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Patriarchy in mongo bett's Perpetua and the habit of unhappiness

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UNIVERSITY OF BURUNDI

INSTITUTE FOR APPLIED PEDAGOGY

ENGLISH-KIRUNDI DEPARTMENT

PATRIARCHY IN MONGO BETI'S *PERPETUA AND THE HABIT OF UNHAPPINESS*

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DEDICATION

To my parents,

To my dear husband and

Our first son,

I warmly dedicate

This work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The present research would not have been what it is without the devoted contribution of many people to whom I owe much gratitude.

I am particularly indebted to my supervisor, Dr. Njeng Eric Sipyinyu, who, in spite of his numerous responsibilities, kindly accepted to supervise this work. His suggestions, corrections, and constructive remarks are indeed, highly commendable.

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ABSTRACT

This work examines patriarchy in Mongo Beti's *Perpetua and the Habit of Unhappiness*. The work explores patriarchal practices such as marriage, the bride-price, education, and related institutions to expose the bias behind male domination. On this note, this study is built on the tentative conjecture that women experience some psychological and social consequences caused by patriarchy. Written against the background of feminist and psychological criticism, this work concludes that there is a need to be a good relationship between men and women.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

From time immemorial humanity has been constructed through gender relationships. The later are tailored by people's culture. In most African culture, men have been considered superior to women. It means that African society is patriarchal. According to Simone De Beauvoir "gender" is a social construct perpetuated by patriarchy to favour and validate the selfhood of men. This shows that men dominate women in all realms of life. This domination is seen in the oppression and discrimination of women through marriage, bride-price, education, motherhood to mention a few. African women remain second class citizens since the dominating gender continues to place itself at the apex of the pyramid of life. Aka Anghui quoted by Awori Therma in his article "The Myth of the Inferiority of the African Woman" holds that:

> The African woman has a position and status which is in many ways definitely inferior to that of a man, and this in spite of the fact that she does most of the hard work in supporting the family. They were regarded as socially inferior to men and were always treated as minors (...) women took no part in the government of the tribe, they did not attend the tribal assemblies, and all political offices were kept exclusively in the hands of men. (Qtd. Awori Therma, 31)

It is therefore evident that African civilization is patriarchal; male centred and organised in such a way as to subordinate women in all domains. It is a society where there is glorification of men and degradation of women. Whereas men are powerful figures and the centre of interest, women are hardly recognized as complete human beings in the society.

Different activities and decisions are held by men without women's consent or participation. Women spend most of their adult lives gestating, nursing, and rearing children. These duties have been defined as their main roles and identity within the society. In view of the above ideas, we are tempted to put the following questions: How does patriarchy impose its ideas about domination in the society? Are women conscious of their oppressive situation, and how do they react in case? We will attempt answers to these questions in the course of our study.

Before one proceeds with the analysis, it is worthwhile defining the key concept which is central in this work. This concept is "patriarchy". According to *Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary* "patriarchy" is a society, system or country that is ruled or controlled by men. Lisa Tuttle in the same vein, in *Encyclopedia of Feminism,* views it as all known societies ruled by men who control and profit from women's reproductive capabilities. She further adds that it is a system in which men dominate. She argues that it can be used as a

synonym for male domination. She amplifies her definition with the following articulations:

> It is the universal political structure which privileges men at the expense of women, the social system which feminism is determined to destroy [...]. Literally, it means "rule of father" and was originally used by anthropologists to describe the social structure in which one old man (the patriarch) has absolute power over everyone else in the family. (242)

From the above definition, we can conclude that Patriarchy is a system where the patriarch dominates and women are fighting against it.

Patricia Connelly et al in *Theoretical Perspective on Gender and Development* say that "patriarchy is a system of male domination that is widespread but historically specific which can vary overtime and context" (37). Originally, patriarchy means the rule of the father over his wife or wives, children, and property. Nowadays, the term refers to the overall systematic character of oppressive and exploitative relations affecting women.

The concept of patriarchy is predominant in Feminist discourse; thereby providing a way of working towards a theory of male domination and female

subordination, and of recognizing that, despite the different forms it takes, all women suffer a similar oppression which cannot be ended merely by changing the economic system, as supported by some scholars.

For a better understanding of this work, it is worth to know a bit of the biography of our author. Mongo Beti was born Alexandre Biyidi-Awala in 1932 near M' Balmayo, Cameroon, when the west central African nation was still a colony of France. His family had a cocoa plantation in this southern part of the country, and when he was ejected from school at age of fourteen for insubordination, the future writer worked in its groves for a time. He eventually finished school at nineteen and received the baccalaureate from the Lycée at Yaoundé and left for France to attend the University of Aix-Marseille. He went on to the Sorbonne in Paris, a university whose heady intellectual reputation attracted other politically minded young men and women from African nations.

Their families were often at least prosperous enough to send them abroad, and such exiles were sharply critical of colonialism and its legacy on African political, social, cultural, and economic traditions. Beti joined their ranks as well and wrote his first novel *Ville Cruelle (Cruel City)*, under the pseudonym of Eza Boto (His real name is Mongo Beti). The city of the title is a newly industrialised area, whose African residents are uneasy with a transition that forces them to survive by working dangerous jobs in newly created lumber

mills and rail yards. He later distanced himself from the 1954 novel, feeling that it was not the finest example of his writing.

Critics consider his first work Beti *The Poor Christ of Bomba* as one of the writer's finest. The novel is set in the 1930s in Cameroon, and features themes that Robert P. Smith Jr. described as "Familiar Mongo Beti Territory". These included origins of fear, persecution, repression, betrayal, conspiracy, tribal conflict, war, revolt, corruption, violence and politics of power in post colonial African Republics. The work centres on French missionary, Father Drumont, who visits villagers and tries to convert them from their indigenous religion to Christianity. He also strives to keep them, at the same time, from adopting western style materialistic values that he has witnessed elsewhere among the newly converted. Drumont is saddened to learn that the villagers only agreed to convert because they are convinced Marxists. He refused to return to his native country even after it achieved independence in 1970. Despite prophesying himself anxious to visit Africa, he remained hostile to the Yaoundé of President Ahmadou Ahidjo. Instead, Beti remained in France with his wife and their three children, and diverted himself to teaching for more than a decade.

In 1972, Beti published a political essay critical of the Yaoundé Government. Titled "The Plundering of Cameroon", the essay condemned Ahidjo and his officers as a puppet government of his country's former colonial

rulers. The problems of decolonisation would serve as the focus of the novels that Beti would once again begin to write.

In the works that include *Remember Ruben (1973)* and *Perpetua and the Habit of Unhappiness* (1974), Beti turns a satirical eye upon the situation in Cameroon, creating the fictitious dictator Baba Toura as the focus of his political satire. In *Remember Ruben*, a young orphan is taken by some villagers and befriended by a village boy. The two grow up and though they part company for several years eventually reunite; one as a revolutionary leader, and the other as a cast-off from an unjust society. The two characters would also serve as the subject of a 1979 work by Beti translated as lament for an African politician, which follows the effect of the two friends to start a revolt against the rule of unjust tribal chiefs. *Perpetua and the Habit of Unhappiness* also illustrates the inequities in post colonial Cameroon through the lives of individuals. This time he also depicts the lowly social status of that country's women. The novel would be adapted as a play in1981. In 1991, Mongo Beti returned to Cameroon, after 32 years of self-imposed exile. Transported to the hospital at Douala on October 6, he died there on October 8, 2001. Some critics noted the similarity of his death to that of his heroine Perpetua, who also died while waiting treatment in one of the country's overburdened hospitals.

The choice of this topic about patriarchal dominion was motivated by different reasons. As an African woman, I myself have experienced the traditional beliefs that prohibit women to get formal education. For instance, in our Burundian society, there are sayings that "A woman's diploma is to get only a husband". Women of my neighbouring areas in particular and of Africa in general have been suffering from the crushing yoke of patriarchal exigencies such as household chores, farming and sexual objectification. It is this emphasis on the female oppression that motivated me to work on "Patriarchy" through the lens of Mongo Beti.

