

NERVOUS CONDITIONS

Title

by [R BEHARI](#) - 13 Feb 2017 @ 15:36

Why do you think the novel is called "Nervous Conditions"?

The quote at the start of the book states, "The condition of native is a nervous condition." What does this mean?

How does it apply to Tambu, bearing in mind that the novel is an example of postcolonial literature?

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Re: Title

by [K ALLAWