
Between National Struggles and Personal Sacrifices: The Psychological Toll of Insurgency in Nagaland

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Abstract:

Violence of different kinds bring immense trauma and agony to the affected, including the offenders who are directly involved in such conflicts and innocent people caught in the crossfire. It fosters enmity, creating deep, lasting wounds that go well beyond harm on the field of battle. Conflict rarely has one cause but is the result of a mix of social and economic inequalities, political repression and discrimination and, sometimes, environmental pressures. Rather than simply being caused by a single agent, conflicts constitute an intricate network of interconnected causes, meaning they cannot be resolved by linear solutions. In the modern world, there are many conflicts that erupt along regional or ethnic lines within countries, rather than between countries. The northeast, where ethnic clashes as well as insurgencies have long been a problem, is a case in point. The area has been a battleground between Indian government forces and guerrillas for decades, with the rebels feeling that they have been politically marginalised and seeking self-determination. Spontaneous uprisings like these catch by surprise the ordinary folk who have no connection with the gun and the bullet, excepting an aspiration for a better tomorrow and fate conspires to engulf them in the whirl of violence, many a time without they being conscious of the fact that the consequences of their action expose them to lasting regret. In this study, the paper seeks to add to the understanding of the many ways violence impacts the lives of those left behind, and in particular - women, who are often at the receiving end.

Keywords: trauma, agony, socio-economic inequalities, political repression, discrimination, environmental pressures, Nagaland literature etc.

Introduction

Tensula Ao is one of Nagaland's most acclaimed writers that provides a remarkable way to read the deep psychological and emotional wounds inflicted by these conflicts. Through these gripping stories Ao brings home the human cost of ethnic violence, especially on the women of the marginalized. These women are attempting to maintain their traditions and their cultural values in the face of overwhelming obstacles in a place where war and

uncertainty have created a disjointed society. Their tales are of inspiring human courage when the odds are stacked against somebody. The effects of domestic violence on these cultures are deep. Women, and particularly women, who get the short end of any stick holding up the weight of cultural and social and political upheaval, work overtime to sustain some sense of what used to be normal in days past. Not only do they endure physical violence, but they also must cope with the mental abuse of being in a state of fear and insecurity. This exposure to domestic and community violence has a serious impact on their health and functioning in daily life, with many carrying untended scars as a result.

By looking at women from other marginalized ethnic groups (in particular those from the Ao community in Nagaland), the paper investigates the issues faced by women in this struggle of cultural survival and survival itself in the context of ongoing regional conflict. These women are responsible for maintaining tradition while coping with the existential terrors of a world that is being ripped apart by violence. Their stories enlighten us on the relationship between gender, culture and war and raise questions about the broader implications of violence for the individual and community.

The North Eastern states of India abound in Cultural Traditions, Folklore, Myths are all woven into the life of its numerous diversified communities. These are countries rich not only in culture but in resources too. But they're also ravaged by violence, war and age-old divisions along tribal, racial and national lines. The contrast of cultural wealth and human misery is one that is daily for those who dwell there. As Poimila Raman (2018) observes, "violence and political disturbances in the North-Eastern states of India are synonymous in disrupting the normal lives of its people" (140). These conflicts have left scars in the social fabric, producing painful stories and quenching the dreams of peace and cohabitation among the various ethnic groups that inhabit this region.

Many reasons explain the root causes behind the continued violence in the North Eastern states. The geographic isolation, political marginalization, lack of educational opportunities, and lack of political participation are the main causes behind recurring ethnic and political tensions. Conflict is a dirty word in Israel and the Palestinian territories, as if it can and should be ignored, yet from a geographical standpoint, the region does not help its negotiations as the region "provides a 'facilitating condition for conflict'" (Hensel p. 1) or, in other words, conflict arises due to geography and its condition'. This idea emphasises the difficulty of harmonising these geographically estranged communities, each with its own characteristic cultural identity.