This work therefore examines how men organize themselves to control women through marriage and bride price. It further shows the difference between men and women in terms of education. The work equally aims at exploring the effects of traditional beliefs on women's lives. The work centres on Mongo Béti's *Perpetua and the Habit of Unhappiness*. Other supplementary works dealing with women's oppression within patriarchal societies will equally be included.

The theories that will centre our discussion are Feminism and Psychoanalysis. First, Feminism is concerned with difference and marginalization of women. Proponents and exponents to this theory include Lisa Tuttle, Elaine Showater, Mary Wollstonecraft, Simone De Beauvoir and Virginia Woolf. Feminist criticism which arose from the late eighteenth century

women's movement should be understood as a political discourse that is, critical and theoretical committed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism.

In the light of white critics, Elaine Showater in *A Literature of Their Own* argues that literary subcultures all go through three major phases of development. The first is the 'feminine phase (1840-1880), where female writers imitate the tradition of writing from men; the second phase is called the feminist phase (1880-1920) where women protest their lack of right; and the final phase is the female phase (1920- to present), where women begin to search for their assertiveness. She also describes theories of difference: biological, linguistic, psychoanalytic and cultural.

Mary Wollstonecraft in *A Vindication of the Rights of the Woman* depicts a woman as an oppressed class regardless of social hierarchy. She observes that men and women do not have equal power in all domains, and call for women to improve themselves through education. What is important for her is that women should be taken as men's companions not as inferior creatures.

Simone De Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* argues that French culture like all Western culture is patriarchal with men having all power over women. Women are submitted to men, and take a second place. She rejects the assumption that women are born inferior, but made to be so. She ends inviting women to refuse to be the "other" and realize their possibilities.

Virginia Woolf points out the idea that women are rare in the process of writing works. Both male and few female writers depict the image of a woman who struggles for mental independence from men, as related to the difficulties of checking off any sort of burden she faces. Women should have the liberty and courage to write what they think, and a feminist writing is to eradicate the exploitation and oppression of the women in the patriarchal spaces.

Therefore the theory of Feminism denounces the fact of taking for granted that women are inferior to men. This theory strongly condemns the beliefs that alienate and exclude women from the society. Feminism also seeks to create an open and inclusive society for both men and women. Lisa Tuttle in *Encyclopedia of Feminism* gives the origin of feminism and its goals by stating:

> Feminism originates in the perception that there is something wrong with society's treatment of women; it attempts to analyse the reason for and dimensions of women's oppression, and to achieve women's liberation. (107)

Feminism seeks the restructuring of cultural codes, habits, customs, and perceptions that privilege men at the expense of women. Feminism has to find new avenues for accommodating women and for insuring fairness and honesty in the daily relationships between men and women.

The Feminist approach is relevant to this study because it will help us to have a better understanding on how patriarchy oppresses women within the societies and how things should be revised.

Second, psychoanalysis is another approach which is imperative in this study since it is evident that any person frustrated by patriarchal premises can be psychologically affected. The proponent to this theory is Sigmund Freud and his disciples Carl Gustave Jung, Jacques Lacan, and Alfred Adler. To him the unconscious plays a major role in human realizations and feelings although mankind is not aware of its presence.

According to Freud, the unconscious is a mental process whose effects are realized after a certain period. He further states that the mind is divided into three parts, that is, the *id*, the *ego*, and the *superego,* with a relation to conscious and unconscious. He argues that the *id* has instinctive energies or survival values, and has no vision on what may follow its actions. In the case of *ego*, he says that it is the regulator of their instinctual demands of *id* which gratifies our instincts for pleasure without regarding the social conventions, and the *ego* will help to analyse the way it serves as an intermediary between character's inner self and the outer world. The *id* is unconscious while the *ego* is conscious. As far as the *superego* is concerned, it represents all the moral beliefs and structure. It helps children to internalise the social values taught by their parents. It

combines both conscious and unconscious, and is dominated by morality principles. It makes a balance between the *id* and the ego.

This theory is relevant to this study since it puts together the thoughts of both women and men in patriarchy. It equally helps to expose why some people cling to certain values, and sometimes believe fervently in them, thereby, making things more difficult to non-conformist.

Psychological and Feminist theories are complementary because they all helped us to expose the effects of oppression on the individual. The psychoanalytic theory carries us deeper into the psyche of characters, making it easy for us to understand why the woman needs to rebel against patriarchal exigencies.

Various writers have expressed their views concerning this area of dishonest treatment of women within patriarchal societies. In this perspective, Mukayuhi Anne Marie in "Buchi Emecheta and the Woman Question" shows how women are victims of traditions. In terms of marriage, there are the parents who make all arrangements and formalities. She adds that most of the time, they sell their daughters as they would do with a goat or a piece of cloth. Hélène Vandevelde Douillière in *Femmes Algériennes,* holds that women have been conscious of their situation and state of dominated people. Even though they

have a strong desire for a change, they remain submissive. She proceeds to say that women are caught between two contradictory poles that means that they want to emerge out of silence but patriarchy remains static. She concludes that nowadays, some categories of women such as elites and young women should take the lead and fight for change; they should force their voices into the areas where they are isolated.

Maria Rosa Cutreffeli in *Women of Africa: Roots of Oppression* argues that women's conditions can only be understood in the context of the general under-development of the African continent. She describes first the colonial period, and how it changed the complex and diverse web of families and relations between the sexes expressed in marriage rites, bride price, polygamy, inheritance, and various other aspects of family and kinship systems. The author goes ahead to tackle the changing situation in post-colonial Africa. She further analyses their conditions of work, both in towns and villages, their job opportunities, involvement in trade and domestic labour, as well as the growing habit of prostitution. She concludes that African women should get a growing participation in the social struggle and political movements. According to her, there is less participation of African women in high levels of the society and development within their countries.

Furthermore, David A. Ntonge in "Women's Rights in Tanzania" argues that women have always been an oppressed group within traditional society. Ill-treatment and enforced subservience have been their lot. According to him, this is inconsistent with the policy of socialism's conception of the equality of all human beings and rights of all to live in security. This exploitation and oppression of women is the result of man's greed for private property.

Nambatya Agnes Kivumbi on her part in "The Impact of Feminism on Kampala *District* 1980-1997" asserts that the patriarchy has taught people that the woman was created biologically inferior in that she was thought to be less wise, emotional and less ambitious. Therefore, a woman always needs guidance and supervision in order to achieve better results. This implies that a woman should remain at the background of all social activities and only provide support services to man.

Ngendakumana Joseph in "Silence, Identity and Conflict: Revisiting Patriarchal space in Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* and Asare Konadu's *A Woman in her Prime"* argues that the burden on women is dictated more by men than patriarchy. He further argues that patriarchy clothes women with negative images, thereby reducing them to second class citizens. He finally concludes that with this overwhelming influence, women sometimes become docile, silent, and passive in their own environments.

Maneno Jean Bosco in his dissertation "The Image of African Woman as Reflected in Mbella Sonne Dipoko's *Because of Women"* points out that women have been for a long time denied their rights to act in their societies as full members capable of productivity. They are assigned minor duties through the belief that they are unable to perform certain tasks. This belief is based on social perception of women as constituting a class of inferior human beings compared to men who are considered to be superior human beings in their societies. He adds that this social discrimination based on a world dominated by men leads women to be dependent upon their husbands in their families. They have no opportunities for acquiring wealth like men. They have to remain dependent and marginal in the society. He finally concludes that these traditional roles and beliefs have brainwashed women who consequently have believed and complied with the set roles.

Muhimpundu Ancilla in her dissertation: "The Image of African Woman in Contemporary African Literature: A Case Study of Mongo Beti's *Perpetua and Habit of Unhappiness*" argues that the authority of a man in society is well exercised in the family. She further argues that the only one who has the right of decision and action in many African societies is the man. African patriarchal societies believe that women are nothing outside their sex. She concludes saying that women are described as creatures by men.

