

TORMENTS AND NIGHTMARES IN TEMSULA AO'S *These Hills called Home: Stories from War Zone*

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Abstract

Temsul AO's works have been epitome of unsolved issues presented in These Hills called Home: Stories from a War Zone. She explores every nook and corner of the oldest unresolved armed conflicts in North-East India. This paper makes an attempt to understand Temsula's poems of new how insurgency enabled the Naga youths in struggling to break the so called bondage of 'foreigners' or alien in their land. This is because of the distant position of Naga's in respect of culture, language, ethnicity and linguistic aspects from other states of India. Mainly they were not happy with the state boundaries married at the time of independence. The outcome of this came in the form of insurgency which caught Naga's in the web of violence with painful experiences. The result is that they started raising their voice of home, identity, nationality and language and kept struggling for these issues.

Paper Identification



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The seven sister states of India are located in Northeast India. The question why have the seven sisters suffered from so much neglect and mass violence which resulted in emerging of various insurgency bodies. The reasons can be many but these states have been out of the mainstream consciousness of heartland India. Who's to be questioned, blamed and who's going to do something better to improve the conditions of these states. The trauma of Northeast at the present scenario in this region compromises of several issues.

These Hills called Home: Stories from a War Zone talks about the lives of the Naga peoples struggling to find a space for themselves in the initial problems of Naga insurgency. The Naga's demand for autonomy started with the dawn of India's independence in 1947. In Temsula's stories, there is an issue of common Naga people who are trapped in the struggle between the State and the Naga ethnic insurgency groups. These stories also through a flood of light on the socio-political circumstances of Nagaland during the period of insurgency and counter-insurgency. The tales included in it underscore the ordinary folks and their sufferings inflicted upon the innocent people by different anti-social outfits for

which parties are responsible. Militants and the security forces. As we find that the impact of western education and Christianity led to gradual change in their outlook. All the stories of Temsula AO's are mainly concentrate on the issues of self-realization, human right, the crisis of identity and socio-cultural development at large.

The Naga is a generic term that includes many tribes and in these tribes each has its own language and traditions of origin. Nagas remained aloof from the outside world even after Indian independence. The total eight States of North-East India that constitute the total part of North-East India, have gone through many historical, political and cultural changes over a great period of time. But the major changes came when the Naga has their interaction with outside world during the two world wars. This part of India nation has a large number of diversities in cultural and traditional context. It represents its own identity. English language was the result of British Empire's rule. Britishers pledged an important role in popularizing English in North-Eastern region.

Temsula AO presents a glimpse of the facts mixed with fictional stories in her collection, *'There Hills called Home: Stories from War Zone'*. The author narrates the plight and misery of these unheard voices. She describes the picture of Nagaland where common people suffer in an atmosphere of violence and conflicts. It further reflects the impact Naga insurgency and its consequences. In this collection, there are then stories and in first story 'The Jungle Major' she narrates the spreading of militancy and its consequences for the natives. In this story Punaba, the protagonist involved himself in under ground activities. So, Punaba lived in jungle most of the time. But his wife on the other hand remains silent on the conform with army. Kathila knows that some villagers, to whom the underground leaders belonged mere punished severely by the security forces. In this regard

she further mentioned that the houses were ransacked by the security forces, the grain in their Bains was brunt and people themselves were herded into camps away from the village and kept in virtual imprisonment inside areas fenced in by bamboo stockades. This form of group incarceration was in famous 'grouping' of villages which the Naga hated and dread even more than bullets. (AO,3)

Likewise, in the next story, 'The Last Song' taken for the analysis the author describes a young girl Apenyo, who was brutally gangraped by the personnel of the armed forces. The condition of women was become more pathetic in that period of Nagaland. This story further depicts the terror of armed forces which mainly targeted women and children because of political motives. In one of the operations Apenyo became the victim of Army Captain's anger; "The young captain was raping Apenyo while a few soldiers mere watching the act and seemed to be waiting for their turn" (28) So, the author in the story 'The Last Song' shows her concern that how women and children became pray to the anguish of insurgency and country insurgency. It led to the traumatic condition and mental agony of the people of Nagaland.

In her next story 'The Curfew Man'. Temsula looks at the condition of innocent villagers who were made prisoners in their own village. The protagonist of the story Saterba was a Constable in Assam police. He left his job because of his broken knee and to survive he became the informer of the army. This job also could not provide him any peace in life. He remained in a State of mentally disturbed person. Now he could not decide his position between the armed forces's man or underground forces's. Now he was searching for his real self. He was a man of lost identity and status in his own land. It was the condition of all the Naga people in their own people and villages. They mere forced to live in a strange environment. This reflects the most inhuman atrocities inflicted upon the Nagas by Indian Army during the counter insurgency operations. This

story presents an indirect resistance to the atrocities of Indian army. In the previous story, *'The Last Song'* Apenyo also asserts herself and shows a resistance in these words.

Apanyo stood her ground. She sang on, oblivious of the situation as if an unseen presence was guiding her. Her mother, standing with the congregation, saw her daughter singing her heart out as if to withstand the right of the guns with her voice raised to God in heaven. She called out to her to stop but Apenyo did not seem to hear or see anything.

This shows a kind of dehumanization of the ethnically different tribal people. It means Temsula AO narrates one of the subtlest issue of North-East region. Temsula also shows great confusion and chaos of the Naga Society. In the next story taken up for the story 'An Old Man Remembers' tells about Shathi and Imli who were engaged as soldiers and finally ended their life at jungle. Their life remains severe painful and pathetic. Every type of better memories of jungle life harms their mind all the time:

We waited, but there seem to be no sign of life, so me stood up cautiously and peeped through the chinks in the bamboo wall. Five bodies lay sprawled on the mud floor now turned black with their blood. We turned to each other with shock and disbelief (23).

They were compelled by the different circumstances and situations in which Shathi and Imli became the members of these underground outfits. As a member of this underground group they also inflicted atrocities on the common people. Sometimes they think and plan to leave this life their houses and villages mere brunt. In this kind of situations the separatist movement show its power relations among the insurgent groups members which makes the member exist not only difficult but even impossible as Michael Foucault says, "As soon as there is a power relation, there is the possibility of resistance". (153)

Temsula's concerns are always political and cultural which are in her collection of short stories 'These Hills called Home' stories from a War Zone. So, the story of this collection describes the confrontation between the armed forces and the Naga underground groups. Naga insurgency has a long history often and before independence as they formed a club in 194 and called it as Naga Club. But in AO's stories we found the account of the post- independence conditions. In the close study of these stories we found that people were in terror and they had to live in war like situations. There were rapes, murders, mental tortures and molestation in every part of Naga area and even in Assam and other parts of North-East region. But the native's still have a kind thrust of freedom from political trauma and the desire which cannot be fulfilled in the life of common people. The unstable political conditions in Nagaland snatched away the real dreams of the young generation like Shashi and Imli:

They had shared so much; played together as children, attended the village school together and left it at the same time. They had slept in same youngmen', morun, wooed young girls from the same young women', dormitory and even got married within the same week! (*An old Man Remembers*)

Thus, the children who often witnessed different experiences together also witnessed the violence, torture, agony and war in Nagaland. They became the victims of the community violence and the conflicts between the underground groups. Temsula in her stories expressed the simple and innocent people's concerns which hampered their growth and put them in a sea of terrors and nightmares. These were suppressed because of external as well as internal issues and problems that was the cause of political instability.

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