

Nagas Role in World War II

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The Second World War (1939-1945) is an important historical event of the World. Even for the Nagas they considered it as an important event in their history. This is primarily due to their participation in the Battle of Kohima, which was a part of the Burma Campaign between the British and the Japanese during the Second World War. The Burma Campaign was fought from 4 April 1944 to 22 June 1944. The Battle of Kohima took place at Kohima, the present capital of Nagaland, which is situated in the Northeastern region of India. The Nagas role in the Battle of Kohima was of great importance and their role in the battle cannot be ignored, as it was one of the factors which contributed to the victory of the British in the battle. Nagas participation and contribution to the “Battle of Kohima” will be discussed at length in this paper.

Keywords: Second World War, Battle of Kohima, Nagas, British, Japanese.

Introduction

World War II (1939-1945) is an important event in the history of the world; so is for the Nagas of the then Naga Hills in the Northeast Frontier of British India. It had exhibited one of the horrifying capabilities of destruction by humans through the technologies of warfare. Participation of Nagas in World War II was mainly due to the Battle of Kohima. The Battle was a part of Burma Campaign which was fought during World War II between the British and Japanese forces from 4 April 1944 and ended on 22 June 1944. It took place in Kohima, the present capital of Nagaland. Kohima is a hill town and is situated in the Northeastern region of India. Japan’s entry into the war was driven by the need to expand its territory and get access to the natural resources of the occupied territories so that it can enrich its economic condition and become world power. Japan invaded India through Kohima and its plan for invasion was mainly motivated by three factors - one, to defend and keep hold of Burma from the British; second, to wipe out the British from Asian countries; third, Japan needed victory in order to boost her morale which was low due to their defeat in the pacific. To the Japanese, the siege of Kohima was essential to secure their conquest in Southeast Asia; while to the British the defence was vital from the point of defending the whole of the India sub-continent. The Battle of Kohima decided the fate of both the British and the Japanese. British with their victory

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were able to recover their lost glory and honour. Japan with their defeat, their dreams of conquering India and removing the British from the Far East came to end and the defeated Japanese had to retreat back. It marked the limit of Japanese offensive into India. Nagas role and participations in the battle cannot be ignored. Their contribution and support to the British is regarded as one of the factors which helped the British in winning the battle.

British-Nagas Relations

Before the advent of the British into the Naga Hills, Nagas lived a world of their own. They were separated from the rest of the world and enjoyed complete independence without any interference from foreign powers. The only contact they had with the outside world was with the Ahoms of Assam. The Nagas for the first time heard about the British from their Assamese friends and through them, they also came to know about the signing of the treaty of Yandabo between the British and the Burmese king of Ava on 24 February 1826. This treaty had great impact on the Nagas and significantly changed their life. With this treaty, the British became the “de facto guardian” (Sema 1992: 1) of the Nagas. Although the treaty formally included the Naga inhabited areas within the sphere of British influence, it remained outside the British administration for some decades. The British and the Nagas for the first time came into direct contact in the year 1832, as there arose the need for safer road and communication between Manipur state and Brahmaputra valley through the Naga Hills and also the need to check the Naga raids on the British subject of Cachar and Nowgong frontier. For some years Naga raids and British counter attack continue. The British however realised that nothing productive could come out of it and eventually try to maintain peace and keep the Nagas on friendly relations. The British followed the policy of non-interference for sometime towards the Nagas but this policy proved to be a complete failure as the Nagas continued on with their raids.

