

Home as a Gordian Knot of Problems from the Selected Short Stories of Temsula Ao

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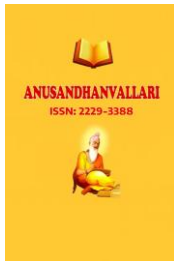
Abstract

Home is a place where one finds joy, peace, happiness, the place that also bonds up with cluster amenities of emotions, feelings shared within a circle named family. People duel to sort and seek the betterment of love filled happiness. Followed by the writings of Temsula Ao, the happiness of Naga people at their home is challenging one. Then real meaning of home tied like a Gordian knot that could never be untied from torture. The invasion of the underground army and so called higher officials curled up the life of the people to gun fire, beatings, rape, and murder also with natural misfortunes. The people seek to get the real bond of so called 'Home', but it turns like a field of war. The real sense of home they secure only in the forest.

Key words: Home, Gordian knot, Problems, Naga

Temsula Ao contemporary author belongs to Assam region. She has contributed to several short stories and poems. Ao boldly portrays the impacts of war, brutality against women and so on. Home, what it is meant by? The word home is a feeling that emerges from one person, seeks a kind of positivity and fullness. It is intimate to the heart of a person both physically and psychologically. Home is not built physically, constructed psychologically with emotions, culture, and tradition. One bequeath in their home with maximum comforts, enjoy with their wellbeing and comforts with complete peace of mind.

In case of this Nagas home becomes a "life-threatening problem" that couldn't settle as a meaning, the word home gives. The situation turns out to be like a Gordian Knot which is unable to untie. Gordian knot is also known as 'double fisherman's knot'. It is the most intricate, unfeasible to untie. 'Gordian knot is a proverbial term for a problem solvable only by bold action'. Having a quick flash on history, different stories evolved to curl up the



meaning of Gordian knot. The Macedonian conqueror Alexander the Great arrived at Gordian on his march through Anatolia, the capital of Phrygia, known as Turkey on BC 333. According to custom of Phrygian the man who unchained the knot and he will be updated as hotheaded warrior and will be the conqueror of Asia. Alexander cut the knot with his sword. As a result the idiom “cutting the Gordian Knot” designate a daring solution into a convoluted glitch.

Temsula Ao, through her short stories picturize the untied skeptical knot of problems that surrounds the life of Nagas. Problems arises in and around, people lived without peace. Home was considered as the Gordian knot of problems incense the people were crushed out which cannot be untied with. As Paul Kersey describes in a blog “Anybody Got a Sword? The Gordian Knot of Binding Arbitration.”

“Some problems do not call for the patience but for the boldness, the new way of thinking and sharp sword”. The story of ‘Gordian Knot’ breaks out the mythical decades over expectations of generation. The smart thinking of Alexander waved to rethink the solutions with smartness and clever minded. The smart move or the replication of sudden outburst of his patience to remove the knot made the world to admit as a brilliant move may be or not about removing the glitch of untying to slicing with one strap.

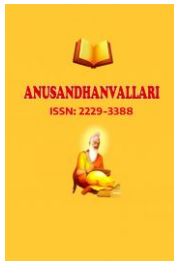
Ao also talks about the troubled relationship of people in their home land. Here the home land if filled with the knot of violence and tragedy. She describes about the violence that surrounds her and if effects through the characters. Though North East is most diverse country, North east India is affected both geographically and politically. By recalling the above incident and short stories of Ao it is clear that smart move will enhance the solution for the problems.

Multiple challenges affects ‘Home’ in Nagaland that interconnects with the global thought of problems and challenges which needs a revolutionary solutions. Families in North East especially in Nagaland people face challenges both economically and socially. They move towards south and other parts of the world in order to fulfill their financial struggle. Unemployment, climatically disaster leads more youth to switch on migration which leads to unbearable separation from the parents, relatives, friends, loved ones and so on.

Bridging a gap between tradition and modernity navigates the juncture of cultural roots and modern life. Tradition feels unpredictable leads to be stable. The tradition is linked with family culture, religion and societal practices. It also provides the different ethics in different style. Tradition does not bridge gap between people, instead it will be a gathering. But in “the phase of the ‘progress and ‘development’ the ambience of the traditional Naga way of life for the youngsters is increasingly becoming irreverent. The sudden displacement of the young from placed existence in rural habitats to a world of conflict and confusion in urban settlements is also a fallout of recent Naga history and one that has left them disabled in more than one way”(x). Modernity bridge gap between youth and tradition. It destroys the ethical values of traditional practices and those values remain in the custom only through the history only if noted.

The other main problem is abuse. More examples are seen through the short stories of Ao. According to the economic survey of Nagaland more Gender, domestic violence, child abuse, drug abuse were happened. This paradigm not only affects the individual but the entire family and often society.

“In spite of the patriarchal dominant of the society we can see how women participate and are respected in the society time immemorial by exercising the responsibility and as a peace initiative. However we see that such privilege is exercise by the exceptional women and not enjoyed by all. Thus most of the women are confined to the household chores and came forth when it is needed. But with the coming of the modernity the role of the women gradually increase. They no longer confined to the household chores but can be seen in different arena of



socio, political and economic spheres. Thus, to empowered women we need to emphasis and educate people more and break the glass ceiling that act as a barrier for women to explore their talent and look for broader sense of gender equality.”(Luckson 205)

Ao short stories ‘These Hills Called Home: Stories from a War Zone’ and ‘Laburnum for My Head’ observes the remarkable state of Naga the struggle they faced to outcome from the surgency of the political and heads of the villages. The point that circulates in every story is subjugating the people through powers. Some characters set examples for their bravery better yet for the patience the result of these doesn’t stay as a Gordian knot. As Alexander characters who hew the knot which is being untangled with problems doesn’t able to hold their life to see the outcome.

