

MATRIARCHY WITH PATRIARCHAL IDIOSYNCRASY, MARGINALITY AND CULTURAL ETHOS: A CASE STUDY OF ESTERINE IRALU'S A TERRIBLE MATRIARCHY

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ABSTRACT

India with its strong history is also famous for its cultural diversity and geographical topography, for its snow laden mountains, verdant valleys, sun bleached beaches, deserts, mesmerizing reverberations of temple bells and Azaan; together they all add beauty, grandeur and serenity to the multicolored, diverse and variegated India. The North Eastern part of India, especially, Nagaland is a state of mysticism and awe, it is culturally rich, boasts of its own ethnicity also it's a house of number of tribes. Against the background of political turmoil, ethnic conflict, social unrest and military insurgency, it serves as a backdrop of numerous tales; distinct and captivating. Esterine Iralu, a Naga female writer has indited a compelling and beautifully intertwined tale about Naga people A Terrible Matriarchy; with regards to the experiences, woes, subjugation and anxieties of Naga women; the marginalized and suppressed, yet there are women who emerged in the same society as authoritative, empowered and tyrannical matriarch. This paper aims to throw light on the influences of matriarchy and at the same time the deplorable conditions of women in Nagaland, and how they have been treated in Naga culture; especially the women of subaltern lot.

Key Words: *Matriarchy, Patriarchy, Position of Women, Suppression and Culture.*

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An intriguing and evocative tale set in the verdant dales and beautiful hills of India's Northeast township of Kohima, unfolds the persistent nagging and censure faced by a girl whose parents sent her to her grandmother's home at the age of five with the belief that the old dame can put all her efforts to make her a perfect and ideal Naga girl, who in later life will successfully fit into the traditional roles of ideal Naga daughter, daughter-in-law and mother. Esterine Kire Iralu sensitively writes about the place she knows very well, her country of origin, Nagaland and about the female gender: the two things she is full of pride. A Terrible Matriarchy is interspersed with myth, mysticism, cultural values, traditions and superstitions, where Iralu beautifully sketches the picture of Naga society that binds us to pause and visualize the austerity, trial and tribulations and thrilling experiences of Angami denizens inhabiting the microcosm designed by her with her artistic genius and faculty of rationalizing the irrational and featuring the culture of marginal community. Iralu's novel A Terrible Matriarchy was originally published in 2007, and has now been translated into Norwegian by Kjell Olaf Jensen, published with the title Nagalands Døtre by Orion in Norway. The novel written from the perspective of a girl, Delieno aka Lieno documents her journey from the age of five to twenty-three, it also examines and analyses the old lady, Vibano's biased attitude towards male and female members of her extended family, focusing on the constraint relationship between the old woman, and her granddaughter, the narrator Delieno: I was the youngest in a family of five children and Mother and Father made it seven. I sometimes felt I was an afterthought, and maybe Father and Mother didn't quite know what to do with me. Also, because I was a girl after four boys, they never seemed to be sure whether to buy me girl's clothing or let me wear leftover boy's clothing. (2)

The same kind of story echoes in a number of households of India, where the girl: an undesired and unwanted is perceived as a package of problems than a bundle of joy. The obsessive inborn hunger of the Indian patriarchal set-up to have a male child as its progeny has virtually brought the ethical systems of India into shambles. The birth of a daughter usually brings disappointment to the parents; they are frustrated and afraid of the responsibilities they have to bear with regards to her upbringing, education, nourishment and marriage. The other prominent factors being: "menace of their dowry, desire to keep wealth within the family, fear of the dependence of the girl on the family, for the life, attempt to control family size, also there is a strong wish to appease god in times of crisis". Since her birth she becomes a problem for her parents