After the failure of the policy of non-interference, the British Government decided to send European officers to the Naga Hills. They were asked to invite the Naga chiefs and make their villages submit to the British Government. The Naga villages which thus submitted to the British Government had to pay tribute to them and in return received all help and protection from them. Those which refused were to be left alone by the British, on the condition that they stop their raids and maintaining peace. The unending local feuds had made the weaker Naga villages to seek British protection, whereas the stronger villages remained aloof or independent from the British Government. But, as far as the British Government was concerned their main interest was to protect and defend their administered areas rather than the actual administration of the Nagas. In March 1878, the British shifted their headquarters from Samaguting (Chumukedima) to Kohima. The occupation of Kohima by the British was a landmark event in the history of the Anglo-Naga relations. After the British occupation of Kohima, fights broke out between the British and the Nagas, as the Nagas attacked British officers who went to visit Khonoma village. The British finally subdued Khonoma village and the situation was brought under control. Gradually, the British started the process of peace settlement in Naga Hills. The policy which the British followed in the Naga Hills was not that “of imposing

a European model of administration, but of establishing the rule of law for the security of colonial interest" (ibid 22). The policy of the British in the Naga Hills was largely influenced by "local circumstances" (ibid).

The British did not introduce any significant changes in the administration of the Naga Hills or any measures which were unknown to the people. They allowed the Nagas to continue to rule and administer their villages according to their customs and traditions as the British Government was satisfied with the maintenance of law and order and collection of annual house tax. The responsibility of the actual day-to-day administration was left to the village headman by the British. The village leadership consisted of village headmen and his assistants. They were given the power by the British Government to supervise and maintain law and order according to the established tribal customs and traditions. This system of administration was made uniform over all the Naga Hills district. In course of time, the village headmen became the agents of the colonial administration, as the village people had direct contact with their chiefs or headmen and had little to do directly with district officials. The British rule therefore did not seriously affect the basic structure of the Naga society. It remained traditional in character and content. Moreover, the system of administration which the British followed in the Naga Hills ensured social continuity and at the same time made it easier for the people to accept the British rule. The British intervened in the village administration only in disputes which could not be settled by the village courts. The main intention of the British Government in recognising the village chiefs as undisputed leaders of the village was to make them loyal agents of the colonial administration. Thus, while continuing as leaders of their people they became an important link between the British Government and the tribal masses.

When World War I broke out, Nagas also participated in the war, but in a small way unlike in World War II. The Government of India sent 4,000 Nagas to France along with other Indian soldiers. However, when the "Battle of Kohima" took place between the British and the Japanese, the Nagas took active part in the battle by performing different roles. Nagas help and services were invaluable to the British. By the time the Battle of Kohima began, there existed a peaceful relation between the British and the Nagas. The British administrative policy tried to ensure peaceful co-existence between the Nagas and the British. The system of administration adopted by the British also suited the Nagas and was conducive for the maintenance of law and order among them. They did not interfere in the internal affairs of the Nagas, and maintained indirect rule by making the village headmen or chiefs rule over them and all cases of dispute settled by them. The village headmen and village chiefs became loyal subjects of the British as the years passed and remained loyal during the battle as well. Almost all the Nagas supported the British and took active part in the Battle of Kohima. The British administrators who were employed in the Naga Hills also played a prominent role and because of their good administration, they won the trust and support of the Nagas. This further enhanced a good rapport between them and the Nagas.

Role of the Nagas

Nagas role in the battle was of great importance. Their role in the battle cannot be

ignored, as it was one of the factors which contributed to the winning of the British in the battle. Nagas acted as guides, porters, spies, stretcher-bearers and even dug trenches for the British. They cheerfully gave their service to the British and some of them even gave their life fighting for the British in the battle. Arthur Swinson (1956) states that the Nagas every time did what was demanded by the British from them. He further says: "How many lives were owed to the courage and skill of these remarkable hillmen will never be known; but the figure must certainly run into thousands" (Swinson 1956: 213). Even before the battle began, the British Government sent most of the Naga government servants for intelligence purposes to their villages to report any information they found to the nearest military unit. For instance, at Phiphema, Nagas like Nikhalhu, Zhuikhu and Dr. Nandij acted as British informers by giving informations about the Japanese which were extremely useful. Reports of the Japanese were given to the British by not only the Nagas who worked for the government, but by even ordinary people who noted anything unusual. They even misled the Japanese by giving them wrong information much to the advantage of the British. Hence, the British used the valuable informations provided by the Nagas to the fullest. Many Nagas joined the British Army and fought against the Japanese bravely. They were recruited to Assam Rifles and the Assam Regiment along with the Assamese, Kuki and Lushai Hill men to fight the Japanese. Nagas like "Constable No 47 Razhuholie Angami was reported by the 2nd Division to have been very helpful during the operation which led to the recapture of Kezoma village and was thrice commended by the Army for good work" (Colvin 1994: 37). Constable No 29 Nigurohie and Constable No 18 Dolhucha did very good intelligence work, by keeping in touch with the Southern Angamis and the Patkai range when the Japanese were still in Kohima. Constable Khoyalese Angami, with the assistance of villagers captured three well-armed Japanese agents. Nagas such as Visopi Angami who fought along with the British was severely wounded by the sword of a Japanese officer in a hand to hand struggle, but he managed to get away in spite of great loss of blood. Veheyi, who worked for the British, was captured and shot by the Japanese while on intelligence duty. Saliezhu Angami also died fighting for the British on 17 April 1944 at the age of twenty-one (Iralu 2000: 48).

Nagas were used as porters by the British and porters in hundreds helped the British 23rd Brigade. They carried things for 2nd Division in the attack on Aradura Spur and evacuated the wounded. Some of the Naga villagers were divided into carrying parties and they took heavier equipment for the British soldiers. According to Sergeant Fred Hazell, D. Coy 2nd Norfloks, "Nagas, two or three hundreds I should think. Men, women, young lads and even young girls carrying ammunition and water. There were young girls with box of ammunition on their head tripping along quite gaily. We were staggering along underneath our packs!" (Hart 1998:156). Bisheshwar Prasad also noted that, "Locally recruited Naga porters were outstandingly successful. They were willing, indefatigable, cheerful and amazingly gentle. They did not panic under fire, but it was necessary to keep them out of it because they discontinued their work to dispose of the dead and had a considerable mourning period" (Prasad 1964: 336-337). The Nagas thus carried ammunition, rations, medical supplies and basic necessities of war like rifle oil and flannelette for the British soldiers.

Some of the Nagas acted as guide to the British Government like Constable No. 4

Kelhikhrie Angami. He acted as a guide throughout the battle. The Nagas guided the British patrols to ambush the Japanese. They also guided the wounded British soldiers on 6 April 1944. They guided 80 walking wounded and 100 non-combatants from the Jail Hill and this evacuation was made possible in seven hours because they were there to guide them. Nagas also acted as stretcher-bearers carrying the wounded British soldiers. Certain Naga villages provided labourers to the British. Mao village provided about 100 labourers, Khuzama 200 and Viswema 500. John Colvin mentions that, “Without Nagas help in the evacuation of the wounded British and the Indian troops up and down the sodden hills, the death rate among the Allied battalions would have been much higher” (Colvin 1994: 153-154). Nagas also rescued about twenty British soldiers of whom two were flying officers. They killed some of the Japanese soldiers and captured some and handed them over to the British soldiers. Sixty-five Japanese were killed by the Nagas one of whom was an officer and twenty-nine Japanese were also captured by them (File no. 497, 1944: Nagaland State Archive). They also captured “Fifty-seven I.N.A, Jiffs or enemy agent invariably referred to by the Nagas as Congress Wallahs” (*ibid*). They at one time had the distinction of having captured more Japanese prisoners than the whole of the Fourteenth British Army. They sometimes laid down ground signals which indicated to the Allied aircraft the presence of the Japanese, without being concerned about the British bombing that would burnt their villages to the ground and bring immense suffering to them.

