



Sahitya Akademi

17 October 2014

## meet the author

Temsula Ao





Born in October 1945 in Jorhat, Assam, Temsula matriculated from Ridgeway Girls High School, Golaghat, Assam. Later she graduated with distinction from Fazl Ali College, Mokokchung, Nagaland. After taking her Master's degree in English from Guwahati University, Assam she did her post-graduate Diploma in the teaching of English from CIEFL (Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages) Hyderabad and

later her PhD. from North Eastern Hill University (NEHU), Shillong.

Temsula joined, NEHU in 1975 as a lecturer and later she was appointed as Head, Department of English and Dean, School of Humanities and Education. She also served as the Director, North East Zonal Cultural Centre, Dimapur for five years.

Temsula's first publication was her collection of poems *Songs that Tell* in 1988. Her works have been majorly shaped by oral tradition and myths, the creative intersection between folk narratives, poetry and fiction.

Temsula's foray into the world of creative writing was with poetry. However poetry she admits is demanding and she went back to it later again. Meanwhile in her feverish quest for creative exactness she started writing short stories in between her busy



Receiving Ph. D Degree





At Argentina with other delegates

teaching career. However she did not let her poetry languish and has till now published five collections of poetry. Finding a close parallel and synergy between poetry and songs, she titled her poetry collection *Songs that Tell and Songs that Try to Sing*.

Her short story collection *These Hills Called Home – Stories from a War Zone* (2006) and *Laburnum for my Head* have been received wide critical claim.

The anthology of short stories, *These Hills Called Home: Stories from a War Zone* is eloquent proof that the violent phase in Naga life will remain etched in their collective memory. Her stories have a gripping quality that forces the reader to read them at one go. The stories mostly revolve around women, who in any case, have to bear the brunt of violence.

Temsula Ao was honoured with the



At Argentina with other delegates





With her daughter

prestigious Padmashri in 2007 for both literature and Education, the Nagaland Governor's Award for distinction in Literature in 2009 and the Sahitya Akademi Award in 2013. Her works have been widely translated into Assamese, Bengali,

Oriya, Kannada and German.

Temsula Ao, has widely travelled in India and abroad as part of writers' delegation to China, Switzerland, UK and Buenos Aires. She is currently the chairperson Nagaland State Commission for Women, Nagaland, Kohima.



With her children





*Receiving Award from Ao Community at Moatsu Festival*

### **A CHRONOLOGY**

- |         |                                                            |      |                                                          |
|---------|------------------------------------------------------------|------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| 1945    | Born in Jorhat, Assam                                      | 2009 | Received Governor's Gold Medal                           |
| 1975    | Joined NEHU, Shillong as Lecturer                          | 2009 | Visited Switzerland as a member of the Naga delegation   |
| 1985-86 | Fulbright Fellow                                           | 2009 | <i>Laburnum for my Head</i> published                    |
| 1988    | First collection of poems <i>Songs that Tell</i> published | 2010 | Retired                                                  |
| 1992-97 | Director, North East Zonal Culture Centre                  | 2013 | <i>Once upon on life</i> (Memoirs) published             |
| 2007    | Conferred the Padmashri                                    | 2013 | Sahitya Akademi Award                                    |
| 2007    | Visited China                                              | 2014 | Invited to IX International Poetry Festival at Argentina |
| 2009    | Invited to London Book Fair                                |      |                                                          |



*Receiving Governor's Gold Medal*





*Receiving the Sahitya Akademi Award*

## **SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY**

### **Poetry Collection**

*Songs that Tell*, Writers workshop, Calcutta, 1988

*Songs that Try to Say*, Writers workshop, Calcutta, 1992

*Songs of Many Moods*, Har-Anand Publications, New Delhi, 1995

*Songs from Here and There*, NEHU Publication, Shillong, 2003

*Songs from the other Life*, Grasswork Books, Pune, 2003

*Book of Songs* (Anthology of Collected works), Heritage, Dimapur, 2013

### **Ethnography**

*The AO-Naga Oral Tradition*, Bhasha Publication, Baroda, 1999

### **Short Story**

*These Hills Called Home – Stories from the War Zone*, Zubaan-Penguin, 2006

*Laburnum for my Head*, Penguin, 2009

### **Literary Criticism**

*Henry James and the search for an Ideal Heroine*, Writers Workshop, Calcutta, 1989

### **Memoir**

*Once Upon a Life*, Zubaan, New Delhi, 2013



*Receiving Padamshri*