This work differs from the above mentioned in that it does not only portray the ways in which women are oppressed within the patriarchal space but also shows the effects of patriarchal institutions on women's lives. This work also shows that even if some patriarchal exigencies are to be respected, the oppressive ones should be uprooted in favour of cultural dynamism. That is there is no culture which is static. All cultures evolve and in this evolution some bad habits should be rejected.

This work is based on the hypothetical contention that both women and men experience some psychological and social consequences caused by patriarchal system. Then, in order to maintain harmony and progress in the society, there is a need to be a good relationship between men and women.

Including the general introduction, this work is divided into three chapters and a general conclusion. The general introduction provides an overview of the work. The first chapter entitled "Marriage and the Bride-price" portrays the ways traditional marriage arrangements are done. This chapter clearly shows how patriarchy organises itself to oppress women through the above institutions. The second chapter titled "Education in Patriarchal Societies" focuses on the presence of patriarchal norms in terms of education. It also tackles women's participations in teaching those oppressive norms. The third chapter titled "Effects of Patriarchal Exigencies on Women's Lives" talks about

detailed effects of patriarchal practices on women. It analyses the situation in which women are enslaved. The general conclusion summarizes the major arguments raised in the work, bringing out findings and recommendations and proposes possible avenues for future researchers.

CHAPTER ONE: MARRIAGE AND THE BRIDE-PRICE

This chapter raises the curtain on the organisation of traditional marriage. It proceeds to show clearly how patriarchal system in Africa organises itself to oppress women through marriage and the bride-price institutions. It also exposes social norms about those institutions established by patriarchy.

In traditional Africa which is very patriarchal, marriage is not a mere union of the two persons. It is generally a union of families. Thus, any decision about marriage must be accepted by parents who play a determining role in this affair. Maria Rosa Cutreffeli in *Women of Africa: Roots of Oppression* argues that

> Customary marriage is mainly regarded as an institution of the control of protection and is seen as a social act endowed with religious values and one which nobody could shrink. For this reason, celibacy is deemed to the actual social failure, a bad marriage is far better than no marriage. (54)

From the above statement, it is evident that marriage in traditional Africa is highly respected and valued. It is a social obligation which nobody should escape. This is due to the fact that through marriage, there is procreation and respect.

In the same vein, the superior, especially the patriarch (the male head of the family or community), must intervene in each act related to marriage since he is supposed to keep the tradition. That is why the choice of spouses, in general, is held by parents.

Furthermore, not to get a husband or children is considered as a curse. That is why the main preoccupation of a daughter's parents is to provide her with a good education and then choose a husband for her. In most African traditional societies, a girl has no right to reject her parents' choice of her husband whether the later is young or old, handsome or ugly. It is often stressed that a man is never ugly as Ubania, a character in Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* says "A woman may be ugly and grow old but a man is never ugly and never old. He matures with age and is a dignified" (4). Therefore, this exposes the patriarchal arguments about how a woman should not hate or refuse a husband chosen for her by her parents.

As a matter of fact, patriarchy continues to perpetuate its domination by taking control of young ladies in forcing them to accept husbands without any right to choose. Surprisingly, women participate in this perpetuity of men's domination. This is because the social norms established by the patriarchal society are mainly taught and put into practice by mothers. Perpetua, in Mongo Beti's *Perpetua and the Habit of Unhappiness* is forced to leave school and be

married to a severe husband even if the later seems decided to make her suffer. Perpetua's mother argues as follows:

> Every woman is meant for marriage, it's the law of nature and that's that. I swear when I married Perpetua I only thought about her happiness and the law of God. I found a husband for my daughter. (27)

Here, we see a clear presentation of patriarchal teaching about marriage. The pretext for forcing their daughter to a marriage is natural and God's law. Here, one may think that since Perpetua's mother considers marriage as God's will, she marries her daughter in order not to disobey God. However, the idea behind it is getting much money as bride-price and grandchildren.

Thus, since Perpetua's mother fears that her daughter would refuse the proposal of getting married, she does not tell her anything about marriage preparations. In fact, Perpetua wants to ask for more time to finish her studies and think about her marriage later, but it is too late because marriage arrangements have already been concluded by her parents. Things have been so well organised that Perpetua is trapped the day of the bride-price. During the arrangements, no one thinks about asking Perpetua's opinion. She has to sit there, powerless, while they are arranging her life. Mongo Beti presents her as a victim of the situation; she is still confused, "She heard her name spoken several times without being able to tell if someone was calling her or if she was simply

the subject of conversation" (11). That is the way traditional marriage arrangements, in patriarchal societies, are done resulting from the fact that a girl has no say in her society.

In the absence of the father, anyone who has a direct influence on the girl, either her brother, her mother, or any other relative plays an important role in pre-arranged marriage. This situation assumes tragic dimensions because it sets girls as inevitably victims of the tradition of the pre-arranged marriage. Perpetua does not escape but grieves inside, she suffers inevitable harms. And the fact of not escaping shows that it does not matter whether a girl lifts her hand or not. Her fate is out of her own hands. Wherever she is, her life is directed by other people or by the norms of the patriarchal society.

Concerning marriage, only in rare cases may the refusal to marry a man be tolerated but most of times the parents use force to give their daughters to the man who has paid the bride-pride. The choice of the spouse by elders sometimes becomes a handicap to love between a boy and a girl. According to traditional norms, they are not supposed to choose following their sentiments. In that case, the girl suffers more than the boy since she is obliged to leave her family to a place or family she does not know or like. Sometimes, the boy's parents can discuss with him about the girl they have chosen but girls are not generally

consulted. The selection is made by elders who have their own criteria for selection.

A similar situation occurs in Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* in which a daughter dares speak to her father. She says: "I am not marrying that man. I don't like him". Her father then answered: "You don't have to like your husband. You don't even have to know him in advance; you just marry him" (12). Therefore, the father's reply shows clearly the powerlessness of a girl over her choice. The girl in question is in dilemma because she wants to marry a man of her choice. But she is announced her marriage before she tells her parents about her secret love. However, Mongo Beti's Perpertua does not know her husband to be. All that she is told is that the boy is an important government officer and handsome. What is regrettable is that all that she was told were lies. Commenting on the social rank and status of Edward (the boy she would marry), the narrator says:

> When she was told at the beginning of the whole story that Edward was a privileged official whose expenses were paid by the government, she had not dreamed. She would find herself lighting the fire in the same way as her mother, but with less wood, under a smaller trip holding her pots and pans, in a place where you could hardly stand up right. (13)

Anyone can imagine how disappointed Perpetua was since she was married off against her will, leaving her studies unfinished. She was at last consoled by the fact that she was going to live with an important man who had at least a nice house. The narrator goes on to say: "Far from having all his expenses paid by the government, Edward was in reality a very bottom of the official grades, with no one beneath him except labours" (14). This statement is another proof showing how it is perplexing to marry an unknown person. The situation is too tragic for Perpetua because she was educated and could not believe that she would marry in such a traditional way. She has kept the word of her elder brother Essola who has gone in prison. Before leaving, he forbids her to marry a man she does not like or to be sold. However, Perpetua finds herself in a situation from which she could not withdraw. She was afraid of rejecting her husband because she would bring "shame" and "dishonour" to her mother at such a serious moment when all neighbours and relatives are watching. She does not want to make her mother or herself the subjects of neighbours' comments. This shows clearly that patriarchy has established in people's minds, discriminatory and oppressive thoughts.

While talking about marriage in African patriarchal societies, we cannot forget polygamy. In fact, polygamy is another kind of marriage in which men can marry more than one wife. Thus, African women accept polygamy because of some factors connected to social ideologies. When a wife has a particular

biological problem, the second wife's presence is of utmost importance. A wife who gets problems of giving birth for example is proposed a co-spouse. In fact, the wife would not have accepted the existence of a rival amid her state.

Furthermore, women accept a co-spouse because of the fear of their husband's infidelity. If men's infidelity were severely prohibited by social norms, a wife could not accept a co-spouse. All arguments that women furnish to support polygamy are connected to the fact that the social norms do not give them other options. In Mongo Beti's *Perpetua and Habit of Unhappiness* Anna-Marria says : "No woman is shared by three men unless she's a fool. And your sister was no fool. Far from it a real woman gives herself to one man and lets the others get on with it" (186). From the aforementioned, it is evident that traditional African people are bound to ideologies which oblige women to get only one husband. If a woman is caught with another man she is punished.