Nagas also acted as interpreters for the British. Mr. A. Kevichusa was one such interpreter for the British. He organised Naga labours for the British in order to carry their load. Apart from him, there were also other Naga interpreters who worked for the British. The Nagas also faced danger for their lives since they helped the British. Though the Nagas were willing to continue their intelligence activities, they were worried about the fate of their villages as well. Nagas who acted as guides to the British were shot down by the Japanese. “Three Naga porters, on the 4th Brigade supply route, were met by a Japanese patrol which was evidently lying up in waiting for them. Their loads were taken, they were beaten up, and left tied to the trees” (Swinson 1956: 174). The Japanese use force to get the help and support from the Nagas. According to the Japanese Divisional War Correspondent, Yukihiko Imai, “As soon as we reached a village we caught the women and children and locked them up. We then asked the menfolk to guides us to the next village, promising to release their families as soon as they had done so. This was the only way we could get to guides or labour to help with the transport” (*ibid* 56). Joshi pointed out that the Nagas “Cheerfully facing torture and death they organised an efficient intelligence system for the services of the allies; they operated tirelessly around, behind and across Japanese lines; they inflicted formidable casualties on the enemy... They cheerfully placed all they had, whether of men or material at the disposal of the British” (Joshi 2001: 58). Many of them died as a result of the battle and some of the Nagas were permanently disabled while some others were wounded.

Reward to the Nagas by the British

Some of the Nagas received reward for their help or service rendered by them to the British. Nagas like Constable Menguzellie Angami and Constable Khruhel Angami were

rewarded with Indian Police Medal (Colvin 1994: 37). “Three Nagas in the regular force received the Military Cross, nine the Military Medal, one the I.D.M.S, and six Naga civilian, M.B.E. Moreover, the villagers of Lazami received a handsome cash reward from the government for the capture of twenty six Japanese soldiers” (Sema 1992: 148). Nagas were also rewarded with cash for rescuing the Air Force flying personnel and even equipment. “A reward of Rs 450/- was paid to the rescue of Lt. Col. W.H. Smith and crew of 9 men of the U.S. Army Corps” (File no. 155, 1943-47: Nagaland State Archive). Likewise “an American aircraft C.46 No. 43-47W58 crashed in the Patkai Range. A reward of Rs 400/- was paid for the rescue of Lieut. Jimmie Fields and three others American airmen involve in the crash” (ibid). The British paid the Nagas in salt for Japanese equipments such as, “1 lb. for a rifle, 7 lb. for a machine-gun and 14 lb. for an officer’s head” (Latimer 2004: 291). There were even cases where some of Nagas refused payments. For instance, British soldier Mountstephen was sent out to Kohima to repair telephone line, and he could not make journey back to the main road. On his trek back to Kohima, he was offered water by a Naga who refused to take payment for his help. He said, “I am Naga, you need water” (Colvin 1994: 45).

The British admired what the Nagas had done for them. British Major-General Grover says, “All the troops are filled with the admiration for these stout-hearted, cheery hill men... They are doing us so very proud that I feel we must at least show our gratitude” (Swinson 1956: 145). Arthur Swinson further commented that the Nagas evacuated the wounded soldiers down the slippery hills with great courage and endurance. “If it weren’t for them, hundreds of men must have died; no European could possibly have taken stretchers over that country. All the troops knew, when they first encountered the Nagas, was that they were head-hunters... But soon they were struck not only by their cheeriness and eagerness to help but by their intelligence” (ibid).

