ministry.



*When you focus on being a blessing, God make sure that you are always blessed in abundance.*

**-Joel Osteen**

# VACANCY

North East Christian University (NECU) invites applications for the post of **Dean** in the department of **Religious Studies**.

**Required Qualifications:**

1. Post Graduate in Theology
2. Secular degree in any discipline
3. Age between 45 – 60 years
4. 10 years of teaching experience

Send your application with resume and other necessary documents before 30<sup>th</sup> of May 2019 to:

*The Vice - Chancellor*

*Achor Complex, East Block*

*Burma Camp, Dimapur*

*Pin - 797112, Nagaland*

*dtkhathing@yahoo.com / necuvarsity@gmail.com*

Applicants are invited for the post of 1 (one) Nursing Tutor (Only female) on contractual basis.

**Required Qualification:**

B.Sc Nursing / Post Basic B. Sc Nursing / M.Sc Nursing (Preferably with experience)

Interested candidate can send their application along with resume and other necessary documents during the office hours through post or email. Last date for receiving of application will be July 2019. Candidates will be intimated by email and telephone for the interview.

*Principal*

*Jorhat Christian Medical Centre, School of Nursing, Jorhat*

*Jail Road Borbheta P.O. Jorhat -785004,*

*Contact No. 03672932378*

*email: jcmson1934@gmail.com*

# Asia Pacific Baptist Federation (APBF) Mission Consultation: Findings and Recommendations

*As reported by Rev Dr Jolly Rimai, Mission Secretary, CBCNEI*

Introduction: Under the leadership of Rev. Dr. Timothy Lee, a Chairman of the Mission Board of APBF, the first Mission Consultation of all Mission leaders was held on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2019 at Melaka, Malaysia. The main purpose of the Consultation was to strengthen partnership and collaboration of Baptist churches' mission under APBF. We want to see that every people group, every nation and every tribe is reached during our lifetime. To achieve this, we need strategic engagement among the unreached nations in APBF area. May the Lord help us to achieve this vision.

## Facts:

1. Over 60% of the world's population is in APBF region
2. Most diverse region in the world
3. Almost all religion begins from this region
4. Largest Island nations in the world.
5. Least reached region in the world.
6. Most affected region by natural calamities

## Findings:

1. Churches are growing
2. Churches are passionate about mission
3. Most of the Conventions are sending missionaries in many countries
4. There is hardly any relationship or partnership between missionary-sending and receiving Conventions/countries.
5. Many missionaries are working individually without proper supervision and member care.

6. Many missionaries are also sent to the countries where there are least needed, like in Nagaland.
7. Many countries are desperately in need of missionaries.

Recommendations: After listening to the sharing from the Convention mission leaders, it was felt that the following recommendations be put forward:

1. That all Conventions under APB F will have strong partnership and collaboration in mission work.
2. Survey will be done to identify least reached nations/people groups in APBF area and assign/request particular Convention/s to focus that particular people group.
3. That we make sure every people group is strategically engaged/targeted during our lifetime.
4. Countries/ Convention that need missionaries will put up request to send missionaries with detail information: target people group, amount that can support the survival of the missionary, specific training/skill needed, etc.
5. Missionary sending Conventions should always contact the receiving Convention about their plan to send missionaries.
6. Both sending and receiving Conventions to have clear partnership understanding before sending missionaries.





## NEW APPOINTEES



**Mr Imsutoshi Pongener** is from Ao community hails from Mokokchung, Nagaland. He did his MTh in Missiology from *Church on the Rock Theological Seminary*, Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh in 2016. He had been into teaching for three years at *Amazing Grace Theological Seminary*, Dimapur, Nagaland. He is the newly appointed Mission Assistant from February 2019.

**Ms Ch. Sweety** is from Maram community of Manipur, hails from Senapati. She did her Bachelor of Divinity from *Eastern Theological College* Jorhat (2014-2018). She has worked as the co-ordinator in *Union of Evangelical Students of India (UESI)* in Arunachal Pradesh. She is the newly appointed Assitant Editor for Baptist News from February 2019.



**Ms Madhusmita Konwar** hails from Karbi Anglong. She worked in Rice Oil Retailer for 4 years. She was a teacher for 1 year in Shankar Dev Jatya Vidyalo and previously worked as a security personnel in a private security firm. She is the newly appointed campus security from February 2019.

**Mr Jimmicartar Marak** hails from Garo Community. He is from Pillangkatta village of Meghalaya. He is the newly appointed Security from February 2019.



# Tragedy In Solomon's Life- Blessings Overdosed!



*Ecclesiastes 2:10, "Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart rejoiced in all my labor; and this was my reward from all my labor".*

*Dr Niyor Dutta, Resident Medical Officer, Babupara Christian Hospital*

The objective of many preachers today is to soothe the ears of the congregation and applaud of men. They are more concerned about making the listener 'feel good', comfortable and passive. Sermons are focused on getting the 'listener abundantly blessed' with no or very little regard for God. Looking at today's invitations for any programs, what do we see? 'Come and be blessed', 'come one, come all', 'be blessed abundantly' and so on. There is a sudden increase in craving for 'a blessed life', so much that christians would join any individual, preacher, ministry or 'a man with special gifts' only if they get "blessed" in the process. Certainly, these are the days of advancement, we have people to pray for families, children, work and all aspects of life but if we are ready for contribution. Also, there are schemes to bless us further, for instance a blessing plan for some who would choose to partner in developing the ministry in infra-structures and another set of blessings for partnering in ministry's broadcast programs and so on. Thus, the craving 'to be blessed' has increased among christians.

King Solomon is portrayed like the same category of people. He too had a craving for blessings. Whatever he desired, he pursued it. He might

have thought that surely it is a blessing, as his life was full of abundance. In all aspects, be it a lofty comfortable house, garden, apparel, servants, family; Solomon had abundance of everything. He even might have been looked upon by his contemporaries as the standard of a blessed life.

However, we must encounter a truth, *"And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives"* (Hebrews 12:5-6). The most tragic moment in the life of a Christian is not in suffering, sickness or a loss but when God removes His restraint from the man's life, *"But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons"* (Hebrews 12:8).

This is a tragedy, no matter what we would consider a blessing, whether our finances are well managed, living a good health life with lofty and comfortable providence etc. But when God removes His restraints, our life is in ruins. It is as though God saying, do whatever you want, invest whatever you want but I will no longer guide you. We must be careful enough not to fall in this matter of seeking 'an abundant life', 'blessed life' above what God intended for us.

Now the question is why did God not restrain Solomon from ruining his life with abundance? We get the answer when we go deeper into Solomon's heart. His heart was inclined on the blessings (a palace which took thirteen years to build, seven hundred wives for his pleasure, wealth and his vast kingdom) than on God who blessed him. His quest for God was as long as he got what he wanted. Let us be clear that the blessings of God are good, but when the heart of the receiver is not inclined towards God, he will ruin even those blessings.

