

**Indian Fiction in English**  
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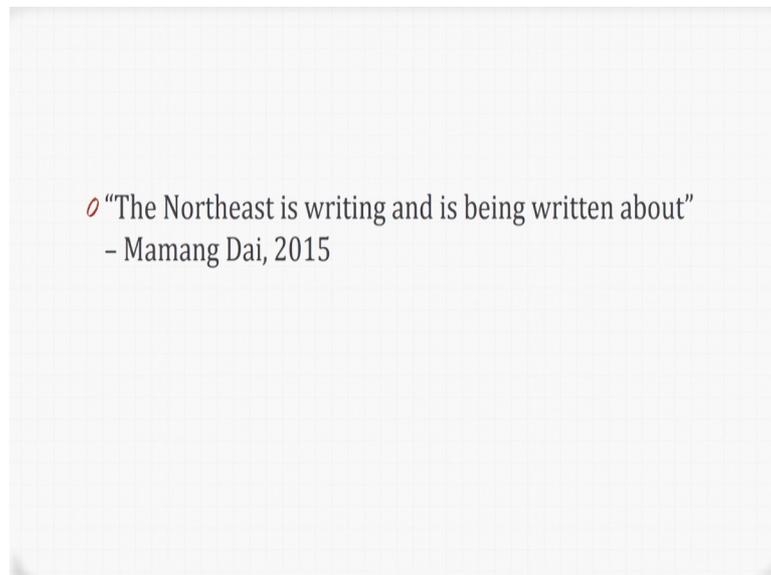
**Module - 10**

**Lecture - 35**

**Writings in English from the Northeast: Reading Temsula Ao**

Hello everyone. Welcome to yet another session of the NPTEL course titled Indian Fiction in English. Today's lecture is titled Writings in English from the Northeast: Reading Temsula Ao. We begin this lecture by giving a background to the writings in English produced from the Northeast and we focus especially on the writer Temsula Ao. There are 2 short story collections which are briefly discussed as part of this lecture.

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In 2015 Mamang Dai, one of the most known, one of the best-known writers from the Northeast remarked that, the Northeast is writing and is being written about. So, it is a very recent phenomenon and it also needs to be kept in mind that the writings from the Northeast began to emerge and began to acquire visibility only in the recent decades.

So, the initial flowering of the Indian English Fiction which we noticed in the earlier decades, from the 1930s onwards, or the second coming, or this watershed event, Midnight's Children which had a major impact on the writings produced from India from the 1980s onwards. These events did not have a major bearing on the kind of productions that came out from the Northeast.

We need to look at this kind of writing, though this is in English, from a different perspective altogether. This lecture is all about trying to showcase the different context from which the writings from Northeast have emerged in. And in these last few decades, especially from the late 2000s onwards, we find a major impact of emerging literatures of the Northeast region.

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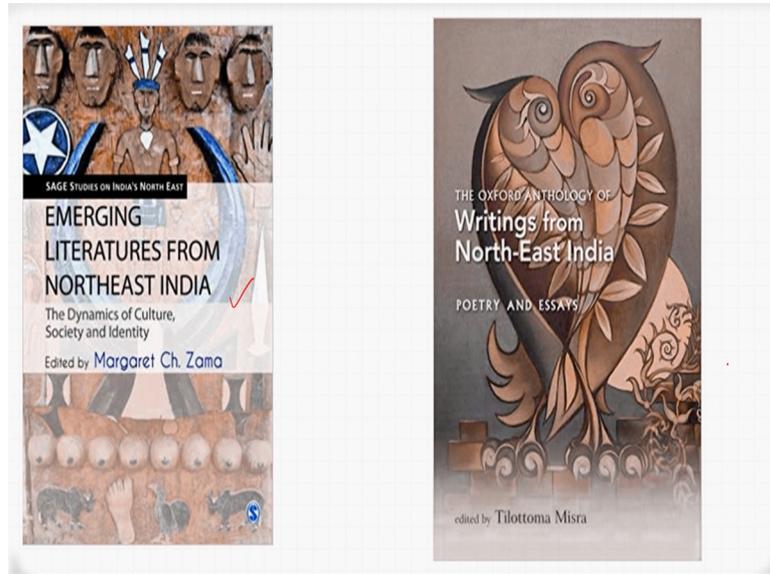
The term emerging is used significantly in most discussions about the writings from the Northeast region. And these writings are available both in English and also in the vernacular tongue. There are also number of translations which are coming out in the recent times. And many critics and writers from the Northeast region and also the outsiders, as they feel that these, the last few decades, the last few years have been instrumental, in making such works accessible for the first time to the rest of the world.

In the context of the absence of authentic histories of most communities in the Northeast. We also find creative writers taking the role of cultural historians to provide alternate histories. So very often than not, we find the fictional writings from the Northeast being read as alternate forms of history as well. And there is also a different context from which we can look at these discussions.