However, it is permitted for a husband to get as many wives as he wants. In the same novel, Perpetua tells her husband the following:

> You are the master. You are a man. You do what you like. Life gives all the rights to the men. If I had been a man, I expect I would have long done the same. No, I am not annoyed with you - just at the way life is. (135)

As we can ascertain it through the above excerpt, the patriarchal society has already secured itself by convincing people that men have the right to marry more than one wife. Mongo Beti continues to present the situation as follows when Anna Maria is supporting Edouard's second wife:

> So what? Is he the first young man to take a second wife? Didn't our forefathers always do it? Many of my generation did it. Otherwise who could be sure that the race would be continued? And, in the end, that's the only thing that matters. The white priests who want to destroy our customs say it is wrong to have more than one wife. (127)

From this, we understand how people are attached to their customs. This exposes certain selfishness on men's side. This phenomenon is woman's oppression since it puts her in frustrated condition especially for the first woman.

Generally, it is the sexual freedom that men give themselves that helps in the support of polygamy. A man can betray his spouse pretending that what he is doing is socially acknowledged as normal or natural for men. From all indications, patriarchy has protected itself by putting forth norms which say that polygamy is adultery for women and it is more evil to women than men.

Another obstacle in patriarchal society which is related to marriage is the bride-price. The *New World Encyclopedia* defines it as follows: "Bride-price also known as bride wealth is an amount of money, property or other form of wealth "paid" to the parents of a woman for the right to marry their daughter" ("Bride-price"). In addition, we can assert that bride price is a payment made in "exchange" for the bride's price family's loss of one object (daughter) by another object (money). In this case, the bride price can be seen as a social custom that permits the sale of girls and women are assimilated to merchandises. Emeka Esogbue states the following:

> In our African society, many cultures require that a bride-price be paid before. This bride-price has been mismanaged, and grotesquely distorted to mean the bride-price wealth. Our families in Africa have become materialistic only wondering how their daughters can be married to supposedly wealthy individuals in the society ("High Bride price: when shall African Learn?")

The above assertion shows that African families consider the bride-price as a source of richness. This is the case for selfish and poor families. However, when the boy's family is poor, it is generally impossible for the boy to get the girl. In Mongo Beti's *Perpetua and the Habits of unhappiness*, Perpetua's mother forces her to get married to Edouard in order to get an amount of money as bride-price.



Mongo Beti says that "Maria was behaving on this occasion like businessman, determined to honour a contract and deliver the goods for which she had been paid" (78). Here, he wants to show how parents are materialistic that dare to compare their daughters to the objects. Nuruddin Farah joins Mongo Beti in *From a Crooked Rib* as follows:

> From experience, she knew that girls were materials, just like objects or items on the shelf of a shop. They were sold and bought as shepherds sold their goats at market-places or shop owners sold their goods to their customers. To a shopkeeper, what was the difference between a girl and his goods? Nothing, absolutely nothing. (16)

This is of course a revolting situation. It comes to say that a girl is nothing more than a property, a piece of good which will bring money to its owner. They are considered as bridges to wealth. And the one who pays much money will be the buyer. Parents therefore appear to be too materialistic and often want to profit from others welfare via their daughters and the later become a source of income.

This materialistic view in patriarchal marriage is reality in most African societies. In fact, love is not cared about in typical African marriage. The love towards a man is due to his possession and position. The bigger amount of money he pays, the happier his in-laws and wife are. However, in most cases,

the bride-price seems to carry a humiliating meaning. It gives the impression that the husband buys his wife as he can buy any other merchandise. Peter, one of the characters in Onuora Nzekwu's *Wand of Noble Wood* explains how dowry came to lose its real meaning and becoming the bride-price which can be said or paraphrased as the price of the bride. He says that it was first of all applied to the presents a suitor made to a girl and her parent. It consisted mainly of products from his farm. These were intended to prove that he was a hard working man, so that his in-laws trust him with the welfare of their daughter. The quality or quantity of the present varied from one suitor to another, depending on how relatives contributed towards the present. But gradually, things changed as each suitor tried to give more presents than his predecessors. And when money was introduced, suitors began to use money instead of farm products. And once again, each suitor tried to outdo the other. It came to a stage where parents dictate a price for their daughters and suitors tried to beat it down. In this case, the girls always prefer the highest bidder. That is how the bride-price became the degenerated form of the dowry, losing therefore the noble purpose of guaranteeing that a suitor could maintain a girl effectively. The girl's parents seemed to be waiting impatiently for the time to sell her. They saw her only as a commodity like a cow waiting for its market day.

In Mongo Beti's *Perpetua and the Habit of Unhappiness*, where Perpetua's mother says:

> My daughter, Providence has smiled upon you. This is the great day of your life. You are to have the kind of husband girl's dream of, the young man of every girl's hopes, rich as he soon will be, good-looking. He is already at his age doing the kind of work that is not usually reached until years and years later. (70)

This statement shows us how the mother is impatient to get a groom who is very important like Edouard. She was told that Edouard is the young official who was said to have a wonderful future in front of him. So, she forces her to get married to him in order to get a lot of money as bride-price.

Furthermore, after marriage, the girl becomes the property of her husband, having full rights to do whatever he wants with her. For instance, in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Okwonko beats his wife during a week of peace, a thing which is considered abominable; he is taken to the court by his in-laws and to defend himself, he says the following:

> That woman standing there is my wife, Mgabobo. I married her with my money and yams. I don't owe my in-laws anything. I owe them no yams no money. I owe them no coco yams. (20)

Here, he just means that since he paid the bride-price for his wife, he is her owner and has full rights over her. In that case, he mistreats her and no one even

her relatives can intervene. So, the women's value is questioned. One may wonder if she got married to him in order to be her husband's companion or her slave. Actually, the case is that she is rather a slave than a companion. The relationship between her and her husband is that of a master-servant.

The bride-price seems to give to the husband the right to oppress his wife. In Mongo Beti's *Perpetua and the Habit of Unhappiness*, Essola, Perpetua's elder brother says: "I didn't want her to be sold, I didn't want her to become some man's slave" (29). Here, he wants to suggest that when a girl is married to a man she does not like, she is exposed to live in bad conditions.

Moreover, the practice of the bride-price is so deeply implanted in patriarchal African societies that most of the girls would not leave their parents if nothing has been paid on their heads. Criticizing the situation, Jacob, a character in Buchi Emecheta's *The slave Girl* ironically says: "Women, they like to see money spent on them" as reply, Clifford, another character says: "yes, they love to know that they cost a lot of money" (22). Of course, these men mean that women are stupid; they do not realise that they are exploited throughout the bride-price.

In a nutshell, this chapter sets out to examine the patriarchal organization of traditional African societies. In the course of the analysis, we discover that

men dominate women in too many domains such as marriage and bride-price institutions. All along this chapter shows how patriarchy has established social norms that oppress women through the above institutions. Mongo Beti brings to the public eye different evidences of patriarchal domination in traditional Africa.

CHAPTER TWO: EDUCATION IN PATRIARCHAL SOCIETIES

This chapter aims at bringing to limelight the presence of patriarchal social norms in African education. It equally tackles the issues of the participation of women in building the continuity of patriarchal teachings which put men at the apex in all social domains. This chapter shows how patriarchy has set gender roles and expects different behaviours to both sexes.

The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* defines education as:

> A process of teaching, training and learning, especially in schools or colleges to improve knowledge or develop skills, it is also the institutions all people involved in teaching or training.

Through the above definition, we can see that there exists school education and when we talk about education we also mean the persons who participate in that process of teaching.

In this chapter, we will be concerned with formal education, that is, school education and informal education or the education in the family. The later can also be called "socialisation". The *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary* defines socialisation as "the process by which somebody, especially a child, learns to behave in a way that is acceptable in their society".

Socialisation is therefore a process by which parents can teach their children how to behave in every day's life.