Tensula Ao, the renowned Naga writer brings a concept of ambivalence to the idea of the identity of the state North eastern states. If the indigenous people have their lost identity retained and preserved, it will add prestige to the North-eastern identity which is a contradiction as per the perspective of Ao (2015) who mentions,

The North-eastern identity is a misnomer ... the term should not be used as it dilutes the real identity of the people living here. At most, it has geographical and geo-political import. (22)

Ao's words capture the complexities that define the region's identity, and how the identity "North-Eastern" effaces the varied culture and its people. For Ao, this label clouds the true experiences and histories of different peoples that comprise this area. The literature of Ao provides insight into the world of the commoner living in such troubled places. One of the most prominent female writers of the Naga community, Ao's writing brings to life the human toll of ethnic and political conflict. Her narratives convey suffering and grief of inhabitants in a land where violence is an omnipresent force, an integral part of life there now and in the future. In her writing, Ao penetrates the multiple layers of living in a conflict-ridden land, creating a powerful examination of the violence afflicted on women, children, families that have to make their way through a land of fear, uncertainty and loss.

The 'bloody otherness' of the North East, its reality of insurgent movements, armed conflict, a deep sense of alienation from the Indian state, continue to haunt it. The political aspirations for self-rule and ethnic recognition by many groups continue to be a major theme. Despite the region's vast cultural wealth, the trauma of war after decades of states of unrest and the cyclical reintroduction of violence, have left a landscape that, though rich in culture, is still etched by conflict. Ao's writings consequently, are not just purely literary specimens but a powerful commentary on the struggles that people grapple with in the strife-torn region.

Temsula is a well-known writer from Nagaland who has been awarded the Padma Shri and Sahitya Akademi by the Government of India honours for her contributions to literature. Her fiction truly represents the nuanced social scenario of Nagaland, the emotional and psychological trauma that continues to be experienced from the endless ethnic and political strife. Ao's stories based on the lives of people of Nagaland, depict the suffering of war and its aftermath, but also individual courage in trauma. In Ao's work, *The Laburnum for My Head*, combatants and non-combatants are depicted as being subjected to the same kind of psychological trauma, which is the subject of this paper. The novel reveals deep thinking about how the wounds of war manifest on ordinary people, and women in particular, who find themselves between the traditional and the continually changing mores of today's society.

Ao begins her tale with the moving observation:

"The stories that dwell inside every human heart, some are said, the majority, however, in quiet mourning... Sometimes, prayers and not only those that are composed in a figment of imagination, sometimes serve to constitute confessions" ((Ao, 1).

This intro sums up Ao's aim to articulate peoples' frequently silenced feelings and their internal tussles amid the ravages of violence. Through an acceptance of the "blankness" that envelops so much personal narrative, Ao exposes the psychological scars conflict inflicts on people, and gives voice to those who suffer in silence.

The uniqueness of Ao's writing lies in her ability to convey a wide range of human emotions while addressing complex themes such as nationalism, identity, trauma, and the internal struggles of individuals living in conflict zones. Ao's portrayal of the region is deeply authentic, drawn from her own direct experiences within the Naga community, which provides her narratives with a distinct emotional depth. Through the anthology *The Laburnum for My Head*, Ao takes readers on a journey through the lives of those who bear the brunt of ethnic violence, as well as those who try to remain untouched by it. Stories like *The Letter*, *A Simple Question*, and *Sonny* grapple with the profound human cost of violence, particularly the prolonged conflict between insurgent groups and the Indian military. In these stories, Ao effectively illustrates the psychological distress experienced by both combatants, engaged in armed resistance, and non-combatants, who are often forced to live in the shadows of violence. As Chatterjee Siambiakmawi (2015) asserts,

The Northeast has long been on the fringe of mainstream literary consciousness, edged out by its complex socio-politics, crisis of identity, and the prolonged rule of the gun (260). This observation underscores the marginalization of the Northeast region in the broader national discourse, as the ongoing violence and ethnic tensions are often ignored by mainstream media and literature.