There is a prevalent oral culture which is part of most communities and tribal communities of the Northeast and there is also a print culture which is associated with the modern kinds of writing. An amalgamation of these, both the oral culture and the print culture. It is also

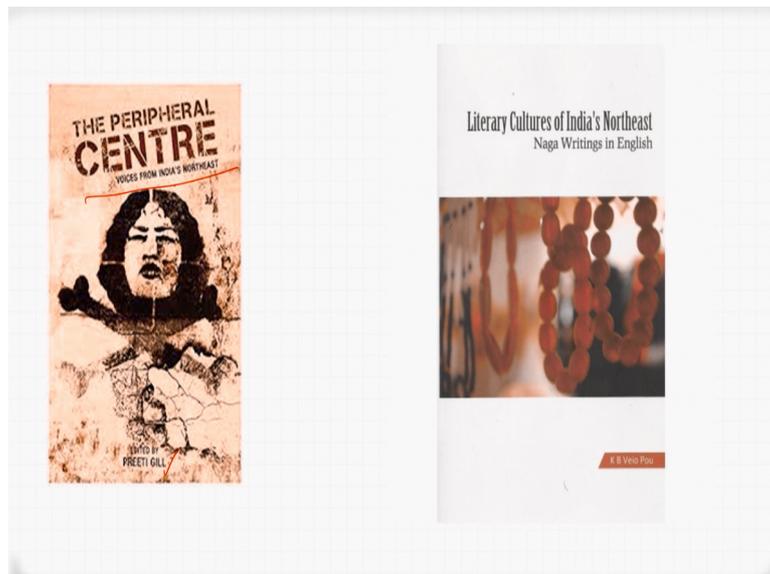
important to understand the spirit of what it means to write about the Northeast or how to define and access the Northeast. Some of the important works of the recent times;

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Which have been instrumental in redefining and reshaping the perspectives towards this kind of writing, include their work edited by Margaret Ch. Zama, Emerging Literatures from Northeast India. Another anthology edited by Tilotoma Misra, The Oxford Anthology of Writings from Northeast India which consists of poetry and essays.

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And collection of essays edited by Preeti Gill, The Peripheral Centre, Voices from India's Northeast, one of the recent works on literary criticism, Literary Cultures of India's Northeast, Naga Writings in English.

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# The Northeast

- o Eight different states ✓
  - o Homogeneity, sweeping statements
  - o Misconception and misrepresentation by outsiders
- o Commonly associated with terror, insurgency, violently explosive
  - o "Let media stop defining the NE by the conflicts going on there. Let media focus on ordinary people and their lives. Let exoticisation of the NE stop" (Easterine Iralu, 2004)
- o Cut off from the nation – a place of bewilderment and external mythmaking
  - o Remote geographical location – away from the 'centre'
  - o Less exposure in the publishing and consumer world

These are some of the works which have tried to bring together the new writings, the commentaries on the new writings, and the new perspectives which will also present these new writings in the context of the contemporary. Talking about the Northeast, it is not a term that signifies homogeneity as we often tend to use it. It comprises of 8 different states but nevertheless there is a certain homogeneity and a number of sweeping statements which are associated with the Northeast; as if it is 1 geographical political entity.

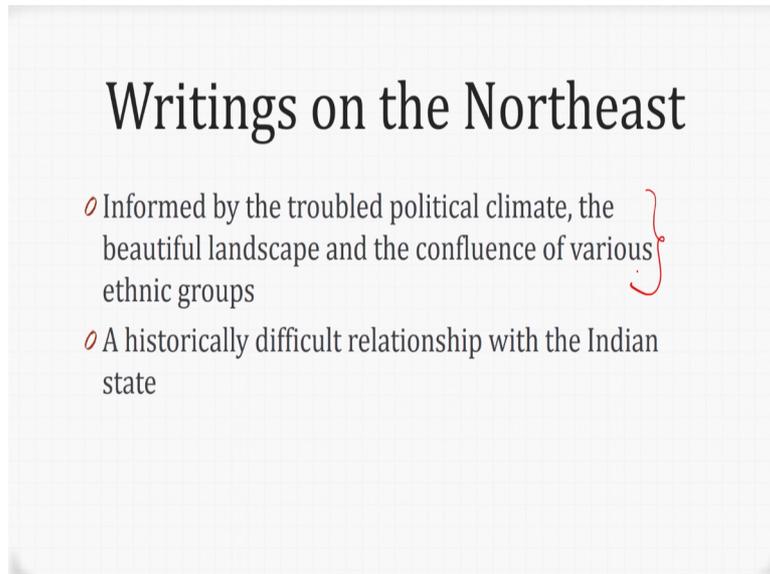
And the defining of the Northeast is also dominated by the misconception, misrepresentation by outsiders the ones who are clueless about what the Northeast is about, but still claim to have access to the truth, to the lived realities which are inside. And this area, the Northeast is commonly associated with terror, insurgency and is seen as a violently explosive territory as Eastern Iralu, one of the writers pointed out in 2004.

Let media stop defining the Northeast by the conflicts going on there. Let media focus on ordinary people and their lives. Let exoticisation of the Northeast stop. So, the only image available of the Northeast for public (cons), for wide consumption, outside of the Northeast in the mainland. It is that of, either of, one of the explosive territory or of an exotic remote location.

And this place is a geographically and politically, it is seen as being cut off from the nation. It is considered as a source of, a place of bewilderment and external myth-making. And this could partly be due to the remote ways in which this area is located. It is away from the political and cultural and geographical centre. It could also be due to the less exposure in the

published and consumer world. Which also dominates certain image making and certain kinds of stereotypical notions. The writings on the Northeast also informed by;

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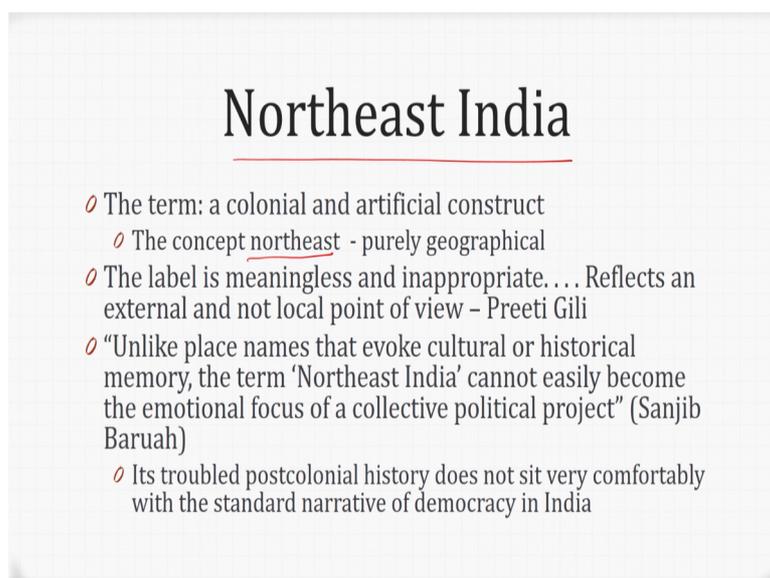


