



Gender Discrimination: Shadow Power of Matriarchy in Easterine Iralu's *A Terrible Matriarchy*

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The grounds of Matriarchy are maternal authority. From childhood males are taught to distinguish to maternal authority. The writer has very realistically delineated matriarchal hegemony. She has accepted that:

The little girl is a combination of many little girls. Some girl readers have told me, 'I am that little girl I was mistreated because I was a girl-child. Some girl- children have suffered more abuse than this one in the story.'

(Easterine: email, 14 January, 2010)

Some of her observations have also suffered in the tale as she accepts:

I put together my experience of school and growing up to piece Lieno's experience into a typical childhood experience. I was bullied at school as the youngest in my class; she is bullied at school. Dielieno actually means, errand girl, so it is a name that designates what the status of a girl-child is, she is considered good for running errands and looking after the house. Nothing very wrong with that but grandmother's way of raising her harshly and preferring the male-children, I felt, was wrong and I have seen that in many families.

(Easterine: e-mail 14 January 2010)

Easterine's narrative technique through the ignorant perspective of Lieno is similar to that of Jhumpa Lahri in her telling the tale of Hema and Kaushik in "Once in a Lifetime". As she points to Kaushik, Hema leads the readers through her past recollections of incidents in their lives, Likewise, Lieno accepts the readers through her life. This explanation shows the main characters in their relationships as the story reveals the female protagonist is five years old. In the story the novelist sees the numerous parts of matriarchal affirmation in manifold manners challenging the simply held feminist point of view. The tale surrounds the five year old Dielieno, only baby girl and youngest of the five children. Sometimes she realized herself unwanted and took for granted that she was a reflection, after an act since her parents after created her wear the discarded garments of her brothers as Beauvoir States:

One is not born a woman, but one becomes one? It summons attention to the concern under consideration. (Beauvoir 295)

Though maturing up as the darling of the family, at the mild age of four and a half, she understood that her grandmother did not like her when she denies to offer her a much expected chicken ley. She was asked,

That portion is always for boys. Girls must eat the other portions. (Iralu 1)

Lieno also paid attention to her mother offering meat pieces from her own plate to her brothers. She observed how her mother lived a very unsatisfied life, living in complete fear of the granny who never praised anything she did. When Lieno's mother sent the elder son to bring water, she was narrated by grandmother to send the girl instead, as she held the opinion that no man to carry water. Grandmother always boasted of how, she started to operate when barely four and stated that:

The girl must be made to work at home. Don't let her run about with her brothers any more. That is not the way to bring up girl- children. (Iralu 4)

Easterine opinions are equal to that of social activist Rosemary Dzüvichü who composes in her poem, "Womanhood" concentrating on gender discrimination in her society. The poem aims to fetch an alternation in the mind-set of men. Lieno was always referred to as "the girl" by her grandmother, refusing her any individual identity. When she asks her mother why is she never summoned by name, her mother shrugs of stating that she is someone important to grandmother. But when she is summoned so even after two years, she chooses up dare to speak up: Grandmother, my name is Dielieno, remember you gave me my name? Why won't you call me by my name? (Iralu 4).

The grandmother literary behaved her like an errand girl as her provided name Dielieno meant- a name granny herself had offered, signifying her to be a non-reality in the midst of her brothers as Tolan states :

They argue that feminism should work to liberate women from a system of male centered values and beliefs, and should empower them to discover their own uniquely female identity.(Tolan 323)

Once, Lieno went to grandmother along with her brother Leto, she created him sit on her lap bestowing mind love to the embarrassment of the thirteen year old boy. Ignored the little girl's presence, she commanded him to bring firewood and went to offer Leto a lump of jaggery. Lieno had great entertainment in the lap of uncle Atu when he came to see grandmother. When she began climbing on his shoulders, she was caned by grandmother stating:

Girl, what do you think you are? A monkey? I've never seen such a badly behaved girl.(Iralu 5)

When uncle protected her being single little child, grandmother turned that no obedient girl climbs up a man's shoulder. Being hurt, Lieno expressed her contempt for grandmother to her father revealing her injured calf. Her father only stated:

It is for your own good, your grandfather would never do anything to you that is not for your welfare... She only wants to raise you to be a good woman. (Iralu 6)

But she did not understand as it got ingrained in her heart that grandmother contemptedly looking at her entertaining herself and desired that old lady ceased. Lieno's mother happened pale on hearing her tragic tale and inquired if grandmother ever said 'bad blood', she accepted mother created her when promise never to describe it to anyone. One day Lieno overheard her parents talk their scheme to send her to live with the grandmother who passed a secluded life. Though mother expostulated with her father, he had his manner stating.