Ao's writing not only writes about the political and military strife, but also interrogates the personal and emotional cost on individuals, in particular women. The other stories in her anthology reflect on the ethnic layers that make up Naga society. She writes about how women cope with the stress of tradition and modernity against the backdrop of violence. Ao captures the hardships of women, not just in the war torn context but the social dimensions of a society in transition. As women fighting to sustain their cultural roots, they are symbols of a community's resourcefulness in the face of hardship on many fronts. With her compassionate works, Ao provides a unique insight into the interaction of gender, ethnicity and turmoil. It is not only the tale of the instant effects of violence but about the cumulative psychological effects that determine the future of the Naga people. It is, as Ao demonstrates elsewhere, the crushing emotional torments, which do not dissipate when the assault itself has ended. Her work is a testimony of literature's power to bring to light the invisible wounds war leaves behind.

The term "psychosocial" is often used to describe the dynamic interaction between social and psychological factors that influence human behaviour and development. According to Loughry and Eyber (2003), as referenced in the Oxford English Dictionary, the term is defined as "the influence of social factors on an individual's mind or behaviour, and to the interrelation of behavioural and social factors; also, more widely, pertaining to the interrelation of mind and society in human development" (2). This definition emphasizes that psychosocial issues are not merely individual psychological experiences but are intrinsically linked to societal conditions. In conflict-ridden regions like Nagaland, where insurgency and political violence are commonplace, this psychosocial interplay becomes particularly pronounced. The psychological toll of violence is compounded by the ongoing

societal pressures that individuals face, perpetuating cycles of trauma and distress. As Daikho Manehrii (2018) poignantly writes,

It would be a profound falsehood for a Naga to remain silent regarding the immense atrocities inflicted on a daily basis (p. 81).

Such violence not only disrupts individual lives but also profoundly alters the social fabric, leading to enduring psychological wounds that shape the community's identity and psyche. In the short story *The Letter* (2009), Temsula Ao skillfully explores the intersection of violence, poverty, and militancy. The narrative unfolds within a village grappling with the systemic exploitation of its inhabitants by both insurgent groups and governmental neglect. Ao highlights the complex relationship between local economic struggles and the pervasive violence that defines everyday life in the region. The story opens with a description of the village's uneasy quiet, reflecting the underlying tension:

"There was an uneasy quiet in the village: the underground extortionists had come and gone, taking with them the hard-earned cash the villagers had accumulated by excavating the initial alignment for a motorable road to their village" (54).

This subtle introduction sets the stage for a narrative where the violence imposed by insurgents is not only physical but also psychological, as the villagers are forced to live under constant threat and intimidation. The villagers had worked diligently on the road construction project for their community, initiated by the Border Roads Organisation. Despite the project's importance, the villagers' contributions were not compensated with respect to their needs. After being paid, they had planned to use the money for personal goals such as buying livestock or repairing their homes. However, they failed to account for the demands of the underground militants, a fatal oversight. Upon learning of the villagers' earnings, insurgents descended on the community that night, armed and threatening, demanding a portion of the money under the pretext of "taxation" (55). This intrusion into the villagers' lives by armed insurgents is not only an act of economic exploitation but also a violation of the villagers' sense of security and autonomy, further perpetuating the psychosocial effects of conflict.

Ao's description of these events is a reminder of the stark conditions in which communities in conflict areas are forced to survive, violence assuming an omnipresent quality to life. The insurgents' methods, extortion and intimidation, create a culture of fear that touches every aspect of the villagers' lives. There are the psychological scars for individuals and communities who are learning to live in this situation of ubiquitous violence. This story illustrates the complicated ways in which insurgency and conflict infect the psyche of inhabitants of these regions, how violence permeates the most normal and accepted of behaviour, both infecting the actor and creating trauma for the acted upon.