## Writings on the Northeast

- Informed by the troubled political climate, the beautiful landscape and the confluence of various ethnic groups
- A historically difficult relationship with the Indian state

This troubled political climate, the beautiful landscape where, which is hallmark of the almost, the entire Northeast and the confluence of various ethnic groups. And this has led to not really a factual kind of a representation but this has led to mostly a stereotypical and an exotic representation of the Northeast. And in a postcolonial sense, the difficult relationship that the Northeast shared with the Indian state, the historical nature of those relationships that also had a major impact on the limited perspectives which are available on looking at the Northeast.

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## Northeast India

- The term: a colonial and artificial construct
  - The concept northeast - purely geographical
- The label is meaningless and inappropriate. . . . Reflects an external and not local point of view - Preeti Gili
- "Unlike place names that evoke cultural or historical memory, the term 'Northeast India' cannot easily become the emotional focus of a collective political project" (Sanjib Baruah)
- Its troubled postcolonial history does not sit very comfortably with the standard narrative of democracy in India

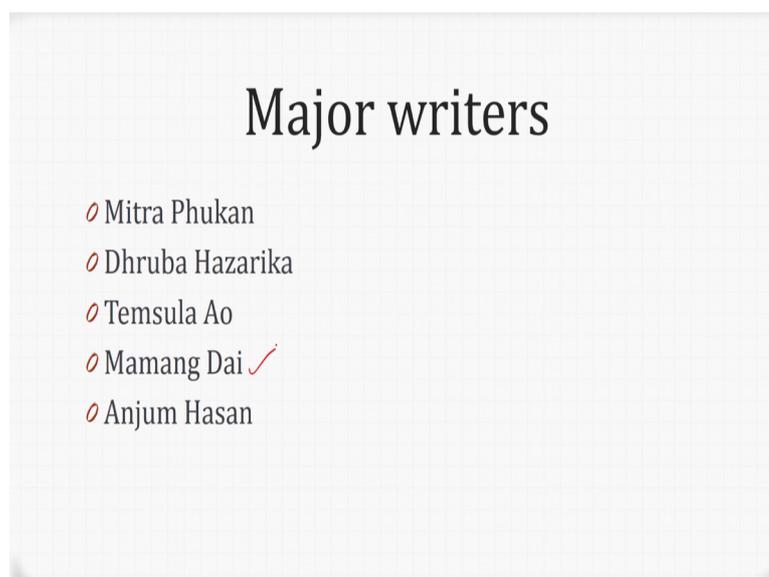
The term Northeast India has been much contested. This term has been dismissed by some of the writers, activists and academics from the Northeast as a colonial, an artificial construct. This term the concept of Northeast. They argue that it is a purely geographical concept. It is like in the far East or the Middle East where the defining happens not from the inside but from the outside.

And this label Preeti Gili also points out, it is a meaning less and inappropriate label. It also reflects an external and not local point of view. So, it is bound to be limited in multiple ways. Sanjib Baruah also held the opinion that, unlike place names that evoke cultural or historical memory, the term Northeast India cannot easily become the emotional focus of a collective political project.

So, there are a number of writers and contemporary thinkers who have begun to identify the limitations of using this term Northeast. Baruah also by extension points out that, the trouble postcolonial history that the Northeast shares with the Indian state. It really do not sit very comfortably with the standard narrative of democracy in India which also forces the writings about the Northeast and the representations of the Northeast to be outside the purview of what the mainstream literature, the main cause of literature usually deals with.

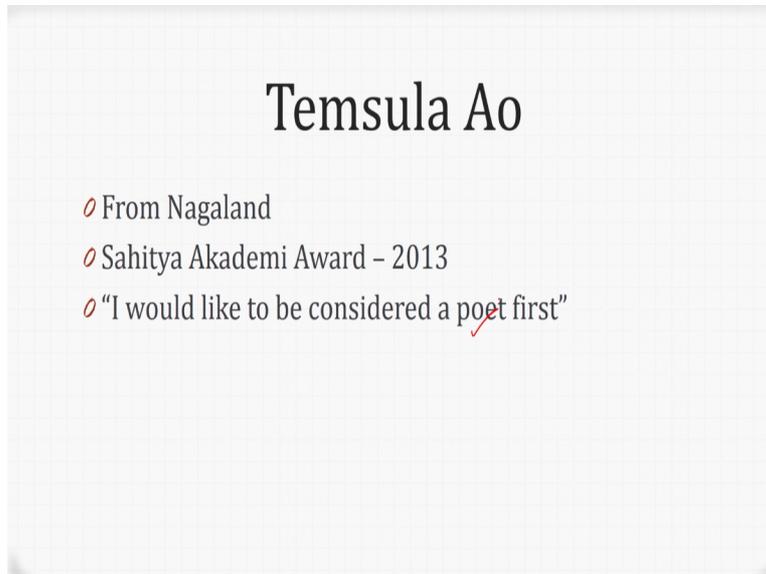
There are however of late a few writers who really made it big who have got visibility of the national scene such as:

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Mitra Phukan, Dhuruba Hazarika, Temsula Ao, Memang Dai and Anjum Hasan. Some of them have also gone to win Ronaldo Awards like Memang Dai.