Suffering of the Nagas

During the time of the battle the Nagas suffered lot of hardships at the hands of both the British and the Japanese. Kohima village which was occupied by the Japanese on 4 April 1944 was destroyed by fire before the inhabitants could save their paddy and other household items. It was a scene of bitter fighting for many weeks and villages such as Chedema were completely destroyed during the fighting. The same fate befell Aradura and Chandmari, where not even a house was left standing. The eastern half of Viswema village was blasted by British guns and all the villages along the Indo-Burma road had some shells dropped on them in order to speeden up the departing Japanese. Chizami village was bombed by the British aircraft and many houses were destroyed. Kezoma and Kidima villagers also witnessed the scene of prolonged and bitter fighting and the villagers of Khuzama had to evacuate their village during the battle. In order to do away with the Japanese from the Naga villages, the British conducted air raids. According to the British, “there was a complete understanding between them and the Nagas as to why such measures were necessary to be taken and that the Nagas understood it and took pride in their loyalty to them” (File no.497, 1944: Nagaland State Archive). Naga houses containing paddy were set on fire by the British Army as a measure of denial to the Japanese, and the fire inevitably spread to other houses so that even before fighting

began a good many houses and the greater portion of the paddy stocks were completely destroyed. It was estimated that about “1, 00,000 maunds of paddy were destroyed by fire” (*ibid*). The retreat of the Japanese caused destruction on a vast scale since each village on the line of retreat was defended by the British. Villages after villages were destroyed, bridges were blown up and villages were dug with mines. Many Nagas became prisoners of the Japanese and even in the most trying times fought with the Japanese, with their indigenous weapons such as spear and daos.

The Japanese when they first came to the Naga Hills were ordered to treat the people well and pay for all their supplies. Initially, they carried out these orders by distributing large quantities of worthless Japanese currency and well forged Rs 10/- Indian currency notes among the villagers in return for their food and labour. The treatment of the Nagas by the Japanese at first was friendly. But at a later stage it was not. In order to feed their soldiers and mules the Japanese soldiers required rice in large quantities. Thus, once they had finished off with their supply of food they began to live on the food from the Naga villages as they were unable to get hold of the British supply of food and their own supply was not coming forth. The Japanese killed and ate enormous numbers of chickens, pigs and cattles and even some mithuns (Indian Black Bison) and buffaloes. So complete was the destruction of their livestock that in many villages no chicken or pig could be found. Except for some of the Angami villages where villagers succeeded in hiding their herds of cattle in the deep secluded valley of the Japvo range. Villages on the Japanese line of communication were hit hard and had lost almost all their stocks of food. The Japanese did not even spare the household goods of the Nagas and were extremely destructive. Cooking pots once used were smashed; daos, axes and hoes were collected from the Nagas and thrown away in the jungle or into the rivers. The Japanese used Naga blankets and clothes and they destroyed them after use. Even the salt pan which was used to make local salt was also destroyed by them.

The Japanese forced the Nagas to work as coolies and made them carry heavy loads for long distance. Asoso Yonuo commented that, “The Nagas, who were suspected to be British spies were killed with utmost brutality against the norms of war as set down in the international law” (Yonuo 1992: 146). The Nagas were even tied at night by the Japanese to prevent them from escaping. “Isolated cases of barbarism which seem to be inseparable from the Japanese Army took place. There were even cases of rape, murder and maltreatment” (File no. 497, 1944: Nagaland State Archive). Most of the ill-treatments which the Nagas suffered were from the hands of the “renegade Indian who had accompanied the Japanese and they did not try to hide their political faith and all their acts were carried out in the name of one of the leading political bodies in India, which the Nagas invariably referred to them as ‘Congress’” (*ibid*). John Colvin also pointed out that, “the members of the Indian National Army, the Jiffs (Japanese Indian fighting forces) behaved more disgracefully than the Japanese themselves. All cases of rape reported were found to have been committed by this rabble and not by the Japanese” (Colvin 1994: 35). As the Japanese retreated from the Naga Hills, their discipline was relaxed and “the true nature of the Japanese came out” (File no. 155, 1943-47: Nagaland State Archive). But the Japanese could not continue with their treatment for long as they

were tired, hungry, dispirited and persistently followed by the British.

Loyalty of the Nagas to the British

The Nagas in spite of all the suffering they had endured remained consistently loyal and helpful to the British throughout the battle. “British troops were certainly taken at once for friends and allies, but not so Indian troops. Nagas continued to regard Indian troops with suspicion, as Indians in the I.N.A. were operating with the Japanese and it was almost impossible for them to distinguish between friend and foe where the Indians were concerned. Nagas disliked the I.N.A. more than the Japanese though they said the Japanese were not human beings and must be another kind of animal” (Lambert: 143-144). Almost all the Nagas remained loyal to the British, except for few like Zaphu Phizo and his brother Keviyalie as the Japanese promised that “they would recognise Nagaland as an independent Sovereign State” (Bendangangshi 1993: 49). The Japanese also made great effort in order to get the help of Nagas, especially from the interpreters, policemen and Government officials for intelligence purposes, but all in vain. The Nagas who sided with the Japanese endured hardships, torture and death with the hope that they would be free as before once the Japanese won the battle.

Ursula Graham Bowers, an anthropologist who works for the Pitts-Rivers Museum in Oxford, was in the Naga Hills to study the Nagas in 1939. She was able to maintain friendly relation with the Naga chiefs. During the time of the battle, she collected information of the Japanese, directed the Nagas to ambush the Japanese and also took care of the wounded British soldiers. She stated that during the time of the battle her personal Naga staff asked for leave. Even though Ursula knew them well, she believed that they were unlikely to return. “But they did so, twenty four-hours later, having gone home, made their wills arranged for their families, given their heirloom necklace to their sons, left beads for burial and came back to die if necessary, with their English friend” (Colvin 1994: 35). According to E. T. D. Lambert, “Naga loyalty, particularly of our old enemy Khonoma, had to be seen to be believed” (Lambert 1946: 144). In one instance, Angamis from Kigwema village came and told the British that there were many Japanese in some building few steps away from the village on the other side of the road. The British artillery quickly got the range through an observation plan, but due to inaccuracy in briefing the spotter in the plane, the village was shelled for half an hour instead of Japanese lines. “Fourteen villagers were killed and as many injured, but men of that village continued to come to our lines and give us targets in the area” (*ibid*). According to Jon Latimer (2004), the Nagas were not friendly towards the Japanese, who talked of politics rather than delivering rice, salt and silver like the British.

Commenting on the support and loyalty of the Nagas to the British, Tom Cattle states, “no one could be more faithful than these people who fought in jungle hill against the Japanese and although when the Japs caught them they were tortured and flogged before being killed, they would not betray the British soldiers. They were as someone described the little gentlemen of the jungle” (Cattle: 21). Even C.V. Furer Haimendorf (2004: 29) says, “the Nagas never faltered in their loyalty”, and William Slim (1956: 341) in his book *Defeat into Victory* mentions the loyalty of the Nagas to the British and says, “These were the gallant Nagas whose loyalty, even in the most depressing times of

the invasion had never faltered". C. E. Lucas Phillip also stated that Nagas were devoted to the British and "for whose cause, knowing that the British were their friends, they ran the deadly risks" (Lucas Philip 1966: 9). John Colvin also says, "Irrespective of the tribe or sub-tribe, the record of the Nagas during the Japanese occupation was one of extraordinary loyalty to the British" (Colvin 1944: 35). David Rodney also commented that the Nagas were amazingly loyal to the British during the Japanese invasion.