Apostle Paul was a man who loved God more than his life, but God restrained him on several occasions. We read in 2 Corinthians chapter 11:22-33 that he could not enjoy fullness of life; his health was often poor, he had trouble during his mission trips, his ministry was not without persecution. It might seem to a first-time reader as though God was more

favorable to Solomon than to Paul. God saw that at the heart of Paul; seeking the will of God, giving God the glory, giving his life for the kingdom of God was more important to him than everything else in the world. God had deprived Paul of an easy go abundant life, but gave him grace upon grace to accept 'No' from God in order to be lavished by sufficient grace during persecutions, perils, prisons and even in death.

This is the blessing which we should ask for more, to grow in grace of our Lord Jesus Christ (*2Peter 3:18*), grace to know Him, grace to be in love with Him and to be among those blessed who endures under trails (*James 1:12*).

*Ephesians 6:24, "Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen".*

"Harm that God blesses is our good, and unblessed good is harm..."

Ref: Father of Faith Missions, Autobiography of Hudson Taylor, page 59)



*Life in abundance comes only through  
great Love.*

**-Elbert Hubbard**



## The Blessed Way

*Huzo Meru, Director of Operations, NECU*

The sole purpose of launching North East Christian University (NECU) by the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India (CBCNEI) is to uplift and empower the youth in North East India through quality education. NECU aims to focus on and all-round development by liberating people from the doldrums of social, spiritual and economic bondage through Christian value-based education under the motto, *Truth and Liberty*. NECU is the biggest mission project of CBCNEI and the leaders of all Conventions and Associations have committed and pledged to support NECU through prayers and giving, as well as resolving that all 105 Associations should become Founding Members. Churches and well-wishers have been encouraged to become Patron or Founding members as well as Friends of NECU with financial support. Subsequently, there are some encouraging sporadic responses of giving although the majority of stakeholders are yet to translate their prayers into concrete action.

American Billionaire Chuck Feeney, gave away all his fortunes worth more than \$8 billion to worthwhile causes like hospital and university. He was driven by a belief that the best use of one's wealth is to help people. He also believed strongly in *giving while living*. He adopted a very frugal lifestyle by living in a rented apartment, not owning a car and using a plastic bag for his papers and a very modest watch. What an inspiration!

Rich or poor, giving is a possibility. It is a matter of attitude. The Bible commands the rich to do good deeds, to be generous and willing to share (1Tim.6:17-19). The Bible also commends the rich generosity of the

Macedonian churches in spite of their extreme poverty because they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability (2 Cor. 8:1-3). The Bible encourages giving because there are immense dividends in giving both now and hereafter. Your giving/contribution, big or small, to NECU can make a difference towards the transformation of our region. Together let us build NECU and leave behind a rich legacy to the future generation.

*"It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).*



**CBCNEI Day of Prayer  
March 31, 2019**

Please pray for:

1. CBCNEI Ministries, viz: Healing Ministry, Students' Ministry, Theological Education Ministry, Justice & Peace Ministry, Finance Ministry, Mission, Relief & Development.
2. North East Christian University((NECU).
3. Campus development of CBCNEI.
4. The CBCNEI President, Vice-President, General Secretary, Mission Secretary, Finance Secretary, Medical Secretary, Property Secretary, Justice & Peace Secretary, Executive Committee Members, all the CBCNEI Staff and their family members.
5. India Baptist Summit 2019 which will be held from 3-6 October.

# Why I Keep Going to North East India?

*as reported by Don Ng, former President of American Baptist Churches*

In 1971, I became the first person in my family to graduate from college. My father born in China only had an elementary school education. My mother was happy to be in school in China but was married off to my father when she was only 16 years old. She never forgave her father for that. After my parents immigrated to America at the end of World War II in 1947, I was born in Boston and grew up in an under-privileged neighborhood. I spoke Chinese before I learned to speak English. My early years in public school were difficult. I was so afraid to ask to go to the restroom that there was a time when I didn't make it back home in time. My fear in talking led me to stutter and there are still times when I am scared that I would stutter. If it weren't for the onset of the television,



I wouldn't have learned English. But the opportunity of going to school and attending a Christian college followed by graduating from seminary gradually and surely built up in me knowledge of the world but also confidence in myself.

The noted Latin American theologian, Pablo Freire wrote about how education can liberate the oppressed people in the world. I can attest to that. Everyone is created in the image of God and therefore has gifts and talents because God is creative. But the tragedy is that there are life circumstances that prevent us from



developing these God-given gifts and talents for the work of the church for God's kingdom. Like my mother, she was denied the chance to study.

In reading, **Inspiring Change: Tribal Women and Men Reading the Bible and Doing Theology**, edited by Marlene Ch. Marak, we hear how most women in North East India are still expected to participate in traditional roles for women that includes child-bearing, rearing, and housekeeping. Many opportunities are denied for women including the chance to attend a university.

Narola Imchen tells a story of a Garo woman named Silje K. Sangma who converted to Christianity through the efforts of her uncle Ramke Momin (one of the first two converts among the Garos) and worked as an evangelist. With the help of her uncle, Silje K. Sangma started to practice "the handful of rice," which is the practice of putting away a handful of rice every time a woman cooks rice, and after selling that rice she used that money for her journeys. She travelled from one place to another and spread the word of God. She is considered as the first woman evangelist among the Garos. Silje K. Sangma was able to live up to the measure of the full stature of Christ. She was able to use the gifts God gave her to accomplish God's work for her.



There are 8 theological colleges affiliated and 1 theological seminary belonged to the Council of Baptist Churches in Northeast India (CBCNEI) but no Christian liberal arts university.

Four years ago, on my first visit to North East India, I became aware of the need for a new Christian liberal arts university. I heard about the challenges that Christian youth have when attending government universities. While there are fantastic theological colleges and seminary in North East India, I wondered where young people would be able to study to become engineers, physicians, nurses, lawyers, teachers, plumbers, craftsmen, electricians, urban planners, computer scientists, designers and innovators and so on. The early missionaries have brought the Gospels over 180 years ago but the work of American Baptists in the US as well as Baptists in CBCNEI is not yet finished.

How will the people of North East India be able to come to the measure of



full stature of Christ unless we establish the Northeast Christian University (NECU)? This is the reason why that for the past 3 years I have introduced more and more American Baptists to the incredible opportunities NECU can provide for future generations of young people in participating in the work of God's kingdom on earth.