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In this lecture we focus on the writings by Temsula Ao. Temsula Ao is from Nagaland. She won the Sahitya Akademi Award in 2013. Though today we are looking at her fictional writings she is of the opinion that she would like to be considered as a poet first. It is also said that her best work has come out in the form of poetry. We will first take a look at a collection of stories by Temsula Ao which is called, These Hills Called Home.

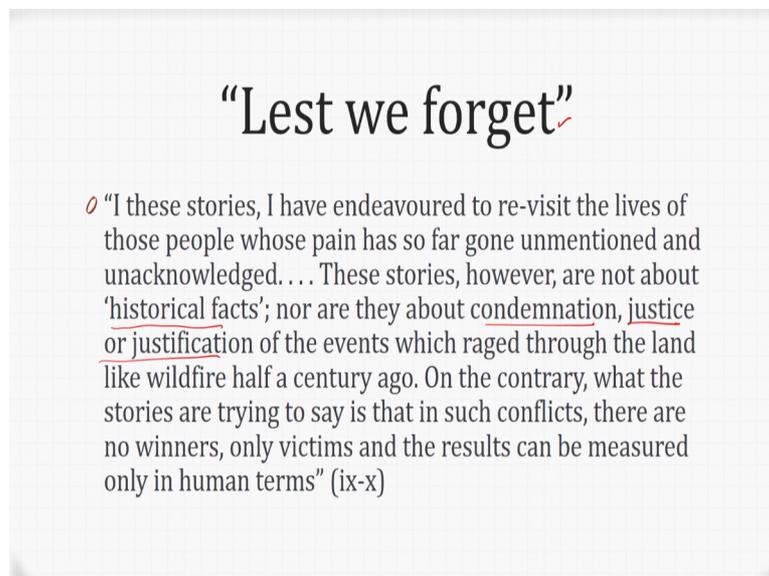
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It also bears a subtitle, Stories from a War Zone. And this is a collection of 10 Stories titled The Jungle Major, Suvhaba, The Last Song, The Curfew Man, The Night, The Pot Maker, Shadows and Old Man Remembers, The journey and A New Chapter. As we noted earlier we

can see here that these are stories about ordinary men and women. The titles also imply that. This work has also been dedicated for those who know what we have done to asses and this in that sense could be seen as a typical postcolonial narrative of resistance.

This was published by Zubaan which was earlier Kali for Women. And Zubaan also encourages these publications of alternate narratives and alternate histories which would provide a counter narrative to the dominant forces of Indian Writing in English that we had been talking about. As the subtitle of this collection implies, Stories from a war zone. These stories were born out of the conflicting period in Nagaland mainly in the 1960s and 1970s. There is a prefatory section before the stories begin which Temsula Ao has chosen to title as;  
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Lest we forget. I read to you an excerpt from this preface which would also give us a sense of the way in which these stories and these histories have been located. I read to you this excerpt. In these stories, I have endeavoured to re-visit the lives of those people whose pain has so far gone unmentioned and unacknowledged. These stories, however, are not about historical facts, nor are they about condemnation, justice or justification of the events which raged through the land like wildfire half a century ago.

On the contrary, what the stories are trying to say is that in such conflicts, there are no winners, only victims and the results can be measured only in human terms. In the same preface she also gives a context for these stories.

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## Context

- o “Many of the stories in this collection have their genesis in the turbulent years of bloodshed and tears that make up the history of the Nagas from the early fifties of the last century, and their demand for independence from the Indian state”
- o [They] try to capture the ambience of the traditional Naga way of life

Many of the stories in this collection have their genesis in their turbulent years of bloodshed and tears that make up the history of the Nagas, from the early 50s of the last century, and their demand for independence from the Indian state. These stories try to capture the ambience of the traditional Naga way of life. So, there are 2 things which inform the context of most of these stories.

Some of them have a very predominant engagement with the violent history of the region. And some of them also try to capture the ambience of traditional Naga way of life. And as we noted earlier, in the absence of authentic histories, in the absence of visible forms of histories, we can engage with these documents, these narratives as historical narratives and as historical documents as well.

There are some significant short stories in this collection of 10 stories. And 3 of them we find having an important, a very different kind of a focus on the female characters. And the individuals here also become very very important. Though the stories are presented in the backdrop of the war zone, in the backdrop of the many violent happenings which dominate the region, we find that there is a humanness. There is a normal say which comes through these tellings. In a story titled The Jungle Major;

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# Short Stories

## o The Jungle Major

o A woman saves her husband from the hands of soldiers through her presence of mind

## o The Curfew Man

o Wife helps her husband find a suitable job for himself though it eventually cannot favour him

## o The Night ✓

o A young girl who has strong decision for a good upbringing of her children, though she is neglected by the society

We find a woman saving her husband from the hands of soldiers through her presence of mind. Here what becomes important in the plot line is not the major event which is related to violence, which is related to the war zone. But what becomes important is the presence of mind and the quality of the individual which emerges as being more powerful than the situation itself.

In Curfew Man we find another powerful female character where the wife helps the husband to find a suitable job for himself. Though eventually it really cannot win any favour for him. We find the female characters getting caught in these situations in spite of themselves. We also find that Temsula Ao has been able to show rather skillfully, how the trauma is more tragic, how the trauma comes down more heavily on women, than perhaps on men.

Not to say that the trauma had affected women more than the men but it affected them in variant degrees and these experiences have a dominant gender difference in their lives. In the story That Night, we have a protagonist as a young girl. She has made a strong decision for a good upbringing of her children though she herself is neglected by the society. And I find the story particularly impressive because it does talk about the future.

