

on, but Temsula Ao has dramatically hypnotized readers with the clarion wake-call that from the ashes, yet the Naga identity looms, this time by virtue of a traditional costume, saved from the ravaging forces and fires. In the finality, the writer impresses upon, that although Apenyo has but a green mound in her memory situated at the boundary of the village graveyard, her spectral winter visitations, on cold December nights, and a seemingly tune breezing by, all who know of- 'The Last Song' stand still to listen. It appears to sway in full force demanding total attention of all who halted to hear, as if reliving the church dedication day, when Apenyo sang full-throated, that December day. The old storyteller in 'The Last Song,' almost shouts, at the group of students, gathered around the warm December fire, to hear the rustling wind, and by word of mouth, relives the story of Apenyo, stirring the need to realise and thereon restore their own true Naga identity, no matter the circumstances, time and age, but rather mattering history. As the paper attempts to present the realisation and restoration of a true Naga identity, one reason ascribed to the fallout of the Naga history and the Naga identity, was that it was rifted thoroughly by the diasporic dimensions. After her migration, Meghalaya became a major preoccupation in her stories; the writer was losing her home not only by being miles away from Nagaland but also due to the political instability. The collection of stories in *These Hills Called Home: Stories from a War Zone* are charged with emotions of loss, and pain that articulate the poet's exilic detachment from the confusion that has engulfed Nagaland. Temsula Ao in *These Hills Called Home: Stories from a War Zone* wishes to recapture the pain following the struggle for self-determination launched by the people of Nagaland against the Indian Union. Her stories attempt to make the new generations of Nagas realize the need to preserve and restore the Naga way of life, the Naga identity, against the invasion of migration and adaptation of metropolitan modernization of India. Temsula Ao's stories exhibit her to re-locate and re-embrace her grand colourful identity, and that Nagas of today, may follow suit. Driven by her personal experience of dislocation Temsula Ao's stories depict the journey of Nagas from villages to towns, from rustic innocence to urban experience, from cutting roots within peaceful isolated homes in hills to putting them in a crowded and violent war zone: 'I was born to tell stories' says Temsula Ao the modern O Tashi (ancient storyteller) from Nagaland who now writes her stories too, much like the mythic birth of the Nagas from six ancient stones. Temsula Ao's short stories are born of those folktales that form the Naga oral literary traditions. Temsula Ao in the tradition of oral tales writes her stories from the memories that her mind has chose to preserve. Thus her stories are not about chronological record of 'historical facts' but about selected remembered events. Through the stories Temsula Ao asserts her cultural identity as a Naga, though in reality she has to accommodate her political identity as an Indian. She is aware of how the forces of globalization, has led to the 'sub-summing' of the 'existential' Naga identity to the Indian identity that acts as a 'disclaimer' to all that a Naga conceives of himself traditionally. This peripatetic journey of Temsula from Nagaland to

another state and back again to Nagaland through her writing, can be termed as, a writer of hyphenated identity possessing a Naga-Indian-Naga identity. But a hyphenated identity does not rescue the Nagas from their struggle for a 'legitimate identity.' Here Temsula Ao's idea can be understood, that though every year thousands of Nagas migrate to metropolis city like Delhi or Mumbai in search of jobs and education, yet it is still a constraint for anyone from Nagaland to think of himself as an Indian, thus in international conferences and workshops it has been noticed that the Nagas introduce themselves as, 'I am a Naga. I come from Nagaland'.