Reasons for Nagas support to the British

Though the Nagas suffered in the British bombing which were to drive out the Japanese, they continued to support the British without faltering. But the Nagas did not like the Japanese as they had ill-treated and destroyed their livelihood by taking away their livestocks and foods. Unlike the Japanese, the British though they destroyed their paddy house or caused destruction, they were able to replace it or provide relief to the Nagas when they needed it, which the Japanese were unable to do. Thus, throughout the battle the Nagas remained loyal to the British and gave their valuable service to them. There are different reasons or views as to why the Nagas remained loyal to the British. For anthropologist C.V. Furer Haimendorf (2004), the reason for the loyalty of the Nagas was the popularity of the British officers. He states that though Professor Hutton and Mr. Mills are no longer in the Naga Hills, the tradition of friendship they maintained with the Nagas saved many soldiers in the battle. He also points out that Japanese promise of a new order fell on deaf ears as the Nagas were content with the present system of administration and genuinely attached to administrators such as Mills and Charles Pawsey. Asoso Yonuo says, "Nagas put extraordinary labour, showed spontaneous loyalty to the British and helped them in different forms in the hope that the British would not fail to do something for the good of their future" (Yonuo 1992: 147). But for Murkot Ramunny (1988), Charles Pawsey was one of the reasons why the Nagas remained loyal to the British. He says that throughout the war, the Deputy Commissioner, Charles Pawsey, who was later knighted and was awarded Military Cross stayed with the people. He lived in the jungles and gave assistance to the besieged garrison in Kohima. His behaviour at the critical time improved the British administration and evoked the confidence the Nagas had in him.

The belief of Murkot Ramunny is also shared by Arthur Swinson. Swinson was of the opinion that the part played by Charles Pawsey, both directly through his courage and indirectly through his influences, was important and should never be forgotten. Swinson further says, "It is doubtful, however, if the Nagas would have undertaken any of this difficult and dangerous work if it had not been for the extraordinary character of Charles Pawsey the Deputy Commissioner of Kohima" (Swinson 1956: 145). He also adds that Charles Pawsey considered Nagas as his children and in return the Nagas also considered him as their father. The Nagas trusted him completely; they knew that in no circumstances whatsoever his word would be broken. "So, when Mutaguchi's thrust against Kohima began, Nagas remained loyal to the British cause, despite the loss of their homes and territory, despite danger and death" (ibid 146). Another reason for the loyalty of the Nagas was the cautious policy of the British with which they governed the Naga Hills. Apart from this, other factors were the strong personality of the British officers who won

the confidences and respect of the Nagas. Moreover, “The Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills and the political agent of Manipur state were always available to the humblest Naga and patiently listened to their ‘most involved’ and ‘longwinded complaint’” (File no. 497, 1944: Nagaland State Archive). Thus, it was because of “this patience, tolerances and also because the entire tribal dispute are settled by tribal custom that the extra-ordinarily close relation between the administrative head and the people was maintained” (*ibid*).

The loyalty of the Nagas to the British at no time was in question. The personal and the material damages which the Nagas suffered in the military operation were much greater than they had suffered at the hands of the Japanese. The British because of all the things the Nagas did for them felt “it a moral obligation on their part to give back all and more than they had lost, provided their independence is not undermined by pampering” (*ibid*). The British Governor-General in Council recognised the loyalty and heroism of the Nagas in the battle. In order to commemorate the role of the Nagas in the battle, he ordered for the construction of a modern hospital at Kohima, with the provision of travelling dispensaries to serve in the interiors of the district. Naga loyalty to the British therefore did much to bring the Japanese invaders to a halt. Hence, the British said that had the attitude of the Nagas been different the battle might have prolonged, the defeat of the Japanese might have been delayed and the casualties of the British might have been higher or the battle might have taken a different turn.

Conclusion

The Battle of Kohima had both positive and negative effects on the Nagas. The Nagas had to go through a lot of adversity during and after the battle. They suffered from different kinds of diseases leading to loss of lives as well as ill-treatment at the hand of the Japanese and the Indian National Army. They could not lead a normal life in their villages and had to flee from their villages and stay in the forest or in their field house. However, as a result of the battle, isolation of Nagas from the outside world came to end. With the opening and improvement of roads, railways and air links due to military needs, they developed closer networks with the outside world. Nagas also realised the importance of education during the battle as a result of their contact with different people. They realised that education was very important as it would bring them civilization, wealth, power, science, technology and government service. Education, the Nagas believed, would ensure them to have administrators from amongst their own men in their land, which would ultimately ensure self-rule. The English language which was made a common language of the Nagas by the British really helped them. With the knowledge of English language, different Naga tribes could meet, talk and discuss their ideas as well as settle their problems and differences. The formation of Naga Hills District Tribal Council was also one of the results of the battle and this organisation became an important political organisation functioning for the welfare and interests of the Nagas. It also began to work for the formation of the Naga identity.