Let me tell you a miracle... When we had our American Baptist Churches Biennial Mission Summit in 2015 when I was president of the denomination, I was sitting down for dinner on Sunday night, the last evening of the mission summit. Before the convention, we invited Dr. Anjo Keikung who was then the chancellor for North East Christian University (NECU) to tell the story of the Christian university to American Baptists. While there were some seeds planted for support, there was definitely much work that needs to be done. When I sat down at the dinner table, there was a man on my right whom I did not know. I introduced myself to him and he immediately said, "Yes, I know you." I said, "Have we met before?" He said that he was following my ministry from a distance. I found out he was Dr. Peter Armacost, a very well-known member of the Armacost family in the ABC. I learned that Peter was a retired college president of Eckerd College in Florida and Ottawa University in Kansas, one of the ABC-related colleges. I also learned that he recently helped establish a Christian college in Pakistan effectively navigating through all of the bureaucracy with the government and religious groups. My mouth was opened. I couldn't believe that God has placed the two of us together at that strategic time. I asked Peter if he was willing to meet with Anjo on Monday morning for breakfast. He agreed and we had breakfast together along with Jerry Cain, the chair of the Friends of NECU board in the US. Since June 2015, Peter has made a number of visits to Dimapur, Nagaland consulting with Vice Chancellor Dr. Darlindo Khathing and the General Secretary of CBCNEI, Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi to establish NECU. No one could have planned this to happen. It can only be God's miraculous hand moving among us to connect much needed resources together to establish NECU.

The Apostle Paul writing to the Ephesians said, "Each of us was given

grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ" (4:7, 11-13). When our son and daughter were completing high school, we encouraged them and worked financially for them to attend college. They met their spouses during their college years and they are both married. They have blessed my wife and me with 3 grandchildren each giving us a total of 6 beautiful grandchildren. Our oldest who is 16 is already exploring where she wished to attend college. Our youngest is only 8 but in a short 9 years, he too will have an opportunity to go to college.

I pray that as long as God grants me the strength and voice to advocate for the establishment of NECU, I will do so. I want young people in North East India and in the larger world to have the same educational opportunities that my 6 grandchildren have in America.

Our mission work is not yet finish until all attain the maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. For this reason I have visited and participated in the NECU Envisioning Consultation at Dimapur in 2018 and at Imphal in 2019 organised under the leadership of Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi, General Secretary CBCNEI. The resource persons of the consultaions were Rev Dr Roger Rex, Don Ng, Rev Dr James Brenneman, Steven Ng, Marcia Patton, LeAnn Snow Flesher, Rev Dr Wati Longchar, Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi, Dr Jennifer Davidson, Malthys D. Sangma, Dr D. Khathing and Mr Huzo Meru.



# A Brief Survey of Ethnic Conflicts and Violence in the North East India: A Peace Concern

*Rev Dr Woba James, Professor, Eastern Theological College*

## Introduction

North East India represents a cauldron of rich unity as well as diversity with regard to peoples, cultures and socio-political life. This region time and again draws the attention of the people mainly due to political reason wherein it is viewed as a 'conflict' or 'disturbed' region. Conflicts in this region generally can be classified into two: external conflict and internal conflict. It is within these two bodies of conflicts that the overall public section of the population finds themselves sandwiched in between in almost every sphere of life. To name a few, we have serious problems such as boundaries issues, betrayal of trust in relationships, disrespect, oppression and violations of human rights, warfare, problem of 'isms' on linguistic, tribal, village and ethnic lines, enmity, retaliations and counter-retaliations and all kinds of atrocities imaginable taking place under many different oppressive powers and structures.

While India had the blessing of celebrating its independence and freedom from foreign or external oppressive rule for the last 71 years, North East India (NEI) region and its states have not much to celebrate due to many different factors of conflict. For decades or for as long as we can remember, Northeast region has not known real peace owing to varied webbed factors affecting the lives of the population. The people in the region now hunger and thirst for peace, love and justice – to live fuller life of dignity and peaceful co-existence.

## 1. Brief Historical Background

Northeast India comprises of eight states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim. The term, 'Northeast' was formalized through the British colonial administration as a frontier region. It is linked with Indian heartland through the 21 km wide Siliguri Corridor, which is commonly known as the Chicken Neck, created by the Radcliff line, the boundary drawn by the British colonial administration before their departure from India in 1947. The corridor is bordered by Bhutan, Bangladesh and Nepal, and the whole of Northeast is surrounded by four countries, namely, China and Bhutan on its North; Myanmar on its East; and Bangladesh on its South and West. It has an area of 2.6 lakh sq. km. (7.6% of India's land area) while its population is 39 million plus (3.6% of India's population). It has more than 475 ethnic groups and more than 400 spoken languages/dialects.

The extensive racial differences between India and the region and the tenuous geographical link (the chicken neck Siliguri Corridor) contributed to a sense of alienation, a feeling of being the 'other' that consequently gave rise to a political culture of violent separatism. Furthermore, Northeast India is home to more than 50 ethnic revolutionary groups – a few demanding complete secession from India, others fighting for ethnic identities and homelands and some running the insurgency as an industry to spin easy money without proper political ideology. The setting to several of the Northeast's ethnic violence is immigration from rest of the sub-continent and the resultant fear of being minoritized by many of the region's indigenous ethnic groups. The inflow of population from the densely-populated East Bengal began in the 1920s. This steady population flow from mainland India particularly from Bengal into the plains of Assam and Tripura heightened the ethnic and religious diversity and introduced a native-outsider dichotomy to the simmering conflict. The Partition of India intensified the migration pressure on Assam and Tripura since Hindu refugees now joined the flow. Tripura's demography changed within two decades as Bengalis became a powerful majority. The fear that other Northeastern states would go the Tripura way weighed heavily on indigenous people and early settlers throughout the Northeast and provoked more militants to take up arms. After the Partition, Assam was pressurized

to accept more than six lakhs refugees by 1961. When the Assam Chief Minister, Gopinath Bordoloi opposed, Nehru threatened him with denial of development funds unless refugees were allowed to settle in Assam. Sardar Patel, the then Indian Home Minister even wanted the Assam government to distribute reclaimable land evenly between landless Assamese peasants and Bengali Hindu refugees. That hurt the Assamese people very seriously. Assam's middle class and rural masses were very resentful of the state's changing demography and land lost to Bengali migrants and colonial exploitation by the Indian state. Besides, Assam also felt slighted by the economic exploitation of the state by the Indian state. The oil refinery agitation raised this issue. From the initial 0.1 million tons in 1947 Assam's annual crude oil output touched a peak of 5 million tons in the 1970s. Before the anti-foreigner agitation Assam received only Rs. 42 per ton of crude oil as royalty. Assam would get only Rs. 54 as sale tax on a tone of crude oil while Government of India collected Rs. 991 on the same quantity. For plywood extracted from North East the states received only Rs. 35 – 40 lakhs a year while Government of India got Rs. 80 crores. Assam sale tax collections from tea hovered around Rs. 20 – 30 crores per year until the outbreak of anti – foreigner agitation in 1979 whereas West Bengal made 60–70 percent more because the head offices of the tea companies were located there. These unequal treatments meted out to the North Eastern states also added more fuel to the existing ethnic violence in the regions.

Therefore, this paper is mainly an attempt to present briefly the historical facts and the nature of ethnic violence in the North East Region as a Peace Concern by Peace Activist with his own experience as one members of ethnic groups of this region.

## **2. What is Ethnic Violence?**

Ethnic violence refers to violence expressly motivated by ethnic hatred and ethnic conflicts. It is commonly related to political violence, and often the terms are used interchangeably, or one is used as a pretext for the other. Violence between different groups of people, differentiated by ethnicity, culture, religion or language is a serious problem and has tragically claimed, and continues to claim the lives of many thousands of people

every year.

### 3. Probable Causes of Ethnic Violence

There is no single cause of violence. Rather, ethnic violence is context-specific, multi-causal and multi-dimensional and can result from any one or from a combination of the following factors:

1. Political and institutional factors: weak state institutions, elite power struggles and political exclusion, breakdown in social contract and corruption, identity politics
2. Socio-economic factors: Inequality, exclusion and marginalisation, absence or weakening of social cohesion, poverty
3. Resource and environmental factors: Greed, scarcity of national resources often due to population growth leading to environmental insecurity, unjust resource exploitation
4. Due to demand of ethnic homeland: Almost all the ethnic groups in the region demands their separate homeland, resulting in inter-state boundary disputes, clashes between different groups
5. Due to takeover of land by migrating communities: Conflicts have regularly caused considerable internal displacement of population in most of the Northeastern states of which is caused by violent conflicts between security forces and insurgent groups, different dissident armed groups and counter-insurgency operations of security forces. Northeast India accounts for almost half of India's conflict-induced internally displaced persons (Bhaumik, 2005). The region has witnessed a number of major causes of conflict-induced displacement in recent years.
6. Displacement of Bengali Hindus and Muslims from and within Assam;
7. Displacement of Adivasis and Bodos within and from western Assam
8. Displacement of Bengalis from Meghalaya, particularly from Shillong, the capital city of Meghalaya;
9. Displacement of the Bengalis from and within Tripura;

10. Displacement of Nagas, Kukis and Paites in Manipur;
11. Displacement of Reangs from Mizoram;
12. Displacement of Chakmas from Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram

Each of these factors constitutes a cause of ethnic violence in the region. New issues will arise during violence which perpetuate the increase of conflicts. Identifying and understanding the interactions between various causes, dimensions, correlations and dynamics of violence/conflict - and the particular contexts in which violence is taking place, is essential in determining potential areas of intervention and designing appropriate approaches and methods for conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding.

#### **4. Basis of Ethnic Violence in the Region**

The historical-racial connections among the traditional tribes in the Northeast are largely of Tibeto-Burman/Mongoloid stock and closer to Southeast Asia than to South Asia. People of the region are ethnically, linguistically and culturally very distinct from the rests of Indian population. Though cultural and ethnic diversity per say are not the main causes for conflict, one of the major areas of problem is that the Northeast is territorially organized in such a manner that ethnic and cultural specificities were ignored during the process of delineation of state boundaries in the 1950s, giving rise to discontentment and assertion of one's identity. Whereas, the colonial rulers took nearly a century to annex the entire region, and administered the hills as a loose 'frontier area', with the result that large parts of the North-eastern hill areas never came in touch with the principle of a central administration before.

Hence, their allegiance to the newly formed Indian nation-state was lacking from the beginning – accentuated by the creation of East Pakistan (today as Bangladesh) – which meant the loss of a major chunk of the physical connection between mainland India and Northeast India. Interestingly, 99 percent of the Northeast boundaries is international and only one percent is domestic boundary.

##### **4.1. Land**

Land is a major factor in the ongoing conflicts in the Northeast. It is the



struggle for land as territory that each emerging ethnic nation claims to own as a right. For example, the assertion of Naga identity and its nationhood seeks to assert claims to the Naga inhabited areas of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Manipur and even in Myanmar. Karbis in Assam, Bodos in Assam, Kukis in Manipur, Garos in Meghalaya, Rhabas in Assam and Meghalayas, Muslim migrants in Assam and even other parts of North East states, muslim migrants are becoming a very serious concern, Chakmas in Mizoram, native tribals in Tripura and Arunachal and so on. As such, many ethnic groups are demanding homelands and resort to armed militancy to achieve their goals. These armed groups often attack settler communities or rival tribes as part of a strategy of ethnic cleansing to achieve ethnically compact homelands. It has become a common trend for almost all of the ethnic communities in the Northeast to claim their nationhood. In fact, the territorial claims of most of the communities lead to non-negotiable contestations and serious ethnic violence in the region. Today ethnic violence continues to be the most common form of violence in our region. In the recent past for example, there have been numerous instances of ethnic violence including ethnic war in between Nagas and kukis, Garos-Rabhas, Bodos and non-Bodos, Karbis-Rengma Nagas and so on, all struggling for their own autonomy in the region. However, it is apparent that certain places and states are more prone to ethnic violence, while others experience essentially none. Thus, the question that comes to our region is, what makes ethnic violence a constant threat and reality within a nation-state?

## **5. Ethnic Violence/Conflicts in Different States of North East India**

### **5.1. Ethnic Violence in Assam**

Ethnic violence in Assam is the result of number of socio-economic factors operating right from the advent of British rule. Human migration is an ongoing phenomenon in the Brahmaputra valley for centuries. Various immigrant groups belonging to Mongoloid group had entered Assam from neighbouring South-East Asian countries.

When the British took over the administration of Assam in the year 1826, it changed the traditional social culture of Assam. After taking over Assam, British established tea and oil industry in Assam and brought educated

Bengali hindus to work in important positions in the colonial administration and other important professions like teachers, doctors, lawyers and magistrates. The local people were reluctant to work in tea gardens which resulted in lack of labour force in colonial Assam. As a result, the colonial rulers encouraged migration of tribal people from Jharkhand and Orissa in order to meet the demand of cheap labour in British-owned tea gardens. In search of better living the poverty ridden tribal people of those areas migrated to Assam. The situation opened the floodgates of migration of people during the British regime. Thus the British-owned tea gardens had remarkably grown but failed to accommodate emerging Assamese middle class in jobs. This had eventually led to an anti-Bengali feeling amongst Assamese middle class who failed to understand the colonial limitation. The British also ignored the demand for replacement of Assamese as language in schools and courts. The linguistic conflict between migrant Bengalis and native population generated socio-cultural conflict between the two groups.

