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A Tribute to Dr. Temsula Ao

Writer, an Academic and Ethnographer, Dr. Temsula Ao passed away on the 9th October 2022, at the age of 80. She wrote several books which convey the angst of the Naga community against repeated incidences of violence and annihilation by security forces. Temsula Ao's stories expressed the anguish that there are no winners in such conflicts but only that of vulnerabilities experienced by victims.

Temsula Ao was a Professor of English at North Eastern Hill University from where she retired in 2010. In the mid 1990s she served as the Director of the North East Zone Cultural Centre, on deputation from NEHU. Interestingly Temsula Ao's education in University of Minnesota opened a window of opportunity to interact with the native indigenous communities of America. This rare opportunity was well utilized by her when she recorded the oral histories, belief systems and folklore of her community back in Nagaland. This rich and rare experience resulted in a book which is a fine contribution to ethnographic account of the Ao Naga community.

Dr. Temsula Ao was the recipient of the Nagaland Governor's Award for Distinction in Literature, along with the Meghalaya Governor's Award for Distinction in Literature, too. She received the Sahitya Akademi award, apart from the prestigious Padma Shri award. Although she was a recipient of various award, she was humble and accessible to many of us. We remember her as a great advocate of women's rightful place in governance and spoke with clarity on this issue. Being the Chairperson of the State Commission for Women Dr. Temsula Ao emphasized on redefining the customary laws, for women to be a part of governance.

Dr. Temsula Ao's demise is a great loss to us and many of those who knew her personally as well as of her work. May she rest in Peace.

IAWS pays homages to the memory of Dr. Temsula Ao and convey our deepest condolences to the family.

Ishita Mukhopadhyay
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