By taking as its main subject the trials of mundane people, Ao draws attention to the profound social and mental disorders that develop in areas of conflict. The story is both a portrait of the physical toll that violence inflicts and a chronicle of the lasting psychic wounds that come from growing up in a world where violence is the norm. Villages, where the labour

was initially seen as a source of progress and development, now live through a sense of powerlessness as the resources they have created are usurped by people for whom the practice of violence is a means of control. The situation epitomizes extreme psychological stress of constant vulnerability of survival being a political bargaining chip as the armed forces seek to appropriate every aspect of life to its advantage.

Ao's painting serves as a powerful reminder of the physical and psychological impact of war on individuals and communities. It was not a social issue; it was nothing short of a psychological issue and moral degradation. This dilution of social and psychological root in the experience of the villager is symptomatic of the larger impact of the conflict on the people of Nagaland. In Ao's art of telling a story, we observe how violence works not only as a mode of physical conquest, but as a method of psychological subjugation, breaking down the mental fortitude and emotional faculties of those ensnared in its path.

Upon noticing the rebels' arrival, the villagers immediately understood that their plans for spending the money on essential needs had been irreversibly thwarted. The sense of their impending fate was palpable as they saw "these imposing figures emerging from the forest, arriving under the cloak of darkness, with a clear purpose: to extort under the guise of the underground government" (55). The villagers, fully aware of the futility of resistance, chose not to challenge the insurgents. They knew that any attempt to oppose the armed rebels would likely result in severe repercussions for their entire community. With no other choice, the villagers reluctantly complied and handed over the 'tax' demanded by the insurgents.

As the names were called out, along with the corresponding sums owed, the villagers began the process of counting the money with a sense of deep resentment. The atmosphere was thick with animosity, as their eyes glinted with frustration and helplessness. In the midst of this tense scene, one villager approached the headman. He explained, with a mixture of guilt and desperation, that he was unable to pay the demanded sum. He had to prioritize his son's education, as the boy needed the money for his final examination fees, which were due within the week. The villager's words reflected the harsh reality of the choices he was forced to make, balancing the demands of insurgents with the needs of his family.

Upon hearing this, one of the extortionists abruptly rose from his seat and struck the unfortunate man with the butt of his rifle, exclaiming, 'What examination, what fees? Are you not aware of the sacrifices we have endured in our struggle against the government? And in what ways are we enduring hardship within the forest? Are you suggesting that we ought to forgo tax collection so that your son can take examinations and ascend to positions of authority within the Indian government to govern us? (56)

The village headman intervened at a critical moment, ultimately saving the life of the impoverished villager who had resisted the rebels' demands. This moment serves as a powerful reflection of the profound moral dilemmas arising from senseless violence, highlighting the frustrations and challenges caused by insurgents who claim to fight for

national liberation. The situation underscores the ethical complexities faced by individuals in conflict zones, where survival often requires difficult choices. The narrator introduces a subsequent event, further illustrating the tension and trauma of the community.

A few days later, an unidentified underground militant arrives in the village, inquiring about the direction to the headman's house. An older woman, well-acquainted with the turmoil in the village, recognizes him immediately by his appearance. This woman, who has witnessed the suffering of those tortured by the insurgents, whom the rebels label as 'sympathizers' has endured the profound trauma of losing her husband to the insurgents. Her husband was abducted and killed for acting as an informant for the Indian army, a fate shared by many in the village (58-59). Like her, numerous women in the region have experienced deep physical and psychological pain due to the loss of their loved ones, often in brutal circumstances.

Cynical and wounded though she may be, even in the face of her memories of pain and betrayal, the women's ability to maintain a level of detachment and identify the purposes of the militant enables her to lead him to the growing underground group. The group plots his death with intricate planning. Afterwards the group's leader finds a letter in the extremist's pocket. The letter contained a request from the man's son, who pleaded with his father to send him some money to pay his examination fees. This detail also adds a moral and psychological dimension to the situation, as the villagers are made to reflect on the gray area of their lives being torn between their inner strife and the larger national conflict.