Temsula Ao's stories have been addressed to these young migrating Nagas who have been disabled in several ways due to their 'the sudden displacement' from 'placid rural habitats to a world of conflict and confusion in urban settlements'. The writer believes that vitality in the life of these migrating young Nagas can be restored only if they remember the years of turmoil that raged in their land and try to make sense of the impact left by the struggle on their lives. Nothing can be achieved if they remain oblivious to the pain that Nagas suffered and the reasons that caused that pain. Here Temsula Ao in the fashion of Vijay Mishra invoking Derrida's *Spectres of Marx* which, notes how Marx's communist revolution would keep haunting the world even if the world underwent incessant phases of globalization. In the same way Temsula Ao reminds the young Nagas that, even if they migrate at their own will or due to changing economic conditions and live comfortably in foreign lands, the horrors and brutalities of the old diaspora would keep haunting the new diaspora because they will never be able to exorcise the ghost of the Naga revolution that have altered the lives of the Nagas and banished them from their homes. In a situation where several Nagas are migrating from Nagaland, the hills of Nagaland has enabled the writer to make a symbolic journey through the difficult terrain of the Naga psyche, whose racial memories must to be stirred by nostalgia for an ideal Nagaland; the Nagaland where Nagas would restore their racial virtues of living in harmony with man and nature. These thoughts of Temsula Ao, perhaps, must have birth *These Hills Called Home: Stories from a War Zone*. These stories are snippets of those innocent habitats of Naga Hills whose peace was shattered by political designs the suffering folk hardly understood. The writer seeks to compel the readers to empathize with the suffering souls. To pick just one example:

But this only further aroused him; he bashed her head on the hard ground several times knocking her unconscious and raped her limp body, using the woman's new lungi afterwards, which he had flung aside, to wipe himself ('The Last Song')

Such frank narrative, by a Naga woman writer brings out the ghastly reality in that part of India powerfully to readers. To the writer's credit, she succeeds in maintaining a distance from subscribing to any particular set of opinion while bringing forth the pain and suffering of the Naga people as a community and shaking the readers' conscience. Being the result of the working of imagination upon the facts of collective experience of a

social group, Temsula Ao's short stories often provides the material for history without being the direct evidence of history. The history of the Naga people who live in the troubled North-Eastern region of India has been marked by bloodshed for more than five decades. According to Mahesh Dattani, a well known playwright, Temsula Ao's book, *These Hills Called Home: Stories from a War Zone* 'is one of the most, hard hitting books from the North-East.' On being asked where she got ideas for such fantastic stories, Temsula Ao says that like any other Naga she grew up listening to insurgency stories, 'Most of the seeds for the short stories that I have written are influenced from what I have experienced or what I have heard from people. Those days were days of insurgency...Every incident was a story in itself...I was influenced by them a lot.' Temsula Ao is a gifted writer to have perceived and articulated the untold stories of unsung heroes of her Nagaland through stories that do not have to try too hard too to express what it has to 'Tell'. Temsula Ao, is moored in traditions, giving her writings a defined depth. The writer feels that younger voices are more urban, cosmopolitan, westernized, than an earlier generation, and regretfully have lost touch with their roots. Their concerns should be to realise and restore their Naga identity; the outsider looking in. The human spirit should live in reflections, and thereby beauty rising out of the pain. Temsula Ao subtly opens up before the readers a world of degenerated and degraded values, where it is shorn off its glory to appear in a very dull and dusky form, and through which, by focusing the attention of a generation on this specific almost historical reality, aspires to bring about a restoration of a true Naga identity, thereby leaving behind a rich legacy of conclusions for the future generations of Nagaland. Temsula Ao, in *These Hills Called Home: Stories from a War Zone* cuts across a thousand thorns and tears, to voice that truth prevails over culture.

References :

- Ao, Temsula. (2006) *These Hills Called Home: Stories from a War Zone*. New Delhi: Penguin/Zubaan Publications.
- Ao, Temsula. "Identity and Globalisation: A Naga Perspective". *Indian Folklore*. Serial. The Morung Express. Nagaland News 11th Feb 2011.
- www.museindia.com/viewarticle.asp?



The Theme of Emancipation in Black American Autobiographies

- Vandana Pathak

Abstract: The slave narratives deal with the experiences, thoughts, and feelings of human beings held in chattel slavery and reveal the impact of slavery on black men, women and children, individually and collectively. Many slave narratives were amanuensis documents and exposed the oppressive condition of the Blacks and the repressive tactics adopted by the whites against them. In the twentieth century too the works of Black American writers like Claude Brown, Richard Wright, Baldwin, Langston Hughes and Gordon Parks are the seedlings of black consciousness and strongly express their yearning for freedom.