Eventually, socialisation which we can compare to informal education is an area where patriarchy has put forth his dominating teachings. It is a fundamental step through which male and female personalities are filtered from their birth till their death. Men and women internalise capacities and motivations appropriate to their gender roles. That is what men or women can respectively do in the society. Kathleen Gerson in *Hard Choices: How Women Decide About Work, Career and Motherhood* says that

> Gender personality differences grow out of early childhood experience within the family. There personality differences lead the adult men and women to choose different roles in the social system. Men become breadwinners; women become wives and mothers. (77)

The above quotation shows that it is through informal education that children are trained about their roles in the societies. At an early age, girls are taught by their mothers to have a good behaviour and trained in household works. This can be seen through Perpetua's behaviour:

> Her grace, her slenderness, her extreme modesty, her austere diligence in carrying out the smallest tasks, a supreme detachment sometimes taken for insensibility, were all in sharp contrast to the usual run of our tom-boys, clumsy, boisterous, insolent and stupid. Her distinction showed itself in the most every day, even menial activities, like peeling cassava tubers, picking tomatoes in a field, hoeing or digging, fetching water in a clay pot or a tin basin, beating the laundry in a river. Everyone felt such admiration for Perpetua. (67)

From this statement, we can see how a real woman is defined by her qualities and activities. That constitutes the criteria to choose a spouse. In this novel, Perpetua appears with a good reputation.

As far as boys' education is concerned, they have to imitate their fathers' works. In that case, men like to go out with their sons even when the later are still young. This is seen through Edward when Perpetua bears a son; he likes to walk with their son Charles Wendelin in Zombotown. In that case, the son grows up with his father's manners. In many cases, patriarchy oppresses women. For example, men can spend the whole day outside playing cards, drinking beer,

smoking, chatting... while women have to stay home for menial activities housekeeping and raising children.

Furthermore, patriarchy has rooted pitiless behaviour in men so that women work hard alone. In fact, they do not feel ashamed when they let their sisters, mothers or wives working alone even at an early age. Mongo Beti states a case of the stocky man when he is addressing Essola, Perpetua's elder brother. He says:

> Don't worry about the work in the fields that my wife is so concerned about. I've arranged it with my youngest brother-in-law, Katri's younger brother [...]. So there is no point in your feeling guilty as we go off. (43)

This excerpt shows how women suffer alone in farming and men are not aware of it. They consider that as a normal thing.

In addition, Mongo presents the same pitiless habit through Martin when he lets her mother alone at home and left with the money they have received as Perpetua's bride-price. His elder brother Essola accuses him in these words:

> You sleep till you are tired of sleeping, you eat as much as you like. You drink till you are not thirsty

> any more. You have girls there from morning till night. You never hear a word about work. (203)

From these words, the narrator wants to show how men look for their own happiness whereas women are suffering alone at home in their housekeeping. They do not think about their tiredness or poverty.

As earlier stated, in traditional African patriarchal societies, girls receive a quite different education from the one given to boys. This is mostly stressed in traditional societies where mothers are totally charged with their daughter's education whereas boys are looked by their fathers. The education of a traditional girl is based only on what and how she should do in order to achieve the qualities of the ideal wife. Therefore, since her childhood, a girl is taught that a girl, who will later become a woman, should always be submissive. In Mongo Beti's *Perpetua and the Habit of Unhappiness*, we see how Perpetua is advised before she gets married: "Be nice to him (the husband). You've got to earn his affection being anxious to please him. That is what a real woman does. Try to be a real woman, don't show me up" (70). This quotation shows that patriarchal societies have set up social norms that oblige women to be submissive to their husbands. Here, Perpetua does not even know that husband she is going to be married to. More so, women participate in this transmission of those social teachings. Perpetua's mother says that if her daughter does not act

according to social norms, it will be a shame upon her. Perpetua wants to resist the pre-arranged marriage and her mother says:

> So you're still an obstinate as ever you've really made up your mind to humiliate me, your mother, who carried you in my body [...]. Do you want to dishonour me you heartless hussy? You're no woman. (70)

This clearly exposes the traditional beliefs that oblige mothers to teach their daughters how to behave as submissive ones. If the daughter reacts as rebellious, the mother is accused by the whole society that she is not a good educator.

Therefore, the deep rooted gender differences that lead to the oppression of women are located in early childhood experiences and for most of the cases those that take place within the nuclear family. In this respect, men and women imitate the role learning models of their immediate social environment in which they grow. In this respect, patriarchy nurtures and cherishes customs and cultural practices which are oppressive to women and are based on fundamental principles of natural rights. This is seen when Edward, Perpetua's husband says: "what are you complaining about? This is in accordance with the customs of our ancestors, isn't it?" (184).This shows that men try to explain their attitudes using customarly beliefs and teachings.

In patriarchal societies, even in religious teaching women are still oppressed. In fact, traditional societies of Africa received a religion from Asia: Christianity and Islamism. For example in *the Bible*, people accuse the first woman (Eve) of being responsible for the fall of the man (Adam). For this reason, women are excluded from public affairs and do not have right to speak. Saint Paul emphasizes this in his epistle to Timothy when he requests women to be silent. According to him, it is a shame for a woman to speak in the church or in public. So, husbands have to keep them silent, command them to obedience as the scriptures say it. This confirms that women's docility is accepted as it is justified in most male writings. In *Women in African Literature* Leith Ross goes on to say that

> A male novelist may probably and often unconsciously make out that the woman is of little account that her whole life is in his hands, that she has no will, no means, no power and no organisation. (4)

This assertion expresses that women cannot live without their husbands. They are portrayed as human beings unable to survive without men's means and will. Besides, women are qualified as powerless people without any organisation, any idea. For example in Mongo Beti's *Perpetua and the Habit of Unhappiness*, Martin confiscates Perpetua's bride-price and he does not give it to their mother. He explains it as follow:

> The money was burning her fingers as it always does. It's a mistake to think she's careful. [...]. In fact, as soon as she's got any money, she has to spend it. Well I began to keep my eye on her, spy on her, keep a close watch. Of course, I didn't show it. She had no idea. (203)

This is another harsh proof that men's domination is so high that a son can think that his mother is incapable. This is the fruit of patriarchal teachings since Perpetua's mother is a mature and responsible woman. What her son accuses her of is false.

As far as sexual education is concerned in traditional African societies, patriarchy also puts itself in a secure position. From childhood, girls are taught that they must be virgins in order to get a good reputation as polite girls. Girls are expected to be virgins by the time they get married. In Mongo Beti's *Perpetua and the Habit of Unhappiness*, Perpetua's mother's boasts about her daughter saying the following: "My daughter, oh she's the Holy Virgin [...]. The common lot is not for her. She refuses to share her husband's (fiancé) bed"(79).

In fact, parents feel happy when their daughter is found chaste because people assume that it is a good sign that shows that the mother has brought up her daughter. Perpetua's mother is confident about her daughter. However, men seem to be permitted sexual intercourse whenever they want. Mongo Beti's

character Martin is accused of adultery. But this does not affect his reputation. This case occurs also in Mothoni Likimani's *What does a Man Want?* Where a woman is complaining about "old men with cars and with young ladies" she says: "What will young men do? Who will they marry?"(28). Here she is deploring those who prostitute while they are still unmarried. This is a sad case where patriarchy expects virginity from girls while its members (men) are the ones who destroy young girls' virginity.

In traditional Burundi society, when a girl is found chaste; her husband's people bring a lot of presents to her parents such as beer and straws without holes inside them. Otherwise, they would bring few presents and straws with holes inside them. In that case, not only does the girl feel ashamed but also her parents, especially, her mother. So those straws were intended to tell the girl's parents that she was still virgin or otherwise.

Similarly, in Moslim societies, they would bring the sheet on which the bride slept on the wedding night with blood if she is found virgin or a all white sheet if she is not. Moreover, people believed that when a woman is virtuous, it is easy for her to conceive. This was of course addressed to girls in order to frighten them so that they behave well. All those cultures are taught to young ladies through socialisation in order to force them to keep their virginity.