and her suffering never ceases no matter at what stage of life she is. In *Terrible Matriarchy*, Iralu delves into the issues of hardship, oppression and the subjugation of female species of varied ages, background and knowledge, dwelling in the lap of the bucolic setting of Kohima, in a most lyrical manner. Esterine Iralu's selection of the title "A Terrible Matriarchy" arouses our interest, however, it sounds bizarre and antithetical because how can matriarchy be appendaged with terrible, when terrible types of patriarchy are rampant and practiced in several parts of India. Actually the novel emphasizes the terrible matriarchy of an old woman who is an alter ego of a patriarch: tyrannical, suppressing and misogynist. She wields her power over her niece, granddaughter, daughter-in-law; even the widow of her grand son is not spared of her medieval and pristine self styled laws. The novel encompasses a broad range of female gender issues while depicting various marginalized women of Naga society. Using the psychoanalytic approaches of Jacques Lacan and Julia Kristeva, Mitchell suggests "that the woman writer will 'speak the discourse of the hysteric'. She will at once 'be feminine and refuse femininity'; she creates a woman's world with in her novels while at the same time, rejecting that world through the authoritative act of writing. Mitchell sees no alternative for the woman writer. She has to work within the dominant order, what is termed the 'symbolic', for to be outside the dominant order is to be mad or dead. But equally she must disrupt that symbolic order with a new symbolism". Thus *A Terrible Matriarchy* is an example of Iralu's expertise in fashioning the women characters in such a manner that it resembles an Indian epic society; featuring the women's suffrage and wretchedness. Mapping the status of Indian women would become incoherent without knowing the conditions of the women in Northeast India. Nagaland is the habitat of different ethnic groups, both tribal and non tribal with patriarchal and matriarchal controls co- existing, the status of women for various reasons does not differ from that of the mainstream India. Women, here too, are subjugated, marginalized; and the overall condition of the womenfolk of the region is quite disappointing.

As far as Matriarchy is concerned it gives an interesting insight into Indian Culture, it's a term, which is applied to gynocentric form of society, in which the leading role is performed by the female and especially by the mothers of a community. Some authors consider it as a hypothetical form of human society. "The word matriarchy is coined as the opposite of patriarchy, from Greek "mother" and "to rule". Gynocracy is sometimes used synonymously. While there are many existing matrilinear and matrilocal societies, such as those of the Minangkabau or Mosuo, no matriarchal societies are known in historical sources, and hypothetical prehistoric matriarchy has been discredited. However, strongly matrilocal societies are sometimes referred to as matrifocal, and there is still some debate concerning the terminological delineation between matrifocality and matriarchy". The matriarch in this novel always refers her granddaughter as "the girl", she does not believe in carrying the unnecessary burdens of feeding good food to girls, educating them, pampering them and showering love and affection on them in the light of the belief that all these things should be reserved for boys, simply because they are born to enjoy such privileges of life. She inherits the

extremely conservative and austere convictions about girls; how they should be dealt and treated at their parents and later in-law's home and the other domains as well. Her views and behaviour are diametrically opposite towards both the genders: hostile and uncompassionate towards female and loving and tender to the male members. The old lady in her conduct and thinking gives the impression of a misogynist. According to a sociologist, Allan G. Johnson, "misogyny is a cultural attitude of hatred for female because they are female". In India "misogyny is manifested in numerous ways, sexual discrimination, denigration of women, violence against them and sexual objectification of women". Though, ironically in India hundreds of thousands goddesses are worshipped, but when it comes to a girl child even the educated and elite feel uncomfortable, and the rate of female feticide authenticates the preference of people, and how obsessed the country seems to be with a male child. Vibano, too in the novel is portrayed as a typical woman of country side with her misogynistic tendency.