It does talk about this ray of hope which is there, the ambition which is there in spite of the situations within which these characters are fraught. So, there is a certain humanness, there is a certain ordinariness and a normalcy which Temsula Ao is trying to bring into her short stories. She is able to bring into the many narratives and which I believe also has the power to transcend the many exotic violent narrations about this region.

I also now invite Swetha. One of our students to share a few things from another short story collection of Temsula Ao titled Laburnum of My Head. I hope that this will also give you an entry to talk about some kind of an introduction to engage with other works produced from the Northeast, to engage with other writers who belong to the Northeast. I also encourage you to be more familiar with different perspectives and different regional inputs like this which also feed into and which also get more energy in return from this fast body of writing now known as Indian Fiction in English. Thank you.

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## Laburnum for My Head -Temsula Ao

I will be talking about Temsula Ao who is a Northeastern author and one collection of stories that she has written called Laburnum for My Head. Ao was born in Assam in 1945 in October.

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### Temsula Ao

- Born in October 1945
- Studied in Nagaland and Assam
- Fulbright Fellow at the University of Minnesota
- Taught at North Eastern Hill University (NEHU) since 1975, Professor of English



And she grew up mainly in Nagaland. Her parents died when she was very young and she grew up in Nagaland. She studied mainly in Nagaland through 2, with the help of 2 missionaries who funded her education. And later received her masters from Assam, came down to Hyderabad at The Centre of English and Foreign languages and a teaching degree there.

And went back to Shillong where she taught at the North Eastern Hill University and where she is still taught very recently and she retired a few years ago. She was a professor of English and she is also the dean for the department of Humanities and Social Sciences. In between her teaching stint she was a (()) (16:51) fellow at the University of Minnesota for, yes for 2 years.

This is a very bare-bones review of her. But oh yes! I am sorry, she was also the director for the Northeastern zone of Cultural Centre and that is a fairly high post in the Government where there they go around the officials rather go around collating cultural evidences, curating folk songs, folk dances, legends, folklore, things like that. And I think, she was an officer for nearly 5 years according to my notes. Right. These are her main works.

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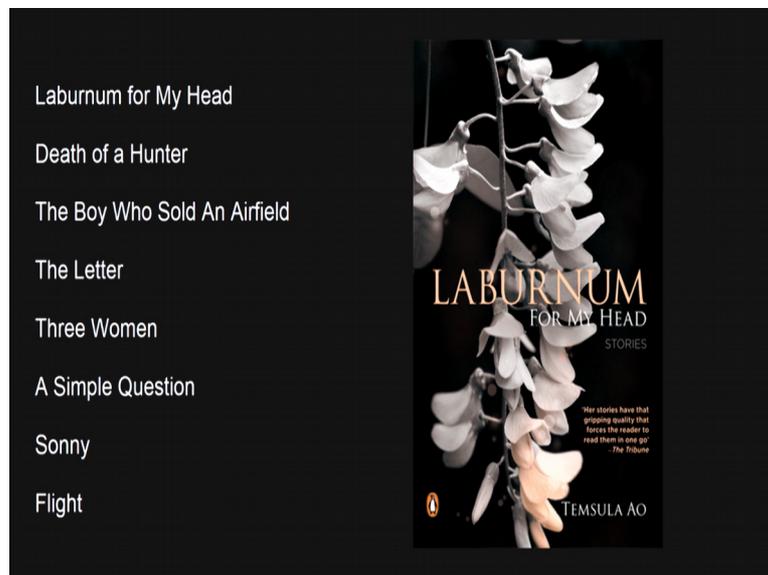
She has not written much not in the conventional sense of much at least. The Ao Naga Oral Tradition was her first compilation of folklore from her own area. These Hills Called Home: Stories From a War Zone, deals with Naga, deals with the situation in Nagaland as it was when she knew it. And Laburnum for My Head is her most recent one; well it was in 2009 and it won the Sahitya Academy Award in 2013.

But interesting These Hills called Home have received more attention, critical attention as such than this one, even though this is an award-winning collection. She is focused, she is said that she personally prefers poetry and she likes to be considered a poet rather than authoress. And she has written 1 2 3 4 yes 5 collections of poems. And she also says that she considers songs and poetry to be very similar.

So, it is alright she interchanges the 2 quite frequently. Ao studied English literature all her life and she is also a professor of English. And she has written exactly one critical essay as such and that is on Henry James and it is called Henry James's Quest for an Ideal Heroine. But it has received absolutely no attention and there are no copies available on the internet. So, I suppose she started out there and realise that she was not receiving much attention and came back to documenting Naga folklore.

Because if you see the dates there for the poetry in 92-2007, she was the cultural officer, the one I mentioned from 92-97. So, she possibly, these 2 sections interrupt quite overlapped quite a bit. Right.

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This is the book I have read and this is what we trying to confine my presentation to. Laburnum for My Head is a collection of short stories. It is 8 stories in the book. The titles of that. It is the very short stories, the very easy to read, the not interconnected in anyway and the very simple as well. So, the first story Laburnum for My Head is about a woman called Lentina who lives in Nagaland, who lives in a fairly upper middle class setting you might say, although Ao never specifies that.

You just glean all this when you are reading the book. Because she has a car and she is the only one in the village who is well-off in comparison to others. She knows how to read and write while everybody else needs to use their thumbprints. It is things like that. Right, she grows up with this woman Lentina, she grows up with the desire to have a laburnum tree in her garden because she is always been captivated by the yellow flowers and all her efforts at trying to grow one of these trees fails.

And her family thinks she is obsessed with the laburnum tree and quite openly make fun of her for it. And then Ao very quickly kills off Lentina's husband in the matter of 2 lines or so. She said that he dies of some mysterious disease. And that really is not so important as is the fact that, it is only at her husband's funeral that Lentina releases what she is going to do to get her laburnum tree.