Nevertheless, this sexual freedom refused to women and permitted to men should not be an acceptable fact for all. That is as women are asked if they are virgin by the time they get married, men should also be asked if they have never made sexual intercourse. Even if virginity test is difficult for men, parents should teach chastity to both sexes.

Apart from informal education, patriarchy traits appear in formal education. Here the patriarchal social norms privilege men at the expense of women when it is the question of going to school. In the early days of colonialism, the period at which schools began, only boys were permitted to attend school whereas girls were preoccupied with household works. This was not due to the fact that boys were more intelligent than girls but it was the custom. Van Allen, in the *Dual Sex Political System in Operation Igbo Men and Community in Politics* asserts that "A woman's place is in the home and women's minds are not strong enough for the masculine subjects of science, business and politics" (47). This situation is evident in *Perpetua and the Habit of Unhappiness* where Perpetua stays at home for household works instead of going to work like her husband. Even if she is more intelligent than her husband, she is condemned to remain at home for the simple reason that she is a woman.

It is also very difficult for women to engage in commercial activities. They have to pay a great amount of money to get a licence for the commercial

operation of a sewing machine. The narrator in Mongo Beti's *Perpetua and the Habit of Unhappiness* states that Perpetua and Anna Maria are arrested and the policeman explains their arrest in the presence of their husbands. It is stated as follows:

> The man in dark glasses (policeman) explained to them cheerfully, even with bursts of a kind of mirth that they could choose between paying a heavy fine for engaging in a commercial activity without a licence or else understanding to set up a branch of Party in Zombotown. (118)

This is an example that shows that women are not permitted to enter into business without permission from men. Men are described as stronger human beings more than women so that they are not allowed to participate even in public affairs. All of this is due to the lack of formal education. Men are described as stronger human being fit for civil and political employment while women are described as weak, timid, and sedentary. Often Goldberg brings out this masculine aggression in the following terms:

> Male aggression is a key to understanding social structure. Males have a little biological edge, little extra aggression makes them want to excel. If women seek to alter this fact of life, to change the political

system of male domination, men inevitably will fail.

(124)

He argues that women cannot enter in political affairs for they may cause many troubles. For a woman, becoming a professional is unusual and those who do so must have been influenced by special facts. Men go on despising women though some are more intelligent than them. Nevertheless, a majority of women are today affluent in business and other professions. This is evident when Perpetua enters in business though it is forbidden for a woman. With her sewing machine, she tries to do all her household in the morning and afterwards, retires into her dress working shop with determination, regularity and eagerness. This proves that women may be good at many jobs even though men underestimate them. But in contemporary Africa, men are starting to do some household chores and women are embarking on careers.

However, the redistribution of responsibility for life work in a more profound sense has not yet taken place. For the most part, women are highly responsible in domestic affairs whereas men take a primary responsibility for the financial stability of the family. Due to the respect of culture and tradition, women are understandably breaking new grounds. Today, it is both possible and desirable for men and women to consent in order to share some activities.

To crown it, men and women have been considered as two different beings throughout their education they get from their early age. As a result, men get power to dominate women in many matters such as politically, socially, economically to name but a few. Women are dramatically underrepresented in the highest position of social, economic and political domains. Perpetua's mother says that there is no need for a woman to waste her time in school. As a result, she forces Perpetua to give up her studies in order to get married. The worst of this is that Perpetua was about to get her certificate in two months. Her mother explains it as follows: "For a woman, school is a kind of game that girls get pushed into by fashion and modern customs-not a foundation on which to build their lives" (124). From this statement, Perpetua's mother does not see the importance of going to school for a girl. This is the result of patriarchal beliefs which do not allow women to be educated. Women are brainwashed by customary ideologies which dominate them. Consequently, African women are not permitted to take decision in socio-political and economic matters which require intellectual endeavour.

This view of Perpetua's mother about a woman is recurrent in most of African patriarchal societies. For instance, Rebeka Njau and Gideon Mukaki in *Kenya Heroes and their Mystical Power* state that

> The scanty literature written on women by colonial scholars depicts the African women as unhappy

> beasts of burden and a slave of man who enjoyed neither the society. (56)

The idea behind this frustration portrays the picture of woman as being destined to fulfil the will of a man. This is also evident in *Perpetua and the Habit of Unhappiness* where Perpetua is taken as a slave by her husband.

Paradoxically, that social belief which privileges men and oppresses women in this domain of education is supported by women themselves. Leith Ross in *African Women* notes that when she was making an investigation in the Ibos from Nigeria she got the report below:

> When I asked mothers what form of education they wanted for their girls, they answered promptly they didn't mind about "the book" but they wanted their daughters to know to manage their homes and how to care for their children. (133)

This quotation demonstrates that it is more necessary, according to social norms, for a girl, to be skilled in domestic affairs rather than in books or formal education.

In those societies, women are taught that their main role is being a mother in charge of household works. Mongo Beti depicts it in *Perpetua and the*

Habit of Unhappiness where Perpetua's mother feels disappointed when her daughter goes back to school, she says:

> Perpetua worries me. That poor child worries me with her books, her school, that woman doctor. These are very strange ideas for one of our girls. Will I ever have a little grandchild to dandle, like so many women no older than I am? What have I done to God to deserve this? Do you think she will go away one day as well and leave me all alone? (66)

These complains shows that what patriarchal society expects from women is something else than studies. Perpetua's mother would prefer to get grandchildren to dandle. In fact, traditional girls are forced to what they do not want. They have only the right to get married.

However, Perpetua has a different vision of things. She strongly detests this patriarchal domination. When her mother comes to take her from school, Perpetua protests by saying that she is frightened of rushing into things and that the certificate is being delivered in two months. Unfortunately, she does not get any opportunity to finish her studies. In the eyes of her mother, she should be a household manager nothing more than that. This is the product of traditional patriarchal ideologies. Within this same framework, it is obvious that education

for women's perceived as needless endeavour. In Leith Ross's *African Women*, it is said that:

> It was bad for a woman to have more education than her husband. All agreed that only those who meant to be teachers or nurse should go up to stand with others should only learn to read and write and take course in domestic training. (271)

From this view, women are blindfolded by tradition. They are discouraged about sending their girls to school, saying it brings no material and even less spiritual advantages. It is affirmed that the girl who has been to a boarding-school is even worse than those who have not perhaps the repression of the school years suddenly removed impels them to express themselves all the more freely.

All in all, this chapter aimed at analysing how patriarchy dominates women through education in traditional African societies. Throughout the whole chapter, we saw how women participate in the teachings of patriarchal social norms which oppress them through socialisation or informal education. The chapter also examined the problem of traditional patriarchal society prohibiting girls to go to school.

CHAPTER THREE: EFFECTS OF PATRIARCHAL EXIGENCIES ON WOMEN'S LIVES

This chapter aims at unravelling detailed physical, psychological and social effects of patriarchal practices on women within their societies. It analyses critically the situation in which they are found. The patriarchal norms are so rooted in most people's minds that the rebellious attitude of some is without promising result.

In most African countries, patriarchal beliefs and mores have been a handicap for women's emancipation. They have generated effects on lives of those women in many ways. This is illustrated by the image of the woman and her status in general and in our novel understudy in particular. From creation, traditions have always generated negative effects on women's lives.

Actually, the woman is as intelligent as the man. We can therefore assume that women undergo moral and spiritual prejudices. Georgina Ashworth in *A Diplomacy of the Oppressed: New Directions in International Feminism* says that

> In many communities of the world, beliefs and practices have been handed down from generation to generation without their usefulness or in some cases,

> their harmful effects being questioned [...]. In regions where tradition has a strong hold over the lives of ordinary people the will to examine these beliefs and customs is suppressed by community leaders. (37)

This excerpt shows clearly that from time immemorial patriarchal teachings, beliefs and mores were transmitted from generation to generation. However, they were strictly transmitted without removing the oppressive ones. They were handed without taking into considerations their sorrowful effects on women's lives.

In modern times as in recent centuries, a woman has been considered as someone who has no say in the society. In the community described in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, the woman is presented as a submissive and passive person. Okwonkwo, the hero of the novel is a convinced traditional man in his beliefs and in his way of reacting to situations. His wives are submissive and passive. They have no say even in matters concerning their well being. This is clearly observed when Okwonkwo's first wife wishes to know the clan's decision about Ikemefuna, the slave boy. Okwonkwo answers her: "woman, since when did you start sharing secrets?"(25).This answer shows that hierarchy put women on the bottom of the society. Okwonkwo reacts so because in his society a woman is someone who has no idea. She is there to execute decisions

made by men. She cannot express her feelings nor participate in public affairs. Thus, for Okwonkwo, it is unbelievable to share secrets with women.

Similarly, in *Mongo Beti's Perpetua and the Habit of Unhappiness*, when Edward, Perpetua's husband receives a visitor, they both have a long conversation but do not think of including Perpetua in their conversation. The author states it as follows:

> The very day, perhaps, Edward and his friend, the police officer who never took his dark glasses during meals, had dinner in the cramped little house, Perpetua waiting on them. At no time did they draw her into their conversation. (145)

This shows that women are forgotten wherever men are discussing. They have no right to express their ideas; they are excluded from men's conversation. They only have to listen and wait for the end. No man can consult a woman when taking a decision. Their ideas are always judged as wrong.

Further, Mongo Beti presents another case where a woman is portrayed as an unintelligent and irresponsible person. This is seen when Perpetua's brother tells their elder brother why he has confiscated the money paid as bride-price for their little sister. He states it as follows:

> It's a mistake to think she's careful. You don't know much about her if you think that. In fact, as soon as she's got any money she has to spend it. Well, I began to keep my eye on her, spy on her, and keep a close watch. Of course, I didn't show it. She had no idea. (203)

This passage unravels men's prejudices about women's ability. This is of course an effect of patriarchal norms which were taught from generation to generation. There is a similar case in what Micere Mugo states in *The Role of Women in the Struggle for Freedom* where he says that

> Stereotyped images of women suggest negativism, weakness and even inborn stupidity [...]. Women are supposed to be gossipers, cowards, and fools and so forth, as opposed to the males who are strong, intelligent and a number of other admirable things. (210)

This shows that the conception which equates the women as weak, stupid and passive elements in the society and men as strong human beings. The man's authority is unchallengeable and the woman has to respect her husband without hesitation. Margaret Snyder in *African Woman and Development in History* testifies:

> To complicate matters, even we may take it for granted that women are always submissive that they have to follow whatever we want. Women labour from morning to evening continuously, with no time to recreate; they have no time to attend meetings where major decisions are taken on their behalf. (137)

This assertion is another proof that shows how patriarchal habits and norms have harsh and frustrating effects on women's life.

As it can be expected in such patriarchal societies, to behave as an inferior creature was inculcated in the women's minds. Thus, they are made to believe that submissiveness is a high quality for women. They therefore accept to be what they are reduced to be. This is the image that Perpetua reflects in Mongo Beti's *Perpetua and the Habit of Unhappiness*, when she confides to her friend saying:

> I know that I am the property of a man who paid a lot of money for me four years ago. I'm not supposed to do anything without his permission first ... up to now, I've done everything I've been told. I was told Perpetua get up, I got up. Perpetua get into bed, and like a fool, I go into bed. (169)

Perpetua, bearing in mind that she is almost her husband's commodity, is convinced that she cannot do anything except his will; no wonder she develops a habit of unhappiness.

Women have been brainwashed by patriarchal beliefs which offend them. They are the first to teach and explain why they have to respect men as their superior. Mongo Beti shows it when he presents a character called Anna-Maria who convinces Perpetua when she refuses to give to her husband her money so that he should use it in paying the bride-price for a second wife. Anna-Maria says:

> With your husband, you've got two choices open to you. Either you give way to him in everything and all goes well, or else you dig your heels in and, if he wants to, he poisons your life for you, makes it a hell upon earth [...] your husband can make you live in hell right away. (144)

As earlier said, women appear to be brainwashed and participate in the continuity of beliefs which undermine them. They consider their husbands as their gods. Whatever they do must be directed by their husband's will.

We realise that patriarchal culture has negative effects on women and prove to be discriminatory against women. This particular treatment directed to

women, places the later in a subordinate position vis-à-vis the man and brings about disharmony in society. Women cannot even participate in most family's decisions. For example, in Mongo Beti's *Perpetua and the Habit of Unhappiness*, we see that wives do not have right to give names to their children. The naming of babies is absolutely the fathers' role. Perpetua gets the favour to choose one of her child's names after a long process of negotiation. The narrator says:

> The birth was notified with the first name of Charles, as the child's father has insisted. But his mother made a point of using only his second Christian name, on Anna-Maria's advice. He won't have anything except Charles? He thinks he's de Gaulle! But never mind, my little Pet. Put Charles first, but then put a Christian name of your own afterward. Then, later always call him by that name. You'll see. (121)

This excerpt shows us how women do not contradict their husband's decisions. The later are the first to take decisions. They cannot consult their wives. Thus, this shows that women have no say in family business. They are really considered as inferior.

In traditional patriarchal societies, the bride-price is another case that causes horrific effects on women's life. This is due to the fact that a woman who

has been "bought" through bride-price institution is meant to be servant, and slave of her "master". Girls are therefore taken as men's possessions. Buchi Emecheta portrays it in *Second Class Citizen* where the narrator sarcastically says: "Men never do wrong, only women can do, they have to beg for forgiveness because they are bought, paid for, and must remain like that, silent, obedient slaves" (24).This conception is an account of effects due to the payment of bride-price. Women lose their human status and become male's property. Women are themselves convinced that they have no choice. Perpetua says: "I know that I'm the property of the man who paid a lot of money for me" (125). Wives are taken as slaves of their husbands. They are not their partners but their employees. Perpetua further says: "I have always respected his come here!" And the worst of all is when her husband does not bring money for meeting familial needs. Perpetua continues to obey her husband and manages to give him his daily ration. The narrator puts it as follows:

> Each day it was a bitter surprise for Edward, on his return to find that his wife had managed not only to feed herself properly but also to prepare an-admittedly modest meal for himself, which she hastened to serve up of him, without the least sign of resentment. (103)

Here, we see that women are meant to respect their husbands whatever circumstances may occur. Perpetua is still obeying an irresponsible husband

who does not even feed the family. Perpetua's husband does not give her a rest, he commands and dominate her all the time. Women who are bought through bride-price are obliged to respect their husbands without murmuring and they are not allowed to divorce even though their husbands bring other wives. If not, severe punishment can be taken.

Within this same profile, men do not hesitate to beat their wives whenever they want. The patriarchal societies do not consider wife-beating as a hindrance to a better relation between men and women. M. Dowres in *Women and Violence* holds that:

> The practice of wife beating is particularly hard to tackle because many traditional and transitional cultures have a blind spot about wife-beating. Wife-beating remains hidden and invisible, not necessary in the sense that it is covered up by victims and ignored by society, but in the sense that people see it as normal and therefore not a problem. (20)

Here, we see that even if patriarchal societies seem to simplify wife-beating, it presents numerous effects on the victims. The wife can get physical effects like wounds, paralysis, psychological problems to name a few. In Mongo Beti's *Perpetua and the Habit of Unhappiness*; Perpetua's husband beats her for any reason. The narrator states it as follows:

> Edward had driven her out of the marriage bed and made her sleep on filthy mattress at the far end of the room. He struck her for trivial reasons even in front of the children. As soon as a suspicion entered his head, he had recourse to an oxhide whip to get from his wife what he called, emphatically, the truth. (181)

This passage certifies that the practice of wife-beating is held for any reason, the husband does not need to have many proofs for accusing his wife.