The name of little Delieno which translates in Angami into "the little errand" is a petty girl of five sent to her maternal grandmother's home, since her tender age she has been subjected to the old lady's oppression and cruelty, consequently the child harbors ill will and vengeance towards her. With an unfriendly and stifling atmosphere at her grand mother's home Delieno or Lieno finds her only companion Bano, her teenaged aunt, the old woman's brother's daughter kept in her custody. Bano is the product of her father, Sizo's illegal relationship with a woman of lower orders, since the old lady does not want any scandal and family name being tarnished so brought the baby Bano to her home. She being the anti education of girl deprived Bano even of the elementary formal education; hence she remained an illiterate girl, though well acquainted with the skills demanded at home only. Bano and Lieno provide company and serve each other's confidante, seeking strength and spirit to move on and find petty happiness in trifling chit chats and whispering discussions about their neighbors. Bano leads a very mechanical and monotonous life, rising early in the morning, stroking fire, fetching water, cooking meals, sweeping home, catching stealthy naps in the afternoon though pretending as if wide awake, tending and nursing her aunt thus, running as many errands as possible to please the old lady, while remaining mute, oblivious and unparticipative at the same time.

Vibano the granddame is strictly against the girl's education, fixed her mind that "education made them get fancy notions about themselves and they forget their place in their family" (23), but Visa, Lieno's father convinced and cajoled her so she half heartedly permits Lieno to join school, but all the more making the life of a girl more miserable and her schedule exhausting. She is also sent to fetch water with Bano, asked to arrange stacks of wood, feed chicken, count them at night and numerous other jobs have been assigned to her, yet, the old woman is nasty and unsatisfied, seems to enjoy picking on her, complaining at her hastiness, finding faults at even the smallest thing and beating her where it hurts her the most. She gets up an hour before the usual time, helps Bano in carrying out the domestic chores then goes to school. "In patrilineal and patrilocal communities daughter's education is viewed as wastage of

time and energy, because expected returns from educated daughters do not exceed the costs, thus the female education as an investment becomes unattractive to parents, pinpointing the fact that in most of the developing countries, women are relatively less educated than men. Girls are either not sent to schools or they do not receive the same quality and level of education, as the boys do. In India, the gender inequality in enrolments is worse at the secondary and tertiary levels than at the primary level. Although benefits of women's education are well recognized, a number of barriers contribute to the gender gaps, with varying intensities across the states" .

At home Lieno bears her grandmother's taunts, criticism and punishment if she ever comes home late from school, and at school girls look down on her and boys swing her school bag in the air, playing with it until she burst into tears from their unfairness, yet, the problems at home and challenges at school never curtail her aspirations to pursue education and mitigate her enthusiasm in any ways. She outperformed her classmates, easily gets promoted to another class by the school authority ahead of her age, where as her brothers have never been recognized and appreciated with respect to their studies, especially Vini and Pete are quite weak in their studies, Vini for his undisciplined and rowdy behaviour and Pete for his physical unfitness. Lieno gets attracted towards an equally innocent, poor and sweet natured girl Vimenuo at school, the common attribute the two shares is their poverty at home. Both the girls are teased and sneered by the well dressed girls at school who never have to fetch water from public water spot and never do petty errands as they do at home, nor do they have few dresses to wear, repeating them on different occasions. Vimenuo and Lieno's sufferings are same; both are maltreated at home for being girls; in fact Vimenuo is worst sufferer along with her mother who is chided by her husband for giving birth to three girls only. Lieno's grand mother abhors her playing and hanging out with Vimenuo, she damns them as low, bad blooded, cursed people, without an male heir, where the father is a drunkard, always visiting the liquor house. Bano further informs Lieno why Vimenuo's father is always ill behaved, drinks and remains angry with his wife "he wanted a boy to carry on his name. The girl children are never considered real members of the family. Their mission in life is to marry and have children and be able to cook and weave cloth and look after the household. They got married, they would always be known as somebody's wife or somebody's mother and never somebody's daughter" (26).

