

The Evolution of Gender Disparity in Naga Society with References to Easterine Kire's Character, *A Terrible Matriarchy*

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Abstract

Easterine Kire in her novel *A Terrible Matriarchy*, have projected the gender disparity prevalent in the Naga society. The novel focuses on the life of a five year old child girl name Dielieno, Grandmother Vabino and her Mother in the midst of the three generations in the Naga society. The novel recounts how the young protagonist Dielieno fights against all the excruciating odds to get education and a place for her family in the society. Through education she breaks the barrier led on her by grandmother and society. Her strict and disciplinary grandmother sets the platform for her evolving identity in the contemporary Naga society. The paper attempts to portray the challenges and difficulties in the male dominated Naga society and the ability of a young Dielieno to endure the stiff matriarchal set up and evolve against it.

Keywords: *Violence, matriarchal, issue, hardship, patriarchal, identity, progression, endurance*

Easterine Kire is one of the finest woman writer from the Northeast India. Her root in Nagaland, enable herself to vividly portray the matriarchal issue and identity in the contemporary Naga society. She has projected the Naga society in the traditional land, where a woman is identified through a male patrilineal. In her novel *A Terrible Matriarchy*, she focuses on the young protagonist Dielieno (also called as Lieno), her Grandmother and Mother in the Naga culture, which is in the midst of ingenuity and social change in the hierarchical Naga society through a woman progression.

A *Terrible Matriarchy*, is a story of a five year old child girl name Dielieno, who fights against all the excruciating odds to get education and a place for her family in the society. Through education she breaks the barrier led on her by the society and grandmother. Kire project Lieno a resilient character who is not ready to define herself according to the patriarchal culture of the Naga society. When Lieno overheard her parents discussing to send her to live with her grandmother, she was terrified. In her dream she sees herself happily playing with her grandfather who then abruptly changes into her grandmother. The dream scares Lieno in a way she could sense the terrific experiences she would have to undergo in her grandmother's home (10). When she was sent to live with her strict disciplinary grandmother at the age of five her grandmother refers to her as *the girl*, and she never called her by her name. She was made to do the household chores and to look after the house along with Bano. On the other hand her brothers were made to stay at home and they goes to school. She was also thought to develop a positive attitude towards her own brothers. "Her grandmother believes that girls don't need an education, but need to train to become a good wife and a caring mother". When Dielieno's mother tell her, "You must not be so harsh on your Grandmother. I know you were unhappy in her household but she was trying to teach you to become a good woman" (291). Easterine project Lieno's character during the period when family, church and school shares a close bond but the girls' education was not prioritise during that period of time (viii). While doing so she assimilate in herself certain qualities which helps her to develop a different perspective towards her own life.

The novel also gives us a peek into the traditional Naga society where the birth of a girl is welcomed as a domestic helper. The Naga society is patriarchal where all the decision are made by men who is the head of the family. However in the novel Dielieno is made to survive in the matriarchal framework led by her grandmother. The experience of the matriarchal society to a better world with better society awaits her. Her journey of strict and disciplinary culture begins with her granny who later transform herself and builds a new identity for herself as well as for the society. Kire in her novel through the character of Lieno portrays a progressive woman with a new hope and identity.

Easterine Kire is known for her vivid portrayal of characters that are influenced by the traditional culture of Nagas and Lieno is one of such character. When Lieno parents decided

to send her to live with her grandmother her whole world collapse as she knew her granny dislikes her and favour only her brothers. On the other hand the grandmother accepts her in her house in order to raise her as a good Naga wife and a mother. However Lieno's parents empathize and consoles her by acknowledging her to be their greatest comfort (292). According to Lieno's grandmother, "girls don't need an education, they don't need love and affection, or time to play, or even a good piece of meat with their gravy!" (307). Thus, Lieno hates her and hope her to die like her grandfather who passes away. Her going and living with grandmother and Bano for six years has transform herself into a new woman who is not weak and ready to fight challenges and hurdles with all her might. Lieno is a curious and intelligent little girl who struggle against her grandmother efforts to *tame* her and evolve as a young mighty woman (viii). When she comes to stay with her family with grandmothers' permission during Christmas season or any festive occasion her granny would send Bano to take her back home and she would look for an excuse not to go back the same night but would return back to her granny's place. Thus, she was petrified and thought not of a single day survival in her grandmother's home but that very obfuscation experiences became a driving force to overcome and to respond it.

Lieno staying with her grandmother fulfils her parents' wish to lead her on the path of her own self-discipline, self-drive, self-direction and bring into existence her own self-identity. She undergoes several mental and physical state of experiences while overcoming various herculean task which made her to define herself into a strong quality towards her own life, her family and others.

Dielieno's father sister Bano show compassion on Lieno. And Bano teaches her to get adapt in her grandmothers' home. When Dielieno ask, "Bano Bano, why does Grandmother hate me so? "Bano comforts her by telling. "She doesn't hate you, Lieno, she doesn't, really, she wants you to be a good girl. It is her way of bringing you up to be a good woman" (37). She also helps her to go to school and do all her chores in time so that she is not caught by grandmother. After her matric exam she got an opportunity to teach in the school and was also able to go college with the support of Leto her brother. Thus, establishing an identity of her own. When she receive marriage proposal through her aunt Bino she turns them away.

The fourth proposal which came neither to her Aunt nor Lieno but to her parents and so she happily accepts the offer with her parents' blessing.

When her parents decided to send Dielieno to live with her grandmother she did not have an individuality of her own and had to sacrifice her happiness for others. She had to live her life on terms of her parents, grandmother and brothers. Living with her grandmother enable her to redefine her own self to the larger world. Thus, Dielieno a name given by her grandmother which means *little errand girl*, to look after her grandmother's household and to run errands' between the relatives', the term is also coin as nonexistence in the midst of her brothers. Lieno's journey is full of hardship which enables her to transform herself entirely into a fine respectable woman in the Naga society. Her determination is firm which allow her to adapt to every situation to which enables her to make an identity in the family as well as in the society. A battered Lieno evolve into a noble woman is an identity facing various obstacles which became the driving force that help her to respond and to engage with others. The various indignant difficulties kept pushing through her life which enable her to discover her real self. Thus, the various challenges and difficulties enable Lieno to explore her hidden potential. Her strict and disciplinary grandmother sets the platform for her evolving identity in the contemporary Naga society.

Thus, the novel gives a detail account in the Naga society with greater possibility for a women through the characters of a young progressive and ecstatic Lieno, Mother, Bano, Vimenuo, Nisano and others. In spite of all their struggle they continue to evolve vividly and eloquently throughout the novel through Lieno's endurance and a vigorous hard work. Hope amidst of all life heartbreak and pain, Dielieno grows up to be strong and sure. Thus, the difference in the women's character in the three generations was overcome through Dielieno's diligent efforts in all her task and she brakes the barrier by becoming an educated woman during the period when education was not prioritize for a woman and that enables her to become an accomplished young lady in the contemporary Naga society.

Work Cited

Kire, Easterine. *A Terrible Matriarchy*, New Delhi, Zubaan, 2007.