In addition to the physical effects that are brought about by the practice of wife-beating, a beaten wife suffers some psychological effects. For instance, there is a loss of love for her husband and in most cases; this creates some kind of sorrow for the beaten wife. Furthermore, a beaten wife may feel helpless and subsequently decide to leave her husband. Unfortunately, it is not allowed for her to divorce when her husband has paid the bride-price. This is the situation in which Perpetua is. Her elder brother Martin tries to describe it by saying the following:

> [...] Oh dear, oh dear, it was dreadful man. Things were really bad between them. Perpetua was in tears all the time, though she was so far gone in her pregnancy [...]. Yes, well she was always in tears. One day she took me aside and said, "Martin you're not going to

> leave me here. You're still my brother. You're not going to let that devil kill me. Take me back to Mother. I can't have the baby here, it's madness. Don't leave me here all by myself, Martin. (207)

From this statement, we see how Perpetua is psychologically tortured until she does not consider her husband as her lover but as a devil. She is really frustrated by her husband's behavior. That is why she prefers more to go back to her mother than stay alone with her husband. She is pleading to her elder brother not to let her alone because she finds herself helpless.

As women are considered as men's properties bought through bride-price, men consider women as sex objects. As matter of fact, women who are sexually objectified lose their rights to control their own sex and bodies. In other words, they become incomplete human beings in so far as they do not have freedom on use of their own bodies. Therefore, they are sexually harassed by their own husbands. This is the case when Edward wants to get a job. He pushes Perpetua to have sexual intercourse with an officer in order to be promoted. He says the following:

> You really are behind the times. What I asked you to do, in a rather roundabout way, I admit, is nothing terrible. This sort of thing is normal all over the country [...].They say the same sort of thing goes on

> everywhere in the world. Why should it be any different here? Why are we so special that we should be exceptions to the general rule? Any wife who isn't a complete fool would be only too pleased if she could get a job for her husband as easily that. (150)

This quotation shows us that since women are considered as men's properties, they are pushed even into things they do not want or understand. It is a crushing evidence that patriarchal practices cause harm to women.

However, when a wife dares to practice sexual intercourse out of marriage, it is considered as an abomination. This is observed when Perpetua makes love with the footballer. Edward, her husband, gives her a severe punishment. The narrator says the following:

> At the end of each day, the police officer required a detailed report from his wife of her activities together of a list of the people who had visited the house [...]. On the list he would cross out some names, telling her without any further explanation that these people were not to be admitted in future [...]. He would warm his wife privately; that if he heard that the vampire had dared to come to the house to see her, he could kill her with his revolver. (180)

Here, we see how women are unjustly punished because patriarchy does not punish men who commit adultery. Even though men have sexual freedom, they feel a morbid jealousy when they suspect that there might have been sexual intercourse between their spouses and other men. Therefore, this proves that men commit adultery knowing that it causes bitter stresses and strains to their wives.

In patriarchal societies, polygamy is another issue in which women suffer from different effects. In fact, in those societies patriarchy has set up norms which permit men to be at the apex of any realms of life. This phenomenon can cause psychological problems to the first wife. Such a situation is observed when Perpetua suffers from the presence of another woman in her bed. The narrator says:

> Perpetua grabbed the lamp from him, and nailing the woman to the bed with a look of hatred, [...] There, unable to sleep, she had to endure the torture of a room alive with the provocative noises from their exertions in the bed. Once, she caught herself sobbing silently, not out of jealousy, or even indignation, but for shame. (105)

Here, Perpetua is suffering from the presence of a rival in her house. The narrator says that it is a kind of torture to Perpetua. This is of course a

psychological torture since there is no stability in her mind because she sees that she is going to share her husband's love with someone else.

In addition, this polygamous practice is a kind of sexual starvation for women because while men are permanently sexually satisfied, women are not. Generally, women stay alone at home while their husbands always enjoy themselves. The later move from a woman to another as they want, while the former are there wishing to have their husbands but in vain. Thus, they become extremely anxious and it frustrates and affects them mentally. Their morals are insecure and they are not stable. The narrator further amplifies that situation saying the following:

> When suddenly she heard her husband snoring, her self-control vanished; she shot up as if on a spring and without knowing clearly what she was going to do, she found herself standing up in her night dress. (105)

This shows mental instability that women are undergoing due to polygamy. Perpetua feels depth of humiliation into which she is plunged. She becomes as a fool and runs out in her night dress without considering that there are some people outside. The practice of polygamy completely troubles women.

Mongo Beti further shows that rivals can be driven to fight. Perpetua and her rival fight each other because sharing one husband in the same house is a very hard situation. The narrator says that the noise of Perpetua's husband and her rival from the bed was provocative to Perpetua. Her anger was so great that she did not know how she began to fight her rival. We read:

> She was gripping her rival's throat convulsively and calling her names, 'Slut! Whore! Syphilitic!' In actual fact the two women rolled about for some time on the bed and then on the stamped earth floor. (106)

This fight is a symbol of wives refusal of co-spouses. Women have no other solutions than fighting their rival. Divorce is not a solution because it is said by social norms that a woman should not leave her husband, especially when he has paid the bride price. Surprisingly, husbands do not feel ashamed of their acts. However, they force their first wives to accept the presence of co-spouses. After the above fight, Perpetua's husband comes to intervene in the favour of his second wife.

In conclusion, this chapter aimed at showing up the effects of the patriarchal exigencies on women. It proceeded to analyse the social, physical and psychological effects due to oppressive social norms within the patriarchal societies. It has also shown that domestic violence and women enslavement led women to the lost of their dignity.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

This work set out to prove the hypothesis that both women and men experience some psychological and social consequences caused by patriarchal system. All along the discussion, it has been glaringly obvious that patriarchy has put itself at the apex of the pyramid of life. In order to establish a base of our analysis, we deemed it necessary to carry it through precise theoretical framework which clearly treat this issue of patriarchal dominion. The Feminist and psychological theories helped us to see that patriarchal teachings embodied in people lead to dramatic effects on women. With these theories we were carried into the psyche of feminists making us to understand why women should rebel against patriarchal exigencies.

In the first chapter, we found that patriarchy has established social norms which are oppressive towards women in marriage and bride-price. From evidences obtained after a deep analysis of the patriarchal space, it is clear that women care the burden of oppressive patriarchal social norms. As far as marriage arrangements are concerned, the patriarch has an absolute power. While organizing union of two parties, the concerned are not consulted. Decisions are held without their contribution. Most of the cases, women suffer more than men since they have to leave their families and live with unknown individuals. As far as bribe-price is concerned, the girl's parents are materialistic

because they accept to give their daughter taking into consideration the social status and financial situation of the boy and his family.

In the second chapter, we discovered how the oppressive social norms are rooted in people's minds through education. In African patriarchal societies, men and women have been considered as two different beings throughout their education they get from their early ages. Women participate in the teachings of patriarchal social norms which oppress them through socialisation. They are taught that they have to be submissive to their husbands. Patriarchy put them at the low rank. They are not permitted to be formally educated.

In the third chapter, we found that women undergo different social, physical and psychological effects due to the patriarchal dominion. Men occur as masters whereas women are considered as slaves. In that point, we have realised that even though the practice of those patriarchal beliefs hurts women, the later are still blindfolded to reality because they participate in perpetuating those traditional oppressive beliefs.

Therefore, since those patriarchal exigencies are not for a better life of one group of the society (woman), there should be a change. That is even if some patriarchal teachings should be respected, the oppressive ones should be abandoned. Women have been brought up in a culture of wife battery, sexual

assault and psychological abuse. The society members should combine efforts in order to uproot those bad beliefs. Leaders should be at the front line in that change. They should start by teaching people so that there should be a change of mentality.

By way of contribution in literature, this work is a continuation of the debate on patriarchal dominion, with a particular focus on Mongo Beti. It further introduces some areas of women's oppression such as marriage and the bride-price. In addition to this, the education is also embodied with patriarchal oppression. It concludes that, as effects of those patriarchal exigencies, women are considered as slaves within the society.

This issue of patriarchal dominion, being a seemingly endless topic for debate, other researchers interested in this domain should make an attempt to make a thorough study by making a comparison about gender roles. We, by the way, make an overt appeal to writers to produce more works which prove that patriarchal practices constitute a handicap in a country's development. Researches should be sure they are carrying efforts to show that women must be considered as important members of the society.

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