

Naga By Blood

The Naga Spirit !

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At this juncture when Nagas seem to be getting further divided, there is an urgent need for vibrant and purposeful leadership that is able to reflectively process constructive criticism and to respond effectively and justly while representing the people's genuine interests. Our history shows that there was no shortage of leaders in the traditional Naga context. The very nature of community life ensured that every individual was a responsible human being who contributed towards the common good. Through being stewards to the community everyone cared for each other's well being.

Today, this sense of stewardship and community responsibility is no longer felt and valued as it was in the past. Now, the negative notions of individualism have begun eroding the notion of community along with the unique contributions of its individual members. These transitions from our traditional Naga context of shared responsibility and mutuality are evident in the absence of purposeful leadership in present day Nagaland. As the community values and positive individuality have been pushed aside, the notion of individualism has increased competition and generated more friction in how Nagas relate to one another.

Subsequently, one of its many consequences is that existing leaders – State politicians, Civil Society, Traditional, as well as, 'national workers' – no longer understand, listen to and communicate to the Naga spirit. This departure is evident in current day Nagaland as the leaders are no longer people-centered as past leaders were. The critical gap in understanding has widened between the leaders and the people. Tragically, this gap has been central in defining their perception of each other. And, because perception is based on politics they fail miserably in understanding each other's intention. Invariably, the focus seems to be centered on posturing, rather than on recognizing and responding to each other's needs as human beings.

Purposeful leaders are needed that have goodwill for their fellow human beings and a perceptiveness or insight that enables them to respond in principled ways, flexibly, yet appropriately depending on what the situation requires. Nagas need leaders who are open and willing to publically acknowledge wrong doings and saying 'Sorry'. Nagas need leaders who can humbly and sincerely recognize their own limitations, as well as, have the courage to elicit public opinion and involve the people in the process of policy formation. Nagas need leaders who have an all-encompassing expansive vision that revolves around improving the lives of all people, not just their kin, clan or their village. The Naga spirit is generous and forgiving. Nagas will embrace leaders with the Naga spirit who are willing to humble themselves and seek counsel from them.

Nagas need leaders with a vision for the common good that can guide the people out of the present condition of indifference and apathy, and inspire new imagination, one that can rekindle the spirit of life once again. In reality, the majority is caught up in the cycle of day to day survival, so leaders are needed that can empower and catalyze the people break its inertia and trapping nature at this juncture. At the end of the day in a multi-cultural and diverse society such as the Nagas, we need leaders who can firmly address the prevailing 'isms' and demonstrate their relevancy to the people and the conditions, thereby restoring our Naga spirit.