“For the victims the trauma goes beyond the realm of just the physical maiming and loss of life-their very humanity is assaulted and violated, and the onslaught leaved the survivors scarred both in mind and soul” (X)

Temsula describes the homeland becomes only as memories for the natives. “Memories are usually transitioned through an invisible strain and selections are done of good and the bad, either to be preserved or discarded. She reckons life has its own ‘inbuilt mechanism’ of putting its house in order to that human beings can live with a modicum of peace and tranquillity.”(VII) The pain the people faces were described by Temsula as,

“I hear the land cry,

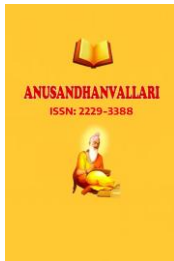
Over and over again

‘Let all the dead Awaken

And teach the living

How not to die’ ” (v)

The first story of These Hills Called Home ‘The Jungle Major’ is the story of young mismatched couple Punaba and Khatila. The Gordian knot of problem lies in story is the soldiers who were in search of kathila’s husband. She cleverly untied the problem and saved her husband from the solders. The second story ‘Soaba’ is about small boy named ‘Supiba’, ‘Soaba’ and so on. The story manifests the sad fate of the young boy who sheltered for food, killed by the army officer like a bewildered animal. Apeyno from the story ‘The Last Song’ is bold, brave, multitalented girl bought up by single parent her mother Libeni and her grandmother. The happily awaiting for the big day-of their village church festival, the dedication of new church building made them to get new dresses. The day when they happily enjoying the sermon the solders ruined the scene and Apeyno boldly burst in solo number and didn’t stop her song. This made the soldiers angrily grabbed her into the building and killed her brutally; her mother became the victim too. No men were ready to oppose the solders to save the girl but the knot turned in the form of destiny for the soldier. He became insane and placed in the asylum. Apeyno trough’s out through her song the dignity and the inner strength of a women cannot be driven out in name of freedom. ‘The Curfew Men’ is all about the story of a retired person Satemba. The injured person after premature retirement from Assam police he joins as government informer and though he accepted the offer for his betterment of future. His normal way of living get collapsed and fear being his own companion. The fear of life when he heard the ‘Go back home curfew man, and if you value your life, never again carry tales’ made him shattered. ‘The Night’ reveals the patriarchal thought of society and Imnala’s decision to slash the knot of traditional practitioner and to overcome from the catchphrase of the society ‘remember in our society a women must have the protection of a man even if he happens to be blind or lame. Women alone will always be in danger’ (Ao 53). ‘The Pot Maker’ is a struggle of a young girl who loves to study the traditional avocation of pot making against her mother who



wants her to learn weaving (58). Her struggle between cultural, traditional and modern outcome made her distress and after she decides to cut the knot of fear, respect and stick to one point of her passion she achieved her goal of making good pots. The art of having a handicraft on every individual will lend a hand in difficult situation. 'An Old Man Remembers' is all about a grandfather who recalls his lost youth due to war. He breaks the silence when his grandson spoke with him to avoid the future should not do the same. 'A New Chapter'

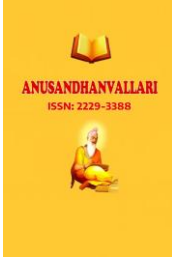
'Laburnum for My Head Stories' is a collection of eight stories which encompasses different kinds of aspects to the people. The first short story 'Laburnum for My Head' is an interesting short story that strongly describes the aspiration of an old woman named Lentina. With different thought note she travels alone with her servant to fulfil her love to grow down her Laburnum plant. The thought of growing plants and getting land for her funeral is an interesting one which many hesitate. The knot of traditional way of building the tomb has been changed to decorating the tomb with colours that give life to the death. The destruction of death to life. 'Death of a Hunter' points out the importance of animals through the protagonist the hunter Imchanok. He hunts every animal which haunts the villages and he is known for hunting. But once he felt the importance of animal after he kills the mysterious animals and struggling to overcome from the guilt of killing the animal shows the cruelty and the hardens of man. Occupying the land of animals, grabbing their wealth, food, man without regretting his criminal mentality towards them ponder everything and kill them without any guilt. Men have to live hormonal relationship with animals and respect them. 'The Boy Who Sold an Airfield' is a humorous story about a boy who cheated a whole village. Though it was in a humourous note the story expresses man have to be careful in everything and not to accept blindly anything as easy gets. Being loyal and honesty is essential and not to deceive others. 'The

Letter' shows up the pain of the father who is unable to send the money for the son for his final examination. The cruelty of underground army pondering the wages of poor people, father could not able to come out of the knot of powers. The life of three women is ported in the short story 'Three Women' who lived against the words of the society, bullying, and racism and so on. The bravery of women to face the discriminating society set an example of every women around not to think about the past and live the present without doubting oneself. Another brave and bold lady Imdongla who saved her husband questioning the caption by asking 'A Simple Question'. 'Sonny' tells the story of a women who suffered by the loss of Sonny. Sonny joins the army, dreaming to lead a happy life together destiny broke out it into sadness and her happiness got devastated. She lost sonny in the war. The painful journey she faces aftermath was critical.

The Gordian Knot of Naga's household circumstances cannot be resolved over and done with a solitary stroke. From the above stories each story tells a diplomatic essence of hardships, pain, dishonour, insult, humiliation, disgrace, and affront. It entails endurance, alliance, and an inclination to become adapted to fluctuating positions while stabilizing the principles that have long strengthened Naga society. By speaking these challenges together, families can renovate difficult unexpected obstacles into junctures to bounce back and progress.

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