Keywords: Black/ African American, Slave Narrative, Autobiography.

*O, let my land be a land where Liberty
Is crowned with no false patriotic wreath,
But opportunity is real, and life is free,
Equality is in the air we breathe.*

— Langston Hughes

The slave narratives and Black American autobiographies are the voices of the voiceless and fruits of education:

Literacy itself was exceptional. While this was particularly true in the antebellum South, opportunities for education in the North as well were often minimal. If the black male's words ... were recorded only spasmodically, those of black female were still less frequently set down on paper. And the more that black communities reared churches, schools, and traditions of family life on white America's models, the more it was the men, not the women, who gave expression to their history, their strivings, and their innermost feelings (Lowenberg and Bogin, 5).

Black American writers were far removed from the fringes of life and literacy. Naturally, they had to fight 'against all odds' and overcome all possible sorts of obstacles to evolve as a person, as an individual, and for self-expression. These Black writers chose a wide variety of genres, forms, and themes to document and record their struggle. Slave narrative or autobiography was a mode of expression widely accepted. Autobiography, as such, was a favourite genre of Americans. Foster declares autobiography as the most democratic genre in American literature and as one of the oldest, offering the best opportunity "for examining a variety of particular confrontations of culture by particular people in particular settings" (Sayre, 26). William L. Andrews argues for the centrality of the African American autobiographical tradition:

Autobiography holds a position of priority, if not prominence, among the narrative traditions of black America. Perhaps more

than any other form of literary discourse, autobiography has been chosen by African Americans to articulate ideals of selfhood integral to an African American sense of identity both individual and communal. At the same time that autobiography has helped African Americans bear witness to an evolving tradition of liberated and empowered individuality, autobiography has also provided a forum for addressing the sociopolitical as well as cultural obstacles that impede the liberation and empowerment of African Americans in the United States (Andrews, 34).

Black American Autobiographies expose the oppressive condition of the Blacks and the repressive tactics adopted by the whites against them. Even though an autobiography is necessarily the story of an individual, the fact is that the racist structures have made it necessary for the Black American autobiographer to act as the voice of the community or to speak for the collective. An insight is offered into the lives of the Blacks and these documents reflect on the intensity of racial problem. According to Baldwin, "the problem is rooted in the question how one treats one's flesh and blood, especially one's children" (Baldwin, 185). The lives of the children reveal that they were and are caught, trapped, and forced to lead suspended lives. A yearning for change, for liberation is felt in almost all writers of this genre. The term emancipation has a great fascination and significance for all marginalized, oppressed communities in the world. It means freedom from physical bondage and breaking of shackles meant to impose physical restraint. It is a dynamic, ever evolving concept. In the case of Black American autobiographers, emancipation indicates yearning to be free associated with a growth in consciousness resulting in protests, revolts, and movements. It is a yearning for equality and justice. It is a demand for just human rights, civil, political, and social. It is a demand by the oppressed, exploited, and subjugated to be treated exactly like their oppressors and exploiters. A subtle yearning for emancipation is noticeable in all slave narratives. It is related with their self awareness, self-assertion, consciousness (individual as well as collective) and identity. Ottobah Cugoano in his slave narrative says, "Nothing else can be expected for such violations of taking away the natural rights and liberties of men, but that those who are the doers of it will meet with some awful visitation of the righteous judgement of God" (Constanzo, 38). Olaudah Equiano learnt about freedom from Daniel Queen. The very mention of freedom excited him, "This gave me new life and spirits; and my heart burned within me, while I thought the time long till I obtained freedom. For though my master had not promised it to me, yet, besides the assurances I had received that he had no right to detain me, he always treated me with the greatest kindness, and responded to me in an unbounded confidence" (Paul, 173). He confronted his master and said, "I told him I was free, and he could not by law serve me so" (Paul, 175). Cugoano's and Equiano's slave narratives reveal their longing for liberation. Frederick Douglass in his *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* says, "From my earliest recollection, I date the entertainment of a deep conviction that slavery would not always be able to hold me within