She decides to buy a section of the cemetery. And she decides to plant a laburnum tree there, when she is alive. And once it blossoms and once it grows into a full-fledged tree. She wants to be buried underneath it. And this is what she does or proceeds to do with the help of her trusted driver. And her family thinks she is crazy. She has 3 sons and 3 daughters-in-law and all of them think she is obsessed with laburnum trees.

But she goes ahead and does it anyway. And as the tree grows Lentina grows older and older and closer to death. But she is resolved not to die until she is seeing the tree blossom at least once. And this she does. So, the moment the tree blossoms the driver takes her to see the tree and 2 days later or so, she passed away in her sleep. And she, oh! interestingly yes. That section of land that she has bought, she gives it over to the cemetery on the condition that there will be no tomb stones erected there, only plants will be grown in lieu of tomb stones of course.

So that you have a very colourful spectacle. The laburnum tree is the main focus in the cemetery. That is the main story that I intended to focus upon. But there are a few more that I have read that I might keep referring to. One is Death of a Hunter and then The Letter, then A Simple Question. Death of a Hunter is I might not do the story justice if I explain it. But I will give you a very bare overview of it.

It is about a man who lives in a village, who is a primary school teacher. Except he is the most renowned hunter in the village. The story opens with him intending to kill a boar; that has been devastating all the rice fields for nearly 3 years now. And he starts remembering his past hunting exploits and he dwells upon one in particular, where the government ordered him to kill a rogue elephant and he did because the government left him no choice.

But he did not accept the governments (pay), he accepted the government's payment but he did not accept the gun they gave him because he felt that it would be a kin to selling his soul to people he did not hold any water with. Then he goes ahead and he kills the boar and except the boar's ghost or memory haunts him until he makes an offering of his own hair to the spirit to obese it and the hauntings stop.

That is, it does not sound very well when put together but it reads much nicer; I can assure you. The Letter is a nicer, it is a shorter story but it is very poignant. It is about again another village in Nagaland that is being pulled apart by both government, by both the Indian army and by underground quote unquote rebel forces in Nagaland. And the people are caught. They need to pay taxes to these underground forces, they need to co-operate with the army.

They periodically get questioned interrogated and beaten up by both sections and they are not very happy about this. And there is one man who is trying to make ends meet very much. He is trying to give his son a good education. He is trying to keep his wife in good health. He is also trying to feed himself. It is a lot going on. And what he does is he acts as an informer for the rebels upon the government.

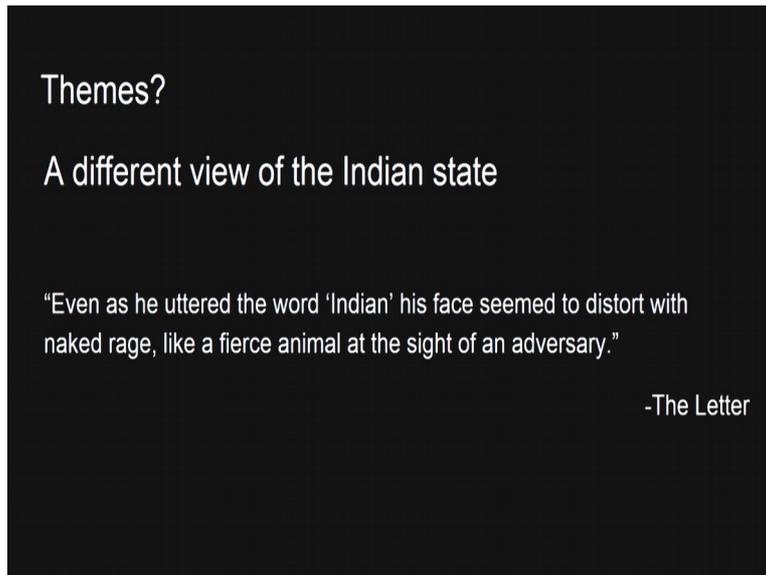
And at the end nobody gets to knows about this until the very end when they kill him because he is an underground force, so to speak. And he is being demanding higher and higher taxes from the village. And the people who kill him are 3 young brushmen in the village. And they kill him and then they go through his pockets and they look at the letter and they realise and they look.

They find a letter in his pocket that says he was trying to fund his son's university fees and you know once that he would be able to get some money in a week or so. And it is that one week in which he terrorises the village asking for more money. And they realise that he was actually a villager from some other village but who was struggling just as they are. A Simple

Question I will elaborate if necessary. I have not made too many references to it. But this, all the stories are very much like this.

They deal with ordinary people, with common people, not with, there is no grandeur reference to the army, as this saviour or as this heroic force that comes in liberating people from dark forces or anything of that sort.

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Themes, I do not know if you can call them themes as such. These are just things you see when you read. I do not think I would categorise them as themes but for want of a better word, I will with the addition of a question mark. A different view of the Indian state is, I have said this, the army is not a salvation of any sort. The villagers hate the army equally seem to sympathise a bit more with the rebels because they are from villages that are very much like their own.

And when one of the rebels is beating up a villager for not paying the tax, that the man says, well I needed to send the fees so that my son can sit in an exam and it is a civil service exam. And the rebel leader hears that and he says, why are you paying for your son to be part of the Indian government. It is the government that is depressing us and it is even as he uttered the word Indian his face seemed to distort with naked rage, like a fierce animal at the site of an advisory.

And you would have killed the man simply because he was helping his son get into the Indian government, if it had not been for the quick wittedness of another villager.

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“Whichever village allowed the setting up of army camp became prime suspects in the eyes of the underground, and, as a form of punishment, were taxed double the amount. Resisting the coming of the army on the other hand was not an option because then the government itself would initiate measures to punish the un-cooperative village...”