Bano is stereotyping the selective and definitive roles of women and their position in society, thinking on Bano's description Lieno also finds her own mother submissive, quiet, dominated by her father, always taking care of her sons and never allowed to show any love and warmth to her daughter. When comparing her mother with Vimenuo's mother, her friend's mother seems to her more miserable because she does not have a son and daughters are synonymous with problems, yet, it is always the girl who is ready to serve her parents and other relatives. Vimenuo helps her mother in her house hold chores and Lieno not only serves her own grandmother but stays and provides company to her sister, aunt Neikuo at her home when she falls sick and needs

a companion. Aunt Neikuo is one another silent sufferer, she is an old spinster, debased and mocked by her own sister, Vibano for being single and dependent on others. Vibano's siblings have been guilelessly straightforward, not stern and apathetic like her. They are kind toward Bano and Lieno also. Sizo tries to fulfill his filial duties towards his daughter Bano but Vibano shoos him away and reprimands Neikuo when she accuses her of being selfish, binding Bano to herself and not getting her married for her personal needs, where as she does more than required when it comes to her grandsons, spoiling them rotten.

When the male species are concerned Vibano owns strange ideology, stinking of being irrationally biased and absurd: "They are boys. Boys will be boys. They will be all right. They should be taught to be manly. In my father's day, boy 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 heir was considered barren. 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". (37) Her primitive and colonial views are engraved in her psyche which can not be altered or erased; rather such masculine ideals apotheosize them (male). De Beauvoir argued that "man is always the subject-self, the "I", whilst the woman is always the object, the other. This belief, she continued, permeates human history, and informs the whole western philosophical thought. It is, for example, central to the work of the famous psychoanalyst, Sigmund Freud, who based his theory of sexuality on the possession of the phallus/penis. A man is a man because he possesses phallus; a woman is, simply, not a man, because she is deprived of phallus that asserts dominion. Therefore, a woman is a lack, a negative-she lacks the phallus that confers subjectivity. This lack of the female self can also be detected in art and literature, where women frequently appear as object of men's desire or fears-metaphorical virgins or whores-but never complex autonomous individuals. Women are always associated with the passive body, and men with the active mind and strong body: this idea has become central to the feminist literary criticism. However, such myths of art and science fail to explain why women have so readily conceded the struggle for subjectivity" .

Girls are being damned for being girls and boys at the same time get princely treatment from their poor parents even, like Lieno's grandmother favors her grandsons, who live with their parents and make the life of Lieno difficult who is a great help to Bano and serves her. Even when Pete falls sick she does not let her go and see him, after much pleading and begging she let her go and the child runs miles to catch the glimpse of her dying brother. In the country households all the sources and energies are channelized toward the healthy upbringing, better growth and nourishment of a male child, at the cost of ignoring female child or female children. The loss of a male child is mourned for a longer span of time and a girl's loss is easily forgotten, in fact when they are alive their miseries, troubles, ailments are ignored and are only considered when they seem to go beyond control, thus in such circumstances their loss is easily mended. After Pete's demise the grief of losing a son is too much for a mother

to bear so the young girl of eleven Lieno, whose menstruation periods have not yet started is now parceled back from grandmother's home to parents' home to work there like a donkey and act like an adult to manage the home in carrying out the household chores.

Lieno attends the school, does her homework and diligently completes all the domestic chores: the responsibilities of fixing food for three grown up, robust elder brothers with good appetite and taking care of an ailing mother lie on her tiny shoulders, also running to the water spot to fetch water; which is symptomatic of the fact that it is always woman who arranges water for the family with numerous other jobs in rural and urban India. Shirin Kudchedkar gives an interesting account of women's position in the society that "establishes gender characteristics of masculine and feminine with the biological sex distinctions is what feminists challenge together with the sexual division of labour: the social roles of wife, mother, housewife assigned to women go hand in hand with a division into the public and private domains, the first being the sphere considered to men, the second to women". Women become 'the second sex' in Simone de Beauvoir's telling phrase. Milton's line, "He for God only, she for God in him" could well be cited as an example of the almost universally held assumption that man's purpose in life is to serve God, the state, society, not least his own self-advancement, while woman's purpose is to serve man". Man is seen as the norm, woman as the 'other', not merely different, but inferior, lacking. Personality traits are distinguished in terms of polar opposites of masculine and feminine. Men are considered to be old, strong, assertive, independent, aspiring, rational, and logical. Women on the contrary are considered to be timid, yielding, gentle, dependent and self sacrificing, emotional, intuitive. Though all cultures claim to praise and value the womanly 'quality', one can cite an equal number of passages denigrating women while the verbal praise masks the actual relegation to a secondary position. Literature of course amply reflects these stereotypes".