The immigration of people from erstwhile East Pakistan or Bangladesh, took a precarious turn during post-independence period but the Government of India did not have a clear-cut policy to handle the issue. On the contrary Nehru-Liaquat Pact facilitated and accelerated infiltration during post-independence era by providing for restoration of rights of immigrants over their properties (Pact, 1950). The agreement was against the spirit of Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act, 1950 enacted by Parliament that provided for expulsion of certain immigrants from Assam. In the early sixties, the government of Assam armed itself with Prevention of Infiltration from Pakistan (PIP) Plan, 1964 launched an aggressive campaign to flush out immigrants, who settled in Assam since January 1951. Bimala Prasad Chaliha, the then Chief Minister of Assam even disregarded the then Prime Minister's plea to go slow on the deportation. Chaliha even went on to say that the problem was so critical that Assam demography and culture would be permanently damaged. Chaliha's campaign pressed a panic button among the Muslim immigrants. Ultimately Chaliha's Plan was put in cold storage and those who were deported earlier gradually returned and again settled in Assam. It has to be noted here that the Assamese members of the Constituent Assembly advocated for giving much wider power to the

States. The proposals include the right to legislate on immigration; inclusion of citizenship matter in the concurrent list; giving residual powers to the states; limitation of central power over subjects in the central list; not to give power to the Union Government to unilaterally redraw state boundaries; to make state Governorship an elected office and to give a much larger share of the exercise and export duties on tea and petroleum to the producing states (Baruah, 2005). During the post Bangladesh era, the All Assam Student's Union (AASU) started a movement called Bideshi Khedao Movement which is also known as Assam Movement. The movement was actually triggered by the discovery of sudden rise of registered voters in the electoral rolls in 1070s. Taking advantage of the deep rooted sentiments and discontentment of Assamese people, AASU successfully translated the agitation into widespread popular movement. Tens of thousands of Bengalis — both Hindus and Muslims were displaced all over Assam in violence unleashed during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, particularly during six years of anteforeigners' agitation. However, the agitation leaders when they came to power and ruled the state since 1985 to 1996, failed to continue the work of detection and deportation of the illegal immigrants.

The ethnic violence in Bodo areas started with the Bodo movement in 1987. The Bodos who are the largest plains tribe in Assam alleged that there has been long socio cultural alienation, discrimination, de-culturalisation and anti-tribal policies of the government toward them. The Assam Movement that resulted in Assam Accord mainly aimed at preserving and protecting Assamese identity and culture. The Bodos objected the clause 6 of the Assam Accord (1995), which promised to safeguard the culture and identity of Assamese people. The All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) along with Bodo Sahitya Sabha launched the Bodo Movement demanding a Bodo state for protecting and preserving their identity. In the initial years the movement was quite peaceful and democratic but later on the movement turned violent because of the conflicts that emerged with the increase of the non-Bodo population. To establish peace, the state government and ABSU signed an accord making provision for setting up of Bodoland Territorial Council (BAC). However, BAC failed to meet the aspirations of Bodo people. The BAC area is not contiguous and in some areas under the BAC there were more than fifty per cent non-Bodo

population. However, to have complete hold over the territory, the Bodos started ethnic cleansing with large scale attack on Muslims of Bengali descent in October 1993. Violent clash between Bodos and immigrant Muslim settlers displaced 3,568 families consisting of 18,000 people in Kokrajhar and Bongaigaon district. Again in May-June 1996 massive attack was launched against Adivasi Santhals. The conflict has resulted in displacement of 42,214 families consisting of about 22, 62682 persons throughout western Assam. After this initial outbreak, conflict between the two ethnic groups became a regular feature in western Assam. In 2004 Bodo Santhal conflict resurfaced again leaving 37,000 people displaced. The enmity between the immigrant Muslim settlers and tribal communities has increased over the years in Assam as the migrants encroach upon the areas previously dominated by tribal communities. Both groups are fighting over the same natural resources and geographical space. In 1998, clash between Bodos and immigrant Muslims displaced 48,556 families and within a span of two years, nearly 5.5 lakh people were living in camps at some point and about 44,000 of them were children. Again in August 2008 ethnic violence took place between the two groups in Udalguri, Darang, Chirang and Sonitpur districts killing 55 and displacing 2,12000 persons. During the conflict 54 villages were directly affected and residents of 150 villages fled from their homes for fear of being attacked though there was no attack in their villages. More recently in July 2012 conflict between the two communities displaced 400,000 people from about 400 villages.

Conflict in North Cachar (NC) Hills and Karbi Anglong is another serious issue in the region. The two hill districts of Assam NC Hills and Karbi Anglong are mostly inhabited by indigenous tribes like Karbi, Dimasa, Kuki, Khasi, Jaintia, Hmar, Bodo, Tiwa, Rengma Nagas and Zeme Nagas. These two hill districts are continuously plagued by unprecedented ethnic violence in recent years. Root causes of the violence are control over land resources and establishment of homeland based on ethnicity. The clashes are between Karbi-Kuki, Karbi-Rengma Naga, Karbi-Dimasa, Dimasa-Hmar, Dimasa-Zeme Naga groups fighting each other and leading to killing and displacement of people in large numbers. According to a report given by the Asian Centre for Human Rights, as a result of ongoing conflict 44,016 Karbis and Dimasas have been displaced till October 2005 in Karbi Anglong,

North Cachar Hills and Hojai sub-division of Nowgaon district. The recent conflicts between the Karbis and the Rengma Nagas, has caused so much damage to both the ethnic communities. Their homes were burned down, their crops destroyed, livelihood wiped out and rendered so many of them homeless. For the moment the clashes are brought under control but it could re-erupt any moment.

## **5.2. Ethnic Violence in Manipur**

One of the worst ethnic violence took place in Manipur during the middle of 1992. The conflict between the Nagas and Kukis resulted in wanton killing, kidnapping, and burning and destruction of houses. This ethnic conflict forced many people to flee from their original places of settlements. A large number of people affected by ethnic violence moved to villages and towns where there they could find some sense of security and more economic opportunities leading to significant change in demography in the hills districts of the state. As a result of that, population in the state's least populated district of Chandel, that had only 71,014 as per 1991 census jumped to 1,18327, in 2001 census (Thongbam, 2006). Naga-Kuki clash was followed by Meities and Pangal clash in 1993. The last in the series was the Paite-Kuki clash in Churachandpur district of the state. A number of factors are responsible for the outbreak of the clash. There was a disagreement between the Kukis and the Paites over the acceptance of the term to be used as the common nomenclature to describe all the Kuki-Chin-Mizo group of tribes in the state. Another important factor which contributed to the Kuki-Paite clash was the fact that the Kukis and Zomis including Paites are at loggerhead over the issue of Kuki homeland taxes and fees. The third reason was that the Paites always wanted to rename Churachandpur as Lamka, which was opposed by the Kukis. The Paites killed 210 Kukis in the clashes and lost 298 of their own tribesmen. Three thousand houses in 47 villages were destroyed and 22,000 Kukis and Paites displaced.

## **5.3. Ethnic Violence in Nagaland and Assam Border**

Ever since Nagaland was carved out of Assam's Naga Hills district in 1963, Nagaland and Assam has been in constant conflicts due to boundary disputes. Both the states believed that the disputes boundary belong to

them “historically”. The Nagaland government has been insisting that a 16-point agreement of 1960, which led to the creation of Nagaland, also included “restoration” of all Naga territories that had been transferred out of the Naga Hills after the British annexed Assam in 1826. The Assam government’s stand is to maintain the boundary “constitutionally” as decided on December 1, 1963, when the hill state was created. Assam and Nagaland share a 434 km boundary. Assam says Nagaland has been encroaching upon over 66,000 hectares in Sivasagar, Jorhat, Golaghat and Karbi Anglong districts. This includes over 42,000 hectares in Golaghat alone (the site of the recent trouble). The encroached area also includes over 80 per cent of reserved forests. Assam says Nagaland has set up three civil subdivisions on Assam territory. Nagaland, on the other hand, insists that more tracts under Assam “occupation” belong to Nagaland.