The narrator, leaves that explanation up to the reader, forcing them to really contemplate the difficult question of how people in this kind of place juggle the personal and the political. The story is a reference to the near-impossible odds people in the country have to live in, when the point where national issues and personal trauma intersect becomes ever harder to find. As a result, its tale is one that emphasizes the moral uncertainty that prevails in a world ruled by insurgency and war, where individual losses unavoidably collude with broader ideological struggles. The narrative further uncovers that a significant number of young individuals enlist in rebel factions without a comprehensive understanding of their underlying motivations. The clandestine government deceives the youth by presenting themselves as the genuine 'freedom fighters' advocating for the well-being of their state. As a consequence of this, numerous young individuals endure significant hardship and tragically lose their lives.

An illustrative incident is portrayed in the narrative entitled 'Three Women,' wherein the young sons enlist in the rebel army. Lipoktula, the matriarch of these sons, asserts that "we were unable to adhere to the deadlines for fee payments, and on occasion, the older boys were unable to participate in examinations." In a state of revulsion, both individuals fled and enlisted in the Assam Rifles, having completed their education only up to the sixth grade" (72). The driving force behind their actions is not rooted in nationalist

ideology, but rather in the pervasive grip of poverty, as it presents the only avenue for them to seek a way out.

The instances clearly illustrate that socioeconomic factors, such as poverty, alongside administrative shortcomings, have significantly contributed to the emergence of anger and discontent within marginalised communities. The villagers found themselves in challenging circumstances, struggling to navigate life amidst inadequate financial resources. The prevailing substandard living conditions frequently compel the youth to align themselves with rebel factions.

Another narrative entitled *A Simple Question* explores the ramifications of political authority exerted over the villagers by both the underground insurgents and the forces of the Indian government. The narrative commences with a disquieting dream of Imdongla, a sagacious woman well-versed in the political intricacies and historical context of her village. Her astute presence of mind frequently spared her husband Tekaba from challenging circumstances. Tekaba, in the capacity of gaonburah, consistently finds itself in the crosshairs of armed factions. They once relished their influence and esteemed status, yet they also found themselves increasingly susceptible when hostilities erupted between the Nagas and the Indian state (81). They are reduced to mere jesters under the influence of clandestine organisations and governmental authorities. Should they neglect to meet their demands, they issued a threat to incinerate the granaries of the village. Initially, a sum of one rupee was requested as a form of 'tax' from each household, intended to cover the travel expenses of the rebel leader who was advocating for Naga independence from India in foreign territories. However, as time progressed, the expectations intensified, and any hesitation or dissent was met with harsh repercussions, affecting not only the individual in question but also the gaonburahs and the elders. (82)

In a comparable manner, individuals who did not extend their support to the government faced repercussions from the authorities. The villagers, exhibiting a lack of cooperation, were assigned to establish military encampments and compelled to clear the peripheries of highways, facilitating a clearer view of the subterranean insurgents. Individuals who decline to acquiesce to this agreement, would be compelled to vacate their villages; their residences and storage facilities would be incinerated, and they would be displaced alongside other obstinate villagers ... prohibited from tending to their agricultural lands (84).

The ramifications of social exclusion are starkly apparent in this context, as the landowners were forcibly removed from their village. A conflict arises as a result of insufficient political power. When Tekaba, accompanied by the elders of his village, was forcibly taken to the army camp for allegedly supplying provisions to the jungle men, Imdongla adeptly navigated the complexities of the situation with diplomatic finesse. Upon arriving at the camp, she fervently advocated for the release of her husband. As the captain of the army camp drew near, she was on the verge of disrobing, an act that would represent

the highest affront to any Naga woman. Upon observing it, he departed from the location and exited. As the captain contemplated various matters, Imdongla remarked, 'Fear of you Indian soldiers and fear of the mongrels of the jungle (p. 87).