In A Terrible Matriarchy the cultural anthropology of rural area of India, like Kohima is being discussed, where Iralu attempts to discover the patterns and tries to understand why the people of a particular geographical terrain behave in a peculiar manner, for instance in the North eastern region of India women are engaged in doing all the industrious works ranging from collecting fuels from woods, working in diverse climatic conditions on tea gardens with their babies tied on their backs, due to water shortage people inhabiting the hilly areas walk down miles to the common water spot to fetch water and this job is even assigned to women. In this novel the public water spot figures as a very important location in terms of understanding the socio-cultural milieu of the place. Bano takes Lieno to the spot which is always flocked by the garrulous gossip mongers and foul mouthed pugnacious women folk, full of evil intent with suppressed and amiable women also struggling to bring water home from the same source. They pick fight for petty things, inveigh at one another, abuse and curse, and discuss the parentage of new borns, thus such activities and regular exercise of women take place on a routine basis. While only few men work, otherwise majority stay idle,

doing nothing, beating their wives, gambling and drinking most of the time. Lieno has seen Vimenuo's father and another man from the neighborhood dead drunk, damaging their vital organs beyond cure, dying a miserable death; both have been the frequent visitor of liquor house. Since child hood Lieno on her way to bazaar with Bano or alone has sensed men ogling and leering at girls outside the liquor house. The pervert women also sit there, watch people with lascivious interest and pass lewd comments. Lieno burdened with work hardly gets time to talk to her friend, moreover, her grandmother never lets her mingle and converse with the people of neighborhood, yet, she overhears the gossips rife in the town.

The novel emphasizes on the discrepancy faced by the female gender when their rearing is concerned: girls are raised with the strictest order and boys are given liberty. Girls like Lieno are not only crushed under the burden of the household chores but they do perform well at school, whereas, most of the boys like hooligans, prefer lingering in the town wasting time and energy, as a result of being favored and pampered at home. There is a common expression in almost all Naga dialects used when a child is born. "For a boy they would say "Us". For a girl, they would say "Other". This is not only used in the past, it is still in use today. This itself is an indication that girls are considered less than boys from the time they are born. With nuclear family on the rise, there is a hope that a girl child will be treated as one of "Us" as much as a boy is. Also, girls from young age have been told that it is virtuous to be quiet, gentle, shy, and vulnerable and not to be too ambitious; whereas boys have been encouraged to be all that a typical Naga girl would not be. Even a slightest resemblance with a girl's character would be mocked with the phrase "Are you a girl?" "Be a man!" A boy is not even permitted to cry; that is a girl's prerogative! As they grow older, such genderization of characteristics and behavior is internalized by both sexes. It is a common sight in Nagaland that girls are made to do all the household chores and even work outside the home to supplement the family's expenses but boys are at liberty to roam around 24/7 without any expectation or discipline from the parents. The excuse is that 'they are boys'. The message would be that girls are servants whereas boys are to be served; girls are producers and boys are consumers; girls are less valuable than boys though this callous attitude has backfired and families, especially parents are crying over the damage that'll take generations to undo".

