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PATRIARCHAL CONSTRAINTS IN TSITSI DANGAREMBGA'S *NERVOUS CONDITIONS* AND R.K. NARAYAN'S *THE GUIDE*

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Abstract: Inequality spreads like a disease, strangling ambition, crushing women's spirits, and discouraging them from supporting and rallying future generations. Patriarchy acts in such a way that we are oblivious to its consequences. Increasing opportunities for women is interpreted as proof that the "woman problem" has been solved, allowing people to overlook the ongoing issues of female inequality. Males continue to be the heads of houses, while females remain housewives, largely due to family customs passed down through the generations. Because of society's unconscious acquired behavior patterns, stereotypical beliefs, and selective vision, the patriarchal system persists.

Index Terms- Inequality, Patriarchy, Discrimination, Disparity, Isolation

The main argument of this article is that patriarchy leads to gender inequality and women's subjection to the point where they have no control over any part of their lives. Patriarchy is a social structure based on the systemic oppression of women through societal and institutional conditions, norms, and regulations that continue to disenfranchise women and are intrinsically tied to power and control issues.

Nervous Conditions, a semi autobiographical novel by Tsitsi Dangarembga, has been the topic of several discussions regarding gender relationships and gender hierarchies in Zimbabwean Shona society. The novel, set in pre-colonial Zimbabwe and written by herself a woman, depicts the struggles of living and surviving in a gendered society during a turbulent period of colonization. Dangarembga highlights that she not only draws on her own personal experiences, but also attempts to portray the reality of female characters in the context in which she is working. *Nervous Conditions* is a piece about poverty, the difficulties women encounter in achieving their goals in life, and the obstacles they must endure in order to succeed.

Tambu, the novel's central character, is given the opportunity to pursue further education following the death of her older brother Nhamo. Tambu sees her English-educated aunt Maiguru and realizes about the sacrifices Maiguru done, many of which were made because of her education, and she realizes that education is not really an assurance of freedom. However, while education may provide a multitude of advantages and a path out of poverty, it is insufficient to eliminate the patriarchy, racism, and traditional

family systems that confine Tambu and Maiguru. Tambu learns during the period of her two years at the mission school, and particularly through her connection with Maiguru, that education is not really a guaranteed route for her to lift her family out of poverty or become a god-like image like Babamukuru.

Tambu soon discovers that Maiguru did not accompany Babamukuru to England to look after him, as her relatives claim. Rather, Maiguru acquired a master's degree in philosophy while she was there, that's why she is now capable of teaching along with her husband at the mission school. Tambu realizes that, in addition to the social insult of Maiguru's education not getting publicly appraised among family and friends, Maiguru has no access to the funds she earns from teaching—Babamukuru utilises her revenue to afford the entire family, robbing Maiguru of any power she might otherwise have to deal with situations or equip herself in other ways. Her inner ambitions have been pushed aside by her responsibilities as a wife and mother.

When I was in England I glimpsed for a little while the things I could have been, the things I could have done if - if - if things were - different - But there was Babawa Chido and the children and the family. And does anyone realise, does anyone appreciate, what sacrifices were made? As for me, no one even thinks about the things I gave up (103).

Maiguru has to give up the benefits she acquired via her education because she is a woman. No one in Tambu's community is aware of or concerned about Maiguru's education, but they are respectful of her husband, Babamukuru, who has a similar level of knowledge to his wife. This gap reflects the deep-seated gender discrimination that existed in both Shona and colonial culture in Rhodesia at the time. Maiguru, however being a better educated working mother, has little control over her wages or over how she raises her children.

R K Narayan is a keen observer of human emotions and motivations, making him a formidable critic of human behaviour. He presents a mirror up to nature, and much like a mirror, he reflects it back to us in its true form. In the novel *The Guide*, Rosie, a beautiful and appealing lady from the Devadasi family, marries Marco, a post-graduate in Economics, and believes herself privileged because her husband is from the upper crust of community. Rosie is obliged to observe her husband pursue his ambition study of ancient civilizations—while ignoring her own. Rosie feels isolated, unwanted, and dissatisfied as a result of Marco's obsessive focus on his studies and his prohibition on her dancing. Despite this, she is fully depends on his financial support as his dependent. As a result, she feels not just unfulfilled and dejected, but also powerless.

Rosie's love of dance is so powerful that she tends to lean towards Raju, ignorant to the reality that he is misusing her. Marco, Rosie's first husband, and then Raju, her lover, both attempted to control and influence Rosie's future. The novel deals with a woman's evolution from a woman who is reliant on men and imprisoned inside patriarchal constraints to an empowered individual who assumes her own powers and therefore achieves her freedom.

Raju's urge to control Rosie increases to the point where he forges her signature in order to obtain priceless jewels from her husband, Marco, without telling Rosie. As a result, Rosie's connection with Raju becomes just as constraining and exploitative as her relationship with Marco. Rosie manages to find herself confined with Raju, much like she did with Marco. While Marco and Raju try in various ways to influence Rosie and mold her future, she eventually defies both men, breaking their grips and taking control of her own destiny. Rosie said, "If these were about dancing, I could perhaps have tried-" He looked up sharply. The word

"dance" always stung him (115). Marco is perplexed as to how Rosie considers dancing to be her cave art. Marco dismisses it as a low-brow, pointless kind of art, heaping insult upon insult on her. He exposes his egoism as well as his patriarchal and commanding personality.

In the Indian patriarchal system, Marco is rarely free enough from the traditional Indian attitude of a married man toward his wife. As a result, he forbids his wife from dancing in public. Another aspect that contributes to gender disparity in patriarchal societies is women's economic dependence on males. Young people should be taught that men and women are equal since biological differences do not imply that one is superior to the other.

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