The help rendered by the Nagas to the British made their fight against the Japanese a little easier. As with the help of the Nagas, they were able to locate the Japanese bases in the Naga Hills and their wounded evacuated. The Nagas helped the British in

carrying their stuff up and down the steep mountains and jungles, guiding them in the jungle, as one wrong turn would get them lost in the jungle. Nagas were there for the British, to take care of them when they were wounded. Nagas role in the Battle of Kohima was therefore of great importance. Different people have given different reasons as to why the Nagas had supported the British. Some attributed to the good administration and popularity of the British officers such as Charles Pawsey, while some others view it as a gesture to the British for expecting something good for their future. The Nagas might have supported the British because of the above-mentioned reasons. But one cannot, at the same time ignore other factors that the British throughout the battle provided the Nagas with food and other basic necessities which the Japanese did not. Moreover, the British did not take away the livelihood of the Nagas by killing their livestock or destroy their household goods like the Japanese did. This can also be one of the reasons for the support of the Nagas to the British. Had the Japanese behaved well with the Nagas and provided them with food and other supplies like the British, the Nagas might have supported them. The Nagas helped the Japanese when they first came to the Naga Hills. But when the Japanese started ill-treating them, killing their livestock and even destroying their household goods when their supplies were not coming forth, the Nagas sided with the British. Eventually, whatever support the Nagas had towards the Japanese started diminishing and all help to them ceased. However, exceptional few such as Zhipu Phizo supported the Japanese during the battle because of their promise to recognise Nagaland as an independent sovereign state if they won the battle. Even when the Japanese promised to recognise Nagaland as an independent sovereign state, very few only sided with them and the majority of the Nagas were on the side of the British.

The Japanese invasion of the Naga Hills provided an opportunity to some of the Nagas to be free from the British rule. The Japanese in order to gain support of the Nagas promised to recognize Nagaland as an independent sovereign state if they won the battle. After the battle, Nagas did long for a separate nation- state for their own people. Zhipu Phizo took up this cause and began to play an important role in Naga politics demanding separate Naga nation-state from the British and the Indian government. When the relationship between the Naga leaders and the Indian government turned worse, Phizo along with other members of Naga National Council went underground and continued to fight for separate Naga nation-state. This demand which began since the Battle of Kohima has gone through different phases, it was being taken up by different factions and still the call for separate land for Nagas persists. This freedom movement led to the genesis and rise of the Naga insurgency which exists till today and works towards the freedom of Nagas from the Indian government. For the Nagas, the Battle of Kohima remained a landmark event in their history. It transformed the Naga society and brought so many changes in their social, political and economic lives. The Battle of Kohima influences the lives of the Nagas and went a long way in shaping the future of today's Nagaland.

The British remembered the help and support rendered by the Nagas to them. The British veterans of the battle founded a trust known as Kohima Educational Trust in 2003 and the trust is devoted to honouring the people of Nagaland by assisting them in the field of education. The trust aims to help the Nagas who fought along with the British in the battle and tries to provide a lasting memorial to the courage and sacrifice of all

those who fought in Kohima. The trust activities include scholarships for needy Naga school children, provision of books for the local schools, seminars for teachers and school children's visit to the United Kingdom. British Flight Lieutenant Ray Jackson was rescued, nursed back to health and helped in escape by a Naga during the battle. As a token of gratitude to the people of Phek who helped him survive after his plane crashed in 1944, he wanted to give something back to the people. The villagers opted for a basketball court. It was completed and inaugurated on 28 March 2008. All these show that the British were grateful to the Nagas for their help and support and still remember them.

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