-A Simple Question

This comes up in A Simple Question. Whichever village allowed the setting up of an army camp became prime suspects in the eyes of the underground and as a form of punishment were taxed double the amount. Resisting the coming of the army on the other hand was not an option because then the government itself would initiate measures to punish the un-cooperative village.

It goes on say that the government, the Indian government who is supposed to protect the state would make the people of the village work without food or without wages at menial labour, you know levelling hills and clearing roads and things like that. And if the villagers still continue to resist then they would quite simply burn down the granaries and drive the villagers away into the forest. And this is something the Indian Army does.

So, the villages have very little sympathy for them. But they are living in a very precarious position because they try and keep peace with both the army and the rebels, in all of these stories. And it is also to be noted that this is in the main focus of these stories. All of this is taken for granted. And it is like this is all the mentioned there is of the army and of the hardships the people undergo with. It has been a way of life so long that Ao seems to normalise it quite a bit.

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## Identity

"Previously, he, the hunter had been in control all the time and chosen what and when to kill; but it was not so with the huge elephant lying dead before them. The prey had been 'allotted' to him."

"What they (the government) failed to understand was that Imchanok did not want to be obliged to them beyond accepting payment for services rendered....If he took the gun from the government, he surmised, he would forfeit his freedom of choice."

- Death of a Hunter

Identity is another thing that you can sort of callout from the readings. It is not there in obvious sense of the word. Previously, he, the hunter had been in control all the time and chosen when, what and when to kill. But it was not so with the huge elephant lying dead before them. The prey had been allotted to him. This is the death of a hunter, when he realises that he is killing at the government's insistence.

And it also goes on to describe that a true Naga hunter has, takes pleasure in his kill because he is killing for the necessity of it and not simply for the pleasure of it. And he describe how a hunt goes on, he says you wait, you lay and wait, you lay traps, you wait for the animal to show up sometimes it is days, sometimes it is hours and then you take careful aim and you might perhaps say a little prayer hoping to be forgiven for killing the animal and then you kill the animal.

But it was not so with this this one. He says he felt none of this when he was killing a prey that was allotted to him. And then when the government gives him his cash reward and a new gun; Iman Chok who is the hunter does not accept the gun as I have already said. Because he does not want to be obligated to the government and also, he does not want this to become a regular thing.

He does not want his, I will say identity but I do not quite mean it. His identity as a hunter to be co-opted so entirely by the government. So, he does not think himself as a hunter and as Iman Chok in 2 different ways they are one and the same.

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## Nature

"...the phenomenon stood out as a magnificent incongruity in the space where man tries to cling to a make-believe permanence, wrenched from him by death."

"... (the laburnum tree) is ever alive and unchanging in its seasonal cycles..."

Nature is again, it is something that is so prevalent that I do not think it should be classified as a team, but for want of themes in general I will put it down as one. This is from the first story Laburnum for My Head. Ao talks about or rather this is Lentina describing the graveyard at first. I am sorry this not Lentina, Ao describing the graveyard with the laburnum tree in it.

The phenomenon stood out as the magnificent incongruity in the space where man tries to cling to a make-believe permanence, wrenched from him by death. So, she talks about how in a space of death, which is the cemetery, there are grander and grander monuments and stone tablets as the days go by. And the people who die just seem to crumble away even more beneath the earth.

But she said that, rather she says that these tombstones have today rather even have photographs adorning them of the dead. They are not simple tombstone with the name, write date of birth, date of death, he was loving father husband whatever. No. It has even got photographs and the glossy photographs that are embossed onto the stone. And she dislikes all of this opulence enormously.

Which is why Lentina goes on to decide that she will have a cemetery where no tombstones will be erected. It will be just plants and flowering bushes and such like. And the laburnum tree is supposed to be a symbol of immortality in this space of death. It is a very nice story. That one. Right.

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## Third World Cosmopolitan Writers?

"The third world cosmopolitans emerge from a non-western culture, but their mastery over the current idiom of the metropolitan meta-language of narrative ensures their favourable reception in the global centres of publication and criticism."

- Timothy Brennan (1989)

So, this is an overview of all of the stories in the book rather detailed overview. But it is very hard to fit Ao in anywhere. She and all of the other quote unquote Northeastern writers dislike the label intensely. They say that it is defacing all of the Northeast. And it is just a handy, it is just a shorthand way of referring to people from that geographical region. Who might who actually do not have that much of a similarity in their writings.

But whom people believe should have a similarity in their writings because there is violence and where is it going on. It is going on in the Northeast. Not in specific states, but in the Northeast. The at least in the essay, there is an essay written by Meenakshi Mukherjee I am sorry, by Tilottoma Misra who has compiled and anthology of Northeastern literature. And she says that every Northeastern state has at least 25 or 26 languages or tribes that have their own languages that are perfectly unintelligible to each other.

And when these language, when these people cannot comprehend or cannot understand entirely what the other, what people from the other groups are saying; it is certainly not right to classify all of them and lump them into one category that is as Northeastern writings. She also says that perhaps in the 60s or 70s schools in the Northeast stopped teaching as such schools of a certain standard had only English.

So, first generation learners who went to these schools, the only language they came out with possessing high levels of competency and confidence in who are English. And Mishra says that if they choose to write in English then it should be perfectly alright. Because it is the only language they feel confident writing in. And she also points to a number of examples in

which these writers have made English their own language. I should not say and Indian language because the Northeast is, does not see itself as Indian as such.

But these writers have they, there is none of this conflict that we have been seeing amongst the, between the Bhasha writers and the English writers so far, in the trajectory of Indian Fiction in English. These writers or specifically Ao does not seem to be conflicted by it. She is perfectly happy at writing in English. She makes no apologies. And she is very confident in it. Right.