Mother was right. You are not raising her properly. She will leave tomorrow for mother's house. (Iralu 10)

When she arrived at grandmother's home to stay, Lieno was informed to keep away from her as she might have fetched germs from her home. She commanded Bano to bathe the girl in icy cold water. She had put on some attires to warm herself up in the bitter cold; she was instructed by the old female to bring water. At the water point she interacted two ladies who commented her for being a descendant of old female. Bano informed her to avoid the comment and never to tell about it to grandmother lest she

would invite her anger and contempt. Though very young, she also started to believe how much men disliked the old grandmother. The experience of motherhood is an unmatched experience of female yet the:

...Institution of motherhood is controlled by a man and this physical quality conditions her entire life? (Rich 35)

At the house, Lieno was offered numerous works such as bringing water, creating grandmother's bed, collecting the chickens at sunset and counting them. When Leto came to see grandmother after three days, Lieno clung to him, but grandmother see off her to fetch sweet potatoes for her brother. Grandmother highlighted her usual love for the boy, however he felt embarrassed to go to cut firewood. However she created him promise to see again and she would cook many dishes for him. The young girl resummons:

It amused me the way my brother had to extricate himself from grandmother's clutches. With some revulsion I recollected that she was going on like a young girl with him competing for his attention and bribing him with good food. The meat that hung on the spiked bamboo was not for us. It was for Leto and all my brother (Iralu 18)

Lieno's fear of grandmother developed day by day as she chose on her with foolish things like creating bed in the wrong manner repeated counting of chickens in the evening and following out neighbour's dog that took away two chickens. When her parents went to see after six months, Lieno was pleased to sit in her mother's lap as long as she could but was followed by the grandmother to fetch tapioca. As mother explained to topic of sending Lieno to school, grandmother told about her days when girls did not attend school but stopped at home to learn domestic works and visited fields. Her father put in his idea for the first time ever before his mother:

Mother.... you mustn't think we don't respect your views on the subject. We took this decision for Lieno because she is a bright girl... of course, she will continue living with you and helping you in your house. And of course, we want to listen to what your decision's on this. (Iralu 23)

They could not perform anything without her last decision on the destiny of Lieno. However, from the following day she could go to school with her best friend Vimenuo. But grandmother did not like Vimenuo's groups believing them sinking from bad blood. Lieno liked going to school but it meant numerous sacrifices as grandmother created her get up and hour earlier to act all the chores, Grandmother was never enjoyed about her schooling and kept informing Lieno's mother:

I really don't know what it is your generation sees in school. Your children are not being taught the skills of life because they are too busy studying. I was doing such a good job of teaching the girl to work... It was difficult enough. She has a stubborn streak to her. Now you come with all these plans for school. She will completely forget all I have taught her now. (Iralu 3.7)

When the father told about the poor action of his sons, grandmother started practicing them stating that they would be correct as they are to be learnt to be manly:

In my father's day, boys never did any work because they had to look after the village and engage enemy warriors in warfare. The household that did not have a male house was considered barren. They were always in constant danger if there was a war. The women would only have one man to protect them. That is why we love our male children so much and we give them the best of food. And we should. (Iralu 37).

Shocked by grandmother's behaviour why grandmother selected on Lieno when she came back to home at from school after special learning how to write and read. Feeling disappointed at the beatings

and abusings heaped on her, she needed to understand from Bano why grandmother contempted her so much. Bano had the common literary:

She doesn't hate you... she wants you to be a good girl. It's her way of bringing you up to be a good woman. (Iralu 39)

When grandmother's brother, Sizo, came home and gave Lino a chocolate, she searched allowance from grandmother to adopt it. That day she came to understand that Bano was Sizo's daughter, though she summoned her mother. Grandmother continues to reveal her wrath on Lino and never appreciated any one praise her. She summons that she did not understand that she had anything good in her. It was Christmas time that she was permitted to see her parents for a week. Lino memories with nostalgia, the time she spent with her mother – cooking dishes and preparing cake. She had a great time playing the game of hide and seek with her brothers Bulie, Pete and Leto. Mother weaved a new sweater for her which she wore with light will power. It was very provoking when mother woke her up on Christmas day with a pocket keeping a gracious little doll. But the happiness of Christmas was swiftly ceased when Bano came to summon her back to grandmother's home.