There has been a series of ethnic violence incidents since Nagaland was created. Three major incidents took place in 1979, 1985 and 2014, leaving at least more than 100 persons dead between them. On January 5, 1979, 54 Assam villagers were killed in a series of attacks by armed men from Nagaland in Chungajan, Uriamghat and Mikirbgheta of Golaghat district, while over 23,500 persons fled to relief camps. In June 1985, a major flare-up at Merapani, also in Golaghat, left 41 persons dead on the Assam side. These included 28 Assam Police personnel. In 2014 the problem that continues till today has left more 15 people dead, so many properties of both the states have been destroyed and burned. Many had fled from their villages to the relief camps and safer cities. In all incidents, Assam claimed that the attackers included Nagaland Police personnel with the help of Naga insurgent groups. However, this claim of Assam was strongly refuted by the Nagaland Government. Both the states continue to blame the centre’s negligence to the issues and they continue to demand the immediate solution to this boundary disputes so that further ethnic violence could be avoided in the future.

#### **5.4. Ethnic Violence in Mizoram**

In 1997 conflict between Mizos and Reang community presently known as Bru which is the second largest tribal group of Mizoram, began with the latter’s demand for autonomy within Mizoram. Mizos consider it as an

attempt to fragment the Mizo state. To counter such demands of minority tribal groups, the Mizos branded them as outsiders. Various attempts were made to invalidate their claims like deleting their names from the voter's list, questioning the census report etc. According to Bru leaders, their cultural practices were obstructed and they were forced to adopt Mizo language. Though they already had their native language - Kokborok - they were forced to accept Mizo language as medium of instruction. Bru leaders also alleged that the names of about 20,000 Reangs were deleted from the electoral rolls. In 1997 ethnic violence took a severe turn when the Mizos unleashed a wave of terror against the minority Reangs. As many as 35,000 to 50,000 people belonging to Reang tribe crossed over from Mizoram to Tripura following atrocities committed against them allegedly by Mizo tribes. The Reang women were raped and men were beaten up and killed. The Reang militant group, which calls itself the Bru National Liberation Front (BNLF) started attacking Mizoram police and that further provoked the Mizos to commit atrocities on Reangs. The Tripura Government says that 30,690 Reangs belonging to 6,859 families have fled into Tripura during the period of three years. But the Mizoram Government refuses to accept them. According to Mizoram government Tripura government has not given details of residence of 10,435 people belonging to 2,075 families. Therefore, their claim to be residents of Mizoram is untenable.

### **5.5. Ethnic Violence in Tripura**

A large number of Bengali Hindus entered Tripura from Chakla Roshanabad (now in Pakistan). The influx of large number of people over a long period of time brought about demographic changes in Tripura. The indigenous people in the state, who accounted for 95 per cent of the population of Tripura in the 1931 census, had been reduced to just 31 per cent at the time of the 1991 census. This has become a serious threat for the tribals, who have become minority in their own land. The demographic explosion which reduced the tribals to minority created fear psychosis in the minds of the tribal people and gave way to ethnic violence. The continuous influx of Bengali people from Bangladesh intensified the progressive alienation of tribal lands and traditional forest rights. There were large scale transfers of cultivable land of the tribal people to the Bengali migrants as the Bengali migrants practiced relatively advanced pattern of wet-rice cultivation

compared to the age-old jhum cultivation. As a consequence of influx of large number of migrants, a growing number of ethno-centric tribal parties mushroomed. The Debar Commission and Hanumanthiya Commission which looked into the development of the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) suggested a tribal compact area to fulfill the aspirations of development of tribal people. In the meantime, the government enacted Tripura Land Reforms and Restoration Act in 1960 to restore alienated tribal land. The Act was amended in 1964. But all these had failed to protect the tribal groups, creating a feeling of mistrust and betrayal amongst the tribals. The state witnessed serious ethnic violence between tribals and non-tribals since 1980 till March 2002. This tension of violence continues even today as the original inhabitants of Tripura are reduced to minority population in their own state

### **5.6. Ethnic Violence in Meghalaya**

One of the unique features of the state of Meghalaya is that majority of tribal population follows matrilineal system where lineage and heritage are traced through its women/mothers. The non-tribal communities in Meghalaya are made up of migrants from other parts of India and recent migrants from neighbouring countries particularly Nepal and Bangladesh. The Khasi and Garo hills fall under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India that provides for establishment of autonomous district council to enforce customary law, use of land as well as reservation in Parliament, educational institutions and government employment. It has to be noted here that unlike some of the states in the Northeast which have been passing through violent insurgencies, Meghalaya has not yet experienced a full blown insurgency but large scale exodus of Bengali and Nepali people had taken place on several occasions. Since late 1980s numerous cycles of ethnic cleansing rocked the state and people belonging to Nepali, Bengali, Bihari and Marwari communities became the target of the attack. In the 1990s Bengalis remained the prime target of the ethnic violence. The pattern was repeated at regular intervals mostly before or during the main Bengali Hindu festival of 'Durga Puja'. Unlike Tripura or Assam, only about 50 people had died in these attacks, but that was scary enough to trigger a Bengali exodus. Since the early 1980s, an estimated 25,000-35,000 Bengalis have left Meghalaya to other parts of India especially to West Bengal. Ethnic



violence between the Rabha and the Garo communities in December 2010 and January 2011 displaced tens of thousands of people in Assam's Goalpara district and adjoining East Garo Hills district of Meghalaya. During the conflict 10 people had been killed and more than 50,000 persons displaced from both communities. Conflict between the two groups erupted over the issue of the legislative and executive status of the Rabha dominated Rabha Hajong Autonomous Council. However, this ethnic violence has left black years in the history of relation between the Rabhas and the Garos.

### **Conclusion**

Ethnic violence in the Northeastern region can be thus attributed to diverse factors - land alienation, heavy and continuous influx of immigrants, fight over space, homeland and fight over natural resources in the same geographical space, issue of majority and minority population, insurgency conflicts etc. As such, it becomes clear that peace can be restored in the region only through the restoration of land and people's cultural identity, socio-political autonomy, poverty alleviation, education and development especially in the rural areas. Problems of indigenous people of the region have continuously been ignored by successive governments. Furthermore, there is lack of strong and committed leadership in the region because of which human resources could not be effectively and productively utilized for the good of the indigenous communities in the region. What is urgently needed at the present is the collective efforts of the Central and State governments, social, political and religious leaders, old and young citizens, men and women, churches, institutions, NGOs, local bodies and very importantly conflict-management or peace experts to come forward and form a common ground for working toward bringing in peace and harmony in the region, weighing all aspects and from all angles. This is because, individual efforts alone will not work or succeed in such a complexly-interwoven structure of conflicts in the region. Today we need peace in our region. Let us joint in peacebuilding and as a peacemaker in our region today.