Vini too has taken undue advantage of his grandmother's leniency. He is given food when ever he gets scolding from his father; he gets money from the old lady. In fact she does everything that helped him inculcating bad habits in him, like coming home reeking with the smell of wine. He spends time with a bunch of goons, picks up fight and brings trouble to home. A Terrible Matriarchy throws light on the different incentives and mechanisms opted by the village folk during the crisis when a family undergoes. For example, there is always an immediate remedy applied to rectify 'the incorrigible and unrestrained male' and it is to marry him off to any simple, ingenuous girl. Grandmother Vibano instills the idea of marriage in Vini and his parents' mind with the belief that she will help him to stop drinking and become a responsible husband and

father. (224) For De Beauvoir "a marriage is an oppressive and exploitative economic arrangement, which reinforces sexual inequality, and binds women to domesticity. It perpetuates the belief that if female is protected and provided for her by male partner, she is happy: she is thought to be content that her needs are provided for" . The lives of poor girls are easily decided in this manner, the burden of giving dowry by their parents are lowered down, though ironically not eradicated when their matches are hooked up with such kind of brutes, yet some what it lessens. Same happens with Nisano, bound in marriage with Vini, he is now doing a menial job of assistant in the engineering department, earning meager income, but full of bad habits. After marriage begins the terrible journey of another woman, who conceives the baby after the five months of marriage while also bearing her husband's tortures and swinging moods. Nisano gives birth to a boy after struggling for hours with intense and prolonged labor pain at home. The addition of one more member has not corrected Vini; he fails to give up and mends his ways. The usual routine of his beating and thrashing intensified after baby and her suffering worsened with time. Grandmother is the only member who continued welcoming him, even made her mind of settling field on Vini. Her vision is hazy and she couldn't see that she was contributing to Vini's problems by giving him money that he would use to drink. It was hard for Leto to talk to her because she would always accuse him of being jealous of Vini's inheritance. (271)

Leto loved Vimenuo and wants to marry her but the grandmother is aghast at the mere prospect of marriage with the chit of a girl "the dead drunk's daughter" Grandmother roared when she was told of the news. "This is what happens when people get it into their heads to educate young girls! Folk forget their status and try to marry above their station. If my mother were alive the news alone would kill her. If you knew the kind of family they are descended from, the scandals in the family, you wouldn't have anything to do with them. But it is all these modern ideas to blame Educating girls indeed! Education can't rid you of bad blood I say!"(210). The old dame yet another time proves to be a typical, illiterate, prejudiced woman who traps an innocent girl Nisano and hooks her in marriage with her rowdy, emotionally imbalanced and physically unfit grandson, destroys her life but abhors Vimenuo and cannot envisage her matrimonial alliance with her other grandson Leto, simply because she hails from a very humble family; where father died a notorious death and mother runs from pillar to post to feed her daughters. In such circumstances the chances of bringing dowry by Vimenuo is cipher, on top of that there is nothing to brag about her family name. Her alliance with her well established grandson seems totally unprofitable, moreover; it does not seem to involve any kind of monetary gains and other privileges which she considers to be the right of a bridegroom's family.

"The custom of dowry is rooted in the religious traditions of patrilineal and patrilocal Hindu Culture (Altekar, 1962; Goody and Tambiah, 1973; Srinivas, 1996). In traditional Hindu Culture the highest form of marriage was, according to the sacred text of the Manusmriti laid down in 6th C, the Brahmin form of marriage. This Brahmin marriage associated with the highest castes of priests, centered round the Kanyadan, the gift of

the virgin daughter. It was considered as the father's karma, the religious plight, to give his daughter to another man, without asking for compensation; otherwise he should according to Manu, sell her and treat her like cattle". Nisano brings sufficient dowry, nevertheless, dowry does not guarantee any kind of hassle and harassment free life at in-laws home, her case is not different than others, hence she too has harrowing experience in presence of her husband and after his end, which comes rather swiftly due to damaging of his lungs. After spending restless night of puking blood he slips to death. Now the miserable time of a young widow begins when she is made to house with a terrible matriarch. However, Vibano showers extraordinary amount of love, now this time the recipient of her affection is her grandson Vini's son, thus spoiling the child, fulfilling his demands and creating a monster in him, while neglecting the mother. The preference of a male child, an heir is so strong in India, that it has become an integral norm of the society and imprinted in animus in such a manner that erasing it seems inexplicable. Whereas, longing to have female child seems very strange, in fact astonishing amongst the multitude which owns biased dogma for male progeny.