The inhabitants of Mokokchung village are acutely aware of the ramifications stemming from power conflicts. They are unable to derive any advantages from their homeland. Despite their engagement in their respective fields and the income derived from such endeavours, they struggle to derive satisfaction from their work, as they have been compelled to relinquish their earnings to the underground army. Our existence is fundamentally intertwined with rice. Are you not aware of the circumstances affecting our children and women? (p. 85). It illustrates the genuine hardships faced by the villagers, who were subjugated and compelled to comply with the directives of armed factions. Nevertheless, the subsequent short story entitled 'Sonny' illustrates the harrowing ordeal of the aspirant Sonny, who met his demise at the hands of his compatriots within the underground power structure. Once Sonny remarked to his girlfriend,

My dear, you fail to grasp that this transcends both you and me, as well as everything else combined. This represents my predetermined path. (pp. 88-89). Sonny was the individual who introduced positive elements into his girlfriend's life, yet following his choice to align with the underground group, their existence was irrevocably altered. Upon aligning himself with the rebel faction, Sonny ascended to the pinnacle of leadership, earning comparisons from his admirers to the enigmatic figure of 'Che'. Despite achieving his aspirations, he found himself lacking contentment in his existence. This information was disclosed through a correspondence addressed to his romantic partner. It conveyed the sentiment,

Dearest, there were numerous occasions when I appreciated your restraint in not preventing my entry, yet now I find myself wishing you had. (94). The transformation of Sonny from a figure of strength to one enveloped in despair is clearly articulated in the aforementioned words. In a manner similar to his personal experiences, the inhabitants of the region have faced profound distress, characterised by the separation of families, the tragic victimisation of women, and the forced witnessing of indignities by men, who ultimately faced either lifelong suffering or death (97). The actions undertaken by the armed groups instilled a profound sense of fear among the populace, thereby engendering "a new sense of terror in the minds of the general public" (88).

In a parallel manner, the naivety of the unsuspecting villagers is effectively illustrated through an incident in the narrative '*The Boy Who Sold an Airfield*'. The narrative unfolds in the aftermath of the Second Great War, where the villagers remain oblivious to the war's conclusion. Each time they hear the distant roar of aircraft, a palpable sense of impending calamity envelops them. They were unaware that the Great War had concluded. Their anxiety was palpable; at the sound of the planes, they instinctively fled into the adjacent jungles. Their lack of awareness regarding social and political events distinctly illustrates

that the marginalised are excluded from society. Their existence appeared to be engulfed in turmoil and complexity due to the pervasive violence and suffering surrounding them. The events and the figures depicted in the aforementioned narratives reveal that individuals have encountered the harshness of violence and have endured significant trauma. According to Jensen & Shaw (1993) trauma encompasses emotional distress associated with warfare, which can arise not solely from direct encounters with life-threatening circumstances and violence but also from indirect stressors. These may include the injury or death of loved ones or carers, economic difficulties, geographical displacement, and ongoing interruptions to daily life. (n.p.)

In narratives such as *Laburnum for My Head* and *Three Women*, female characters are afforded significant prominence. The author illustrates the challenges faced by tribal women as they endeavour to navigate the complexities of modern society while grappling with the preservation of their traditional customs. In the narrative *Laburnum for my Head*, the central character Letina challenges the entrenched Naga patriarchal traditions and asserts her autonomy by choosing to appear in the cremation ground.

Lentina astonished all, herself included, by declaring her intention to accompany her husband on his final voyage (4). In addition to this, when she disclosed her intention to purchase a plot for her burial after her demise, her driver expressed astonishment and remarked, "But madam, your resting place is already designated beside my master!" (6). She finds herself quite disheartened by this response. She is mindful of her intention that her tombstone be adorned with the blossoms of the yellow laburnum flower.

I seek a location adorned solely with magnificent trees to grace my resting place (9).

