

SENSING THE PRESENCE OF WOMAN IN THE MAN'S WORLD THROUGH TEMSULA AO'S *THESE HILLS CALLED HOME: STORIES FROM A WAR ZONE*

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ABSTRACT

*For too long the North-Eastern states of India has been the epicenter of conflicts. The massive agitations and political unrest left every native inhabitant quivering in one way or the other. Among all the eight states that frames the North-East, Nagaland is considered to be the epitome of insurgency. Canvassing the picture of her homeland Nagaland, Temsula Ao penned down ten intriguing short stories in her novel *These hills called Home: Stories from a war zone*. She is one of the prominent voices in English Literature to soar from the North East. Her stories brims with uniqueness and brings forth the looming tribulations which the characters keeps combating. The gender disparity in a Naga society is crucial as it is deeply patriarchal. Taking into consideration two short stories from her collection, this paper attempts to explore the voices of audacious women who comb at and survive toxic masculinities responsible for their subjugation in their society. Soaked in patriarchy, it leaves a very little space for the women to spore. The feminine voices are suppressed under misogynistic male dominance. The paper strives to use feminist theories to deconstruct the various facets of a woman's life. It raises questions on the standpoint of women and their tussle with the privileged men of the society. Ao consciously involves the women characters in the war and shows how meticulously they tackle power and force. The presence of a woman in a society is inevitable but her roles remain confined to the conventional structuring of a meek daughter, tolerant wife, loving mother and most importantly as the torchbearer of the societal norms. She cannot violate the fringes of social chronology and choose to become a mother first and later a wife. Undoubtedly, the women are highly respected in the Naga tradition but it comes wrapped in the bottlenecked validations of men who keeps their claws dipped in prejudices against their opposite sexes.*

KEYWORDS: *Dominance, Gender, Masculinity, Patriarchy, Woman*