So, Timothy Abraham in 1989, he is a scholar and an author. He says that there should be or rather he identifies the section of writers called 3rd world cosmopolitan writers which when the flaunts and the fancies stripped away, Mukherjee says that simply postcolonial writers immersion on non-western culture but the mastery over the current idiom of the Metropolitan meta language of narrative and shows that their favourable reception in the global centres of publication and criticism.

Global centres of publication and criticism, these are centres that have always been hotspots for publications and criticisms. Mainly the western world London, Europe, I suppose New York and a lot of centres in the states as well. Meta Language of narrative that Mukherjee explains is nothing more than parameters and categories that has been set forth by these centres of publication and criticism.

And these are the only means of recognition that any writer who writes in English will receive. So, it is to be expected that postcolonial writers will stress upon themes of colonialism or of post-colonialism or of discovering the identity once they have been, once they have, I do not know, assured the colonial forces out of their land. This is most expected of them, and it is only when they deal with themes like these that they will gain acceptance as a scene with Rushdie.

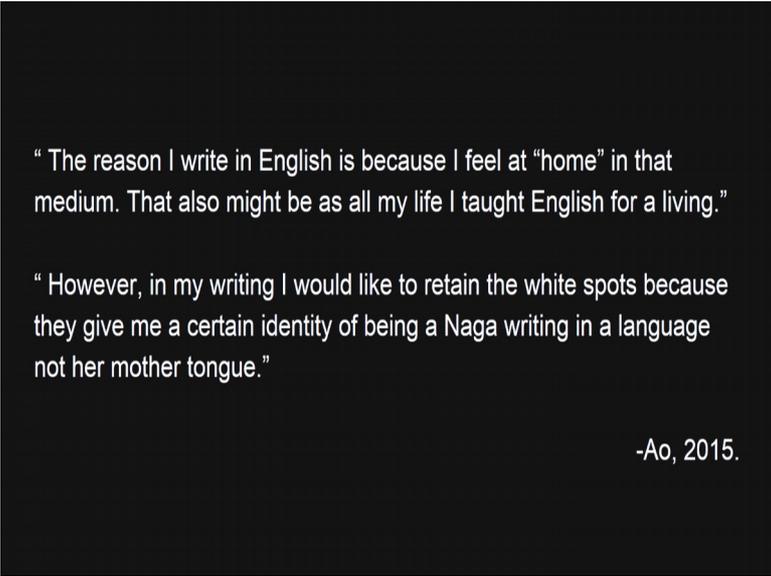
Ao's work especially does not deal with the nation, does not deal with the nation in any sense of word. It does not even acknowledge the Indian nation to be a major part apart from destroying the lives of common people in Nagaland. It is always mentioned in passing. There is never any explicit reference to it. And she focuses more on the daily lives of people in the

villages in; I have not read that much of her work apart from this book. But mainly in the villages about how their daily lives are torn apart.

And interestingly her poetry goes back to legends and myths in the Ao tribe in Nagaland. And she draws upon that and says that, you know, well we have given all of this up to a sort of a western culture. There is no animosity there. It is just more along a matter of fact observational kind of statement that she makes. Right. There is also a difference between post-colonial and postcolonial without the hyphen.

This is debated over but I think it is a bit interesting. So post-colonial with the hyphen emphasises the fact that any writing that is post-colonial with the hyphen is something which is written in chronological, in the time period after you gain independence. And any writing that is postcolonial without the hyphen just deals with the state of being postcolonial. Am I making any sense? I hope I do. Right. That is basically it. And this is Ao.

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“ The reason I write in English is because I feel at “home” in that medium. That also might be as all my life I taught English for a living.”

“ However, in my writing I would like to retain the white spots because they give me a certain identity of being a Naga writing in a language not her mother tongue.”

-Ao, 2015.

She is not written, there is no critical material on her work. There is, all of her works are analysed through the lens of eco-criticism. But I think that quite frankly that is quite lazy, I because, simply because there is a lot of nature in her work. There is an eco-critical lens that is slammed on to it. And right well she is clearly advocating that nature should be saved and things like that.

But there is, I do not hold with that. And she says that, the reason I write in English is because that I feel at home in that medium. That also might be as all my life I taught English

for a living. she also says that the Northeastern identity is a misnomer because the region is a home to a multiple people with diverse cultures, costumes and therefore no one should use this term because it defaces the real identity of the people living here.

There is also been work that positive in a very roundabout way that the Northeast is still trying to find its identity. Not Northeast as such, but specific groups of people in the Northeast. And that Nagaland specifically advocated independence in 1945 or 47 and ever since then, it has been dealing with disillusionment of this dream. Right. Ao also says that, however in my writing I would like to retain the white spots because they give me a certain identity of being a Naga writing in a language not her mother tongue.

So, you think when you read out that she is a fairly apolitical writer. That she is not dealing too much with the political undertones, overtones of the entire situation because it is so very normal that it is not necessary to point it out. But in an interview when asked if, you know, right ok. You have been receiving a lot of attention so far and people are ranking you as one of the best writers in India and who sort of belong to the global cosmopolitan elite.

What do you think of it. And she said, well I am certainly not one of the best. And I do not aspire to do away with my identity completely as most of these writers have. I have nothing against them and I do not condemn them for it. But I quite simply personally speaking, I think I would like to see myself as a Naga writing in English not as a person who is so very confident in English that I do not know any other language.

She interestingly went back and learnt Assamese, how to read and write it fluently enough so that she could read and write in it. I do not think she does but she just, according to her, she wanted to know it well enough. That is about it. Right. That is about it.