# “Evangelism as a minority group in the Hindu dominant Country”

*Rev Dr Jolly Rimai, Mission Secretary, CBCNEI*

Mission is mandated to the church to share the Gospel to every nation, people, tribe and language, and disciple them. Though easy as it may sound, it is not easy as it sounds. The message of the love of God and the forgiveness of sins in Christ Jesus has always been misunderstood by people of other faiths, and many a times, the messengers are persecuted. However, that does not stop us from sharing the Gospel to others.

**Hindu dominant Countries and challenges:** India has the largest Hindus in the world with over 80% of the total population claiming to be Hindu. Nepal also is Hindu dominated country with over 80% claiming to be Hindu.

Witnessing among the Hindus is challenging because of their deeply rooted religious belief where they consider almost everything as part of God. They believe that there are 33 million gods in Hinduism. Some Hindus are even willing to accept Jesus as one of the gods among those many. This accommodative belief in Hinduism opens door for spreading of their religion. When it comes to Christianity, the “only through Jesus” becomes difficult for the Hindus to accept.

**Problems Encountered by the Missionaries:** Out of many reasons that hinder a Hindu to accept Jesus Christ, here are few listed.

1. Deeply Rooted Religious Tradition: The deeply rooted religious tradition is one of the biggest problems and challenges encountered by the missionaries. It was difficult for the Hindus to understand the gospel of Grace since they were so ingrained with their religious rituals, and their concept of *Karma and Samsara* through good works.
2. Zeal to Preserve Culture and Tradition: For many, Christianity is understood or seen as an agent to put to an end the Hindu culture and tradition in India. To them, becoming a Christian means adopting the Western culture and tradition as seen in the life of the tribal

Christians. This is one major reason why people do not embrace Christianity. With Hinduism ingrained deep in the minds for so many centuries, they consider the religious practices of Hinduism as their own traditional-cultural practices. Therefore, they want to preserve this tradition, which is Hinduism.

3. Presentation of Western God: Christianity is considered as the religion of the west or colonial people. Dharmaraj writes, "*To many citizens of India, accepting Christianity and surrendering their religious faiths to this 'foreign religion' would amount to an act of submission to colonial power.*" (Dharmaraj 1993, 13). In a community-oriented society, it is difficult for any individual to make life-changing decisions on their own. In the family, usually the parents make decision. Young people cannot decide what they believe or want. They are bound to obey their parents in every aspect of their lives.
4. Superiority Complex of the Hindus: The Hindus have caste system where tribal communities are considered "Untouchables". Till today, if a high caste girl is married to a tribal, they would, in some cases, rather kill her as "Honor Killing" not to shame the family. As such, they cannot accept the "all equal" attitude of the Christians.

### Strategies for Effective Communication:

The traditional missionary methods of evangelism, though effective for the tribal people in rural areas, are not able to make great impact upon the Hindus in urban settings. Christians should, therefore, try to develop new strategies to work among the Hindus so that the gospel will be communicated effectively.

The apostle Paul uses different strategies in his missionary work (Acts 17:1-4; 18:4). The question here is, how can Christians best present the gospel to the Hindus? How can the gospel be made understandable to the Hindus? And what strategy should we adopt to work among the majority Hindus where there are threats for life?

**Approaches:** Out of many possible effective approaches, suggested are few that I feel very important.

1. *Networking among the Mission Organizations:* Networking among the mission organizations is one of the most important and urgent needs. All denominations and mission organizations need to

corporately reach out to strategic places. Despite denominational differences, they should have a common goal, and that is to reach the Hindus with the gospel and bring glory and honor to God. In order to do this, a strategic ethnographic field survey is necessary where the land will be explored, unreached people identified, and road connections mapped out. We need to come up with a combing operation strategy where every district is adopted and prayed for by local churches, and eventually send church planters. We are always stronger together.

For those churches outside of India or Nepal wanted to send their missionaries and engage in church planting, they need to partner with the local churches and go along with the plan and strategy of the country. This will help in better strategic planning for engagements and avoid any misunderstanding in future. This will also serve as a shield during persecution and other unwanted incidents that can happen.

2. *Building Relationships with the Leaders:* Hindus have high respect for the elders and leaders in the society. Decisions made by the leaders are final. In this cultural context, it is very important for church leaders to establish a good relationship with the leaders in their community.

However, there is a problem when it comes to building relationships with the leaders from a cultural aspect. An ordinary person may accept the invitation from an ordinary family, but it is unlikely that a leader will go to the house of an ordinary person. On the other hand, it is also a shame for an ordinary family to invite a person who holds a leadership position. Therefore, mission organization leaders should present themselves as respectable persons who help in times of need. In order to establish good rapport with the Hindu leaders, church leaders need to be rich as well.

This will also help in preventing persecution from the community to the new believers. It is therefore important that relationship is built with the leaders so that missionaries can go to their community and proclaim the good news.

3. *Identifying with the People:* Being able to identify with the people is another area that needs to be considered. Cultural sensitivity is very strong among the Hindus. Therefore, they have strong resistance when their culture and custom is threatened.

When foreign missionaries converted the tribal people, there were great changes in their lives. The old traditional practices of the tribal people were prohibited since the missionaries saw elements of spirit worship in them. The Hindus saw these changes as a change from tribal identity into Western identity. As a result, they are afraid that if they become Christians, they will change their identity into the tribal identity.

The apostle Paul is one good example when it comes to identifying with the people. He writes,

*To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. ... I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all these for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings. (1 Cor.9:20-23)*

It is important that the missionaries identify themselves with the people whom they are bringing the gospel. Robert de Nobili, one of the Roman Catholic missionaries who came to India, adapted the lifestyle of the Indians and lived like a *sanyasi* (ascetic). Communication could be more effective if there is a certain amount of commonness between the sender and the receiver. The gospel needs to be presented in the context of the Hindus so that they can grasp the meaning of the message.

4. *Contextualization of the Message:* It is important to be aware of syncretism in the process of contextualizing the gospel message. Contextualization is the outcome of religious dialogue from the liberal camp. However, the gospel message is applicable to all cultures and all people at all times. It is, as Wright says, "*presenting the uncompromised gospel of Jesus Christ in the socio-cultural, ethnic, and linguistic context of the hearers so they may respond and be disciplined into a church*" (Terry ed. 1989, 453). It is, as Kato puts it,

*"making concepts or ideals relevant in a given situation. In reference to Christian practices, it is an effort to express the never changing Word of God in ever changing modes of relevance"* (Kato 1975, 1217). He continues to say, *"The New Testament has given us the pattern for cultural adaptations. The incarnation itself is a form of contextualization"* (Kato 1975, 1217).