The narrative presents a determined woman poised to challenge and transcend the entrenched customs of her village. Conversely, the narrative *Three Women* explores the experiences of three generations of women who encountered adversity at various points in their lives. Lipoktula, a woman of the first generation and a grandmother, has endured sexual assault at the hands of her village landlord. Medemla, her daughter, represents the second generation and has experienced abandonment by her lover. Martha, the adopted daughter of Medemla, who is originally from the 'tea tribe,' also encounters racial discrimination. Whenever she ventured outside to play, the other children would mock her by calling her 'coolie' and ridiculing her darker complexion. Upon her enrolment in the school, she observed, "They did not want to sit near me or play with me" (p. 64). Martha's father, having experienced the loss of his wife, abandoned the newborn child in the hospital, lamenting, What will I do with another girl? Feel free to act as you wish; I have no desire to encounter her again (68).

The author elucidates the intricate dynamics that characterise the experiences of women across various historical epochs. The tribulations faced by women persist, although influenced by varying factors contingent upon the dominant social circumstances.

Tensula's *Laburnum for My Head* presents a nuanced exploration of irony, traumatic experiences, aggression, and conflict, offering a profound analysis of human conditions

across various societal strata. The clashes between underground insurgents and Indian Forces in Nagaland can be classified as a domestic conflict, as they are confined to a specific region and involve several ethnic groups asserting claims to territorial sovereignty. John Doyle and Priyanka Talwar (2013) assert that India's domestic conflict may be classified into three themes, reflecting the issues raised or demands made during the conflict: territorial disputes, developmental conflicts, and localised communal conflicts. (68)

The challenges faced in the North Eastern states of India predominantly stem from assertions of ethnic superiority, the imposition of cultural norms, and are exacerbated by insufficient development. The Northeast region is geographically isolated from the Indian mainland due to inadequate infrastructure and insufficient transportation options, stemming from a lack of visionary governance to develop reliable infrastructure in the challenging mountainous landscapes. This positions it among the less developed regions of India (Nongzaimayum et al. 38). The narratives also illustrate a viewpoint that the challenges present in this region are not insurmountable. Cohen (2011) posits that ensuring local communities have sufficient representation within the political system may lead to a decrease in the number of individuals turning to violence. While violence is a prevalent issue that impacts society, it can be mitigated by thoughtfully addressing the authentic concerns of the communities involved. According to James Gilligan (1997), as examined by Jennifer Lawson and Bryn King (2012), violence is a public health issue that can be prevented if there is a commitment to investigate and tackle the underlying causes of violent behaviour (518). The issues leading to unrest and turmoil in the northeast are inadequately addressed by the authorities, who instead opt for a heavy-handed approach in responding to the populace's concerns. The inadequacy of the administrative system in comprehending the trauma experienced by these marginalised individuals reinforces the public perception that they are overlooked and that their legitimate concerns are inadequately addressed. Consequently, Tensula's portrayal of the unfortunate existence of the indigenous population reveals that their lives are permeated with suffering, and the repercussions of insurgency create challenges not solely for individuals but for their entire community. Tensula employs the craft of writing as a means to foster harmony and tranquilly. In her own poetic expression, she articulates, "I hear the land cry/ Over and over again/ Let all the dead awaken/ And teach the living/ How not to die" (Ao, 2006, vi).

Conclusion

To conclude, the incidence of insurgency in Nagaland revealed the psychological wounds on a generation old families and communities waging on a conflict-ridden battleground. Although political and social grievances have fuelled the insurgency, innocent people (especially women) suffer more than warring soldiers. A lifetime of conflict hangs over the daily life where family members are slowly haunted into a cycle of living in pain and wishing for a better day. The violence has far reaching effects not only in physical terms but also emotional, as communities split between open rivalries and individuals left emotionally traumatised from the stories of their past. While the insurgency rolls on it is important to remember that either resolving or preventing such conflicts will require more than just political negotiations: they demand a profound appreciation of the psychological

and emotional toll exacted upon those who must endure them. Any healing that takes place on a scale broad enough to shift the direction of society will need to be one with an equal emphasis on reconciliation, strength and the system in which it takes place if it is not to be just another rewriting of events for territory.

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