Lieno's trajectory in life is unsteady, she stumbles, musters up courage, then resumes her struggle with fresh vigor, and she has been subject to incessant maltreatment at home, bears criticism which increases as her age advances, by her blood relatives and gossip mongers of neighborhood, like aunt Bino, who sent away the first three suitors of Lieno. Usually in India the problems of women intensify with their age, because the strings of expectations and complications in life get entangled beyond control. Lieno offers strength to her childhood companion, her aunt, while all her dreams have lost colors and she is languishing in the world of hopelessness and monotony. Lieno also extends emotional support to her widowed sister-in-law, at an important juncture of life, when she is silently bearing the dictates of her great-grandmother-in-law, on the one hand and society's influences on the other, when after a year of Vini's death people's tongue start wagging about how odd it is that Nisano is still with grandmother. "It is custom for the widow to stay on in her in-law's house and tend the husband's grave for the length of a year. But beyond that period her mother should know that it is shameful to let her stay on and impinge on the hospitality of her in-laws." (268). She supports her family member more protectively after her grandmother's death, which still haunts them in her lonely home. 'Death' is configured as something spiritual, perhaps in Nagaland ties between people and their worldly life break with difficulty, or Vibano's ghost is nothing but tantamount to society's expectations, never let people live in peace.

The Second Sex argued that there was no such thing as 'feminine nature'. "There was no physical or psychological reason why women should be inferior to men, and yet, throughout history and across cultures, women had always been second-class citizens. Even when worshipped and adored, they have had no autonomy and received no recognition as rational individuals any more than when they have been abused and denigrated. Biological differences do not provide a casual explanation for women's oppression, however, their reproductive function has placed women at a disadvantage

by tying them to the domestic sphere and associating them with the body and thus with animals and nature. Just as man considers himself superior to nature, so he considers himself to woman". The Rules, regulations, conduct have always been designed by men or favor men, imposed on female with reference to society, even theology. "In the Bible woman is often restricted to the roles of sinner or (more rarely redemptress). She is described unequivocally at I Peter 3.7, as the 'weaker vessel'. There is precious little evidence that men and women occupied an equal footing in their daily lives. Even in Milton's Paradise Lost, the description of Adam and Eve reminds us that they were 'Not equal, as their sex not equal seemed'" .

As History and literature succeed in proving time and again that men and women are not equal, they also point toward the fact that one precedes the other, there is one superior and of course by virtue of being superior, domination comes into account and domination naturally brings suppression. Undoubtedly women are suppressed and subject to discrimination; but somewhere it is woman who has assumed that she is made to be used and abused; their suppression is kind of understood and accepted by them, in India at least. Simone de Beauvoir's famous statement "one is not born a woman, but becomes a woman", opens the floodgates of questions that no biological, physiological, or economic factor shapes the fate of the woman, rather it is her own maturity and reasoning which determine the figure that the human female represents. Yet, the statement fails at several tangents to clear the scientific proposition with regards to gender and sexuality; the two genders are different from each other, not only in terms of anatomy, also because of inherent possession of the structural and functional traits of sex.

Andrew Edgar and Peter Sedgwick in their book titled, Key Concepts in Cultural Theory has brought out the difference of 'gender' and 'sex' in the following words:

"The concept of 'gender' is typically placed in opposition to the concept of 'sex'. While our sex (female/male) is a matter of biology, our gender (feminine/masculine) is a matter of culture. Gender may therefore be taken to refer to learned patterns of behavior and action, as opposed to that which is biologically determined. Crucially, biology need not be assumed to determine gender. This is to suggest that while what makes a person male or female is universal and grounded in laws of nature, the precise ways in which women express their femininity and man express their masculinity will vary from culture to culture. Thus, qualities that are stereotypically attributed to women and men in contemporary western culture (such as greater emotional expression in women; greater tendencies to violence and aggression in men) are seen as gender, which entails that they could be changed" . Vibano of the Terrible Matriarchy is overbearing, decisive, uncompromising and opinionated; if analyzing her character from feminism's perspective she has all the qualities that are not typical to her gender, and that's what feminism claims that gender is a cultural construct and equating femininity always with tenderness, subjugation and inferiority is not a sensible thing, because different qualities stereotypically attributed to men and women conditioning the gender are subject to change and vary person to person. In continuum of the same

belief, it is the result of one's own instincts, sexual orientation, strength that makes him / her homosexual, heterosexual, transgender and so on. Feminism challenges the conventions of society that the two types of physical constitutions do not design mental peculiarities of the two respective genders.

Nothing substantial leaves Iralu's observation in A Terrible Matriarchy, she does not skip the minutest experience that completes the circle of being of a woman in India. Beautifully she captures the journey of a woman from childhood to womanhood and her experiences. As Lieno strives to project and establish herself after getting educated, she is being censured by her society. She can never outperform men, can never be equal to them, then why this useless trifling of proving herself and using education as an instrument to bring revolution in the place, which is inhabited by people leading austere lives. Yet, Lieno's life stands like a metaphor, referring the tales of millions of women of India, who have potential, zeal to change the conditions of women but suffers from cultural inhibitions. In Lieno, Iralu envisages an Ideal Woman, A New Woman, and A Multi Tasker. She is a woman of her expectations, that's how a woman should be of 21st C; who can be traditional in life and embrace the reformatory norms, designs with the help of education that can bring change in her life and the life of women associated with her.

Nagaland, an exotic land blessed with natural scenery, having distinct culture of its own figures as a domain worthy of discussion around which Iralu has finely woven a story mythically entwined with verisimilitude; a mature attempt that succeeds in drawing attention towards the intricacies of women in general and Naga women precisely, of course at centre being Lieno, with her friend, aunt, sister-in-law, mother, and her great grand aunt standing respectively, at different radii, revolving round her life. Having set a somber tone tended to evoke evaluative responses, the novel certainly without any humor also focuses on Matriarchy; one of the strangest practices in India: believing that women have all powers with regards to dispensing judgments, fixing matrimonial alliances, allocation of property, appointing heir, holding prerogatives beyond domestic realm, as well as other socio-cultural or political powers. It seems to be the very opposite of Patriarchy, where man assumes all the power, however, it sounds strange and untraditional how can in any society patriarchy be replaced by matriarchy, doesn't it lead to ego clashes.

In A Terrible Matriarchy a terrible matriarch when she has authority over her family members she too distorts, alters and exploits female members, meaning to say she too slips into the traditional role of a patriarch. In Gyn/Ecology, the American feminist theologian Mary Daly wrote one of the most radical essentialist accounts of gender relations. Like de Beauvoir, she argued "that religion, law and science were all methods of patriarchal control working to define and limit women. Daly began as a feminist critic of Christianity, arguing that the image of 'God the father' was constructed to validate the rule of the father in patriarchy. Daly concludes that Christianity was irreparably anti-female, and abandoned it entirely. Christianity, she argued, had violently overthrown an earlier, goddess based religion and assimilated the original female fertility

myths. The ascendancy of patriarchy had involved the murder of women living outside patriarchal control, such as unmarried or widowed women, and wise women healers, who were burned as witches by the church. For Daly, this was symptomatic of the Christian perception of women. In Gyn/Ecology Daly advised women to reject the tools of patriarchy, including religion and language, and 'wildize' themselves" and that's what Iralu, an advocate of democracy and human rights wants to specify that humanity is above matriarchy, patriarchy or any other manifestations of superiority or ascendancy. Both the genders are equal and complete and there is no need to disparage one in order to glorify other and this fundamental should be embraced by Atheists, Religionists, Chauvinists, and Nationalists and so on.

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