It is a "meaningful communication in forms that are real to the person,..." (Bradshaw 1975, 1226). Therefore, the purpose of contextualization is to communicate the gospel in the context of certain cultures, so that the people of that culture can understand the gospel in their own cultural setting without any distortion"

Take for an example, the Traditional Worship Style. Hindus in general are very religious people. They cannot enter the temple with their shoes on. In folded hands and bowing posture they enter with humility. They sat on the floor and worship with much reverence. When they saw Christians worship style, they see it as disrespectful to God.

5. *Social Action*: The concept of 'Community Development Worker (CDW)' is introduced for mission workers in India. Though they go there for church planting, they are known as CDW in the mission field to avoid persecution. They are equipped with basic skills on development and farming so that they can help the people in the mission fields. They are also given small projects to build relationship with the people.
6. *Tent Making missionaries*: Since open sharing of the Gospel is becoming irrelevant in this context, it is better to deploy tent making missionaries. The added advantage will be, they will get in touch more with younger generation who are comparatively more open to the gospel. College going and University going students can be also taught basic methods to share their testimony and the gospel to their friends.

**Conclusion:** Though difficult and very challenging, the spread of the Gospel has been mandated to us to continually share the gospel to the unreached nation. Therefore, every believer should take the responsibility to share the love of God to those who have never heard.



## Missionary Care Training: Recommendations from the participants:

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First of all, we (55) the Mission leaders under CBCNEI thank God for this timely training on Missionary Care.

### **Statement:**

We acknowledged we have not cared enough for our missionaries and evangelists.

We realized the need to care for them because;

1. We want them to remain healthy and effective in their work.
2. We value the work of the Missionaries
3. They are there on our behalf.
4. We are required to care pastorally for those who are at warfront.
5. They are the most unwanted people in the area where they are working.
6. We don't want them to suffer for the work they have chosen on our behalf.

Therefore, we recommend the followings to our churches;

- To treat the Missionaries with dignity
- To consider them as fellow servants of the Lord
- To understand they are human too and have needs

### **1. Spiritual Development Program**

- To organize retreat for the missionary families
- Conduct programs such as Life Revision Seminar, Debriefing, Inner Healing etc.
- Send the missionaries for short term courses

### **2. Salaries and Ministry expenses**

Prepare a detail budget for missionaries as well as ministry expenses

with timely increments.

- i. Accommodation (house rent).
- ii. Water and electricity.
- iii. Telephone and mail.
- iv. Spouse allowance.
- v. Sabbatical/ furlough allowance.
- vi. Marriage for children.
- vii. Training and seminar.
- viii. Hospitality allowance.

### 3. Children Education Allowances

- 1. Adequate education allowance be added in the salary
- 2. Create educational loan policy and program for missionary children

### 4. Health Care

- 1. To introduce health Insurance for missionaries and families
- 2. Conduct health check-up before and during their stay in the mission field.
- 3. CBCNEI to have health insurance program for missionaries

### 5. Caring for retired Missionaries

- 1. Churches to support the missionaries throughout their lifetime.
- 2. Conduct special programs to encourage the retired missionaries
- 3. Assign them as prayer group leaders or fund raisers.

### 6. Pension and Retirement benefit

- 1. Introduce provident fund.
- 2. Create gratuity scheme.
- 3. Resettlement plan be arranged for retired missionaries (give plot of land)

### 7. Member care Team:

Every Association/Convention/Council to have Member Care Team







# North East Christian University

## Some Highlights on activities and status

**Infrastructure** : First Floor front face of Anchor Building works underway for more classrooms and few guest rooms.

**Classrooms** :

-  Compact, modern and air conditioned
-  Smart / Digital Classroom for On-line teaching / learning

**First ACADEMIC SESSIONS Started in August 2018.**

**NECU Achievement:**

- \* NECU is only one of two organisations recognised and accredited by the Quality Council of India to be a Personnel Certification Body (PrCB) for Traditional Community Healthcare Providers.
- \* NECU has the distinction to be the only University in India that has this recognition
- \* Under international norms following ISO 17024, NECU can certify a Traditional healer which will be recognised worldwide.

**International:**

- NECU organized Intensive TESOL training in collaboration with Asia Center for TESOL Thailand and Certified by Cornerstone University USA
- Public Administration programme on line with Ottawa University, USA
- Other overseas tie up and collaboration under preparation

**Faculty** : 90% NECU Faculty PhD ; Others PG with long years experience.

## Personality Development :

- Teaching on Christian Principles; Counseling as Mandatory subject
- Community Work as a Mandatory subject – In first Semester, three weeks with Orphanage
- Internship from UG Ist Semester – In First Semester, attached to top rated Hotel
- Music / Art/ Theatre mandatory subject – taught on performing art of choice



### Notes of gratitude

*“Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ” - 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 5:18*

*Life is a beautiful garden with numerous colours and bountiful privileges.* To every individual a chance to experience is *Life*. Every little thing that we encounter is a privilege not a co-incidence (optimistic). One of the greatest privileges that comes on my way is to be a part of this beautiful family called **Council of Baptist Churches in North East India**. I am delighted to be working here as an *Assistant Editor of Baptist News, CBCNEI*. Ever since, reading and writing has been my interests and I should express that, this has been my family’s wish to be a part of CBCNEI.

I graduated from Eastern Theological College, Jorhat (Bachelor of Divinity, 2014-2018). Plans and decisions were always in my tiny head expecting to explore with

numerous aspirations but in vain, for His ways are always different from mine, God said in *Isaiah 55:8* ***“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord.*** Therefore, things start working out in my unconscious moment through Him who is a conscious God and who will be the same yesterday, today and forever. The hope here is that, as he has been in the past, he will always be there as I go on.

### **N.B.**

The Baptist News is a quarterly publication of the CBCNEI that highlights news and activities of the Baptist family in Northeast India for our members and well-wishers to read and get connected with each other. This high-spirited task of putting things together and materializing it will not be easy without you readers. We remind you that you are the core of the Baptist News. We welcome you all to forward articles, news, events, issues concerning your Church, family or society. We are delighted to convey about our other columns that encourages readers to contribute jokes, riddles, poetry, stories and those lovers of food or food bloggers to contribute their scrumptious recipes.

Aspirant and passionate reader and writers can mail us your article at [editor@cbcnei.in](mailto:editor@cbcnei.in) or connect with us on Facebook/cbcnei.

Ch. Sweety

Assistant Editor, Baptist News

Dear Readers,  
Please send your stories, testimonies, reports, articles and Church News.

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Guwahati, Assam-781001, India  
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## The Baptist News

The Baptist News is non-profit publication of the Council of Baptist Churches in Northeast India. It is published quarterly.

### Disclaimer:

The views expressed in this Publication do not necessarily represent the official position of the Council. Each contributor is solely responsible for the views expressed in his or her article.

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