I dreaded going back.... It was not so much the amount of work to be done but the way grandmother made us feel as though we were constantly being watched. (Iralu 69)

From the period she arrived at grandmother's home, she felt secluded, missing her parents and brothers. When Bano explored her happiness in having her return, Lino felt sorry for her who was never permitted to visit her father's home at Christmas since he had another wife and children. Lino's instructor Miss Sobu became pregnant with drawing teacher's child which created grandmother very whimsical because such instructors to teach bad things to students. Grandmother got only two types of men in the world as Bano states:

In the first group are; those who are upright and go to church regularly and come to all the community gathering. The others are those who do not go to church regularly and are found of drinking and whose daughters sometimes get pregnant before they can get married. She is convinced that only those in the first group will get to heaven and the rest will all go to hell. (Iralu 81)

As a matter of fact grandmother hated beautiful girls assuming them to go corrupt sooner or later. Hence Lino could never long for pretty attires as long as she lived there. She started to know why her mother though beautiful, never wore any good garments. When Lino was nearly eleven years, grandmother started to gaze at her for something she did not appreciate. She asked from Bano has she received the curse yet? At night, Bano defined what the curse meant when girls arrived at their puberty. Grandmother's fear was that girls would become pregnant if they mixed up with boys. The young Lino debated the matter with her friend Vimeno and happened fearful of the curse and was ready to eat most bitter gourds to stop bleeding.

Eventually, on her thirteenth birthday she obtained the curse fetching along with it her embarrassment and fear of being searched by school friends. Elaine Showalter comments:

... girl's core gender identity is positive and built upon sameness, continuity and identification with the mother. (Showalter 320)

The girl as she develops to adolescence and adulthood is humiliated by her sudden physical development. She gets herself very distinct from the boys of her age creating her fearful and embarrassed of her womanhood. Kire states:

Tell me mother,
What is like to be a women?
Unafraid
Unashamed

Awkward with my limbs
Ashamed of my menstruation
Afraid of my womanhood?

(Kire 32)

The Child observes herself identical to her mother. She yearns to focus her personal individuality without any mirror image of the other. She reveals her 'Matrophobia' which is the fear of becoming one's mother. She contempts to be her mother's replica there is a hidden secretive pull towards mother. Shashi Deshpande in her novel *The Dark Holds No Terror* delineates an equal condition in the affinity between Sarita and her mother. The mother is embarrassed of gender inequality as she attempts to fetch up Sarita the way she needs, avoiding her female individuality. When Sarita began her menstruation, her mother creates her ashamed of herself narrating her:

You're growing up she would say. And there was something unpleasant in the way she looked at me, so that I longed to run away, to hide whatever part of me she was starting at..... A kind of shame that engulfed me, making me want to rage, to scream against the face that put me in the same class as my mother.

(Deshpande 62)

Lieno was pleased to pass the Matriculation examinations with a second division. Being the best for studies in the family, Leto willed to sponsor her college education. When her father showed the matter to grandmother, she indicated out religiously that:

... a woman's role is to marry and bear children... That is her most important role. Men don't like to marry literated spouses. Then, if you get no one to marry you, you will be secluded in your old age and have no one to bury you.... See what a dreadful thing it is not to have children to bury one? (Iralu 206)

So stating she needed them to reconsider their scheme of college education for the girl. But the tide moved to Lieno's fortune and she should follow her dream. The pleasant news came when she came to understand that Vimenuo would be married to her brother Leto. But when grandmother heard of it, she exclaimed in wrath for creating such a demonic relationship with a family of bad blood. She contemplated Vimenuo for being the daughter of a drunk, welcoming from a scandalous family. She did not come from a scandalous family. She did not need to be part of the defile relationship by denying to attend their marriage. It was her trustworthy belief that:

When there is bad blood in a family, it always repeats itself. That is why we always consider the background of a girl's family when we want our sons to marry well marriage.... is a mixing of blood. (Iralu 213-14)

And she waited the day when the relationship would break up or something dreadful became. Lieno's brother Vini's wedding proposal with Nisano, a girl from a good family, was confirmed by grandmother with delight. She needed it to be enjoyed with high fan fare at her expenses. Though the lad had been alcoholic, she was full of appreciations for him believing to lead a wealthy and superb conscious existence. She also went to give away all her fields to Vini since he married to a girl of good blood of her choice. But Vini surrendered to his bad habit discarding a baby boy Vinilhoulie. A sorrowful stricken grandmother desired that her house would go to the little lad after her demise. However, grandmother directed what Nisano should go and compelled her to spend all the money on the boy's attires and toys. She uttered suddenly her maxim that:

..... a male child is to be brought up very carefully. He will shelter all of us in turn when he is grown up. (Iralu 260)

Lieno was surprised how her father and her folks kept servilely esteeming grandmother's strict opinions. Even Nisano has fixed her loyalty to her:

I had myself never learnt to feel anything of the sort and always wondered how father and his siblings could be so devoted to her. They tried to fulfill her every wish. They quoted her constantly and it irked me that they would expect their spouses to be awed by her wisdom and her philosophy of life and try to abide by it.(Iralu 271).

Little surprise how she continued to be more ruling than ever in modern age. Lieno kept her personal view as a young literate girl of twenty one, though her mother attempted to narrate her to be less strict in her thought of grandmother:

I know you were unhappy in her house but she was trying to teach you to become a good woman. Men don't like women who are aggressive and outspoken. They like their wives to be good workers. You are a good worker, Lieno, but you must try to be more docile. (Iralu 271-72)

But when Lieno started to let out her suppressed bitterness at the way she was behaved as a child being bathed in cold water at her bidding, counting Chickens in the dark etc, mother was surprised. She only debates that all these grandmother operated to Lieno because she was a girl not a boy. However, she always experienced being tortured for being form baby girl and desired she was not a girl: To relax the girl her mother sat beside to define the crux of the matter:

Your grandmother was the eldest of the children. She grew up in the village and moved to the town only when she was married. When she was young she lived through a very hard time. In the village, widows without sons lost their husband's property to other male relatives. So she understood that it was very important for a married woman to produce as many male offspring as she could... But people were unkind and mocked to those who could not produce male children... I think your grandmother looks at her sons and grandsons as a kind of insurance and she is inclined to take a very conservative attitude towards your brothers by pampering them as she saw other boys being pampered in her childhood.(Iralu 272-73).

Mother further indicated out that grandmother's love for lads is due to her requirement to be cared in old age. Grandmother always viewed that females had to depend on males as they were weak. Mother suggested Lieno to be kind to a weak old widow who sought to protect the loyalty of her sons and grandsons. Grandmother developed in a society where females pushed their males to visit to war as they would be secured under such great soldiers. Instead of contempting her, Lieno is inspired to realize grandmother's plight and excuse her. In her mild time, Lieno experienced that if she denied to excuse grandmother, she would herself finish being embittered. Slowly she started to realize how a profound sense of uncertainty carried grandmother to keep her opinions. Lieno's fear changed into pity as she knew grandmother attempting to purchase affection. She resolved to be sympathetic to the old female. Meanwhile Bano fetched news that grandmother was bedridden. When Lieno and her mother were by her bed side, Lieno pronounced:

Grandmother, it's me Lieno, I want to say that it is Okay, I forgive you for being harsh with me. (Iralu 280)

The pleasant words of forgiveness created grandmother's motionless face beam with a lamentation. Grandmother mourned her tears, showing her pain, before she ceased away that night. Three days after her demise it was considered that grandmother created her appearance numerous times. Lieno saw her sitting in her chair as usual. She is able to wield her impact on the family even after her demise. When Lieno moved twenty three, she was married to Bulil's comrade. The tale had come to its complete circle after her wedding. But will she continue to make the perpetual tradition of her grandmother or break free from the staples of the past? Grounds of women empowerment has been grandmother's power and stay throughout the fictitious tale. It is created on Maternal power though ethical strength, control of higher studies or socialization order through indoctrination strength, the rescue, reflex, through victim

force and emotional terrorism and vehemance through intimidation strength. It is important to express on the speech of Luce Irigaray:

It is also necessary for us to discover and assert that we are always mothers once we are women. We bring something other than children into the world, we engender..... love, desire; language, art, the social, the political, the religious.... and we must re-appropriate the maternal dimension that belong to us as women. (Irigaray 70)

Lieno's bitterness is changed into absolution for her grandmother realizing her social dilemma during a period of Naga history when a man was deemed to be the soldier of the family. Such convictions of the older generation are to be known in the backdrop of socio- cultural advancement of a society in transition. *A Terrible Matriarchy* stops scrutinizing questions to all and sundry to look after kids, irrespective of their gender individualities, accepting there valuableness as presents of God. The fictitious tale is a clarion voice to male and female to frolick their unmatched part in introducing in social change, doing away with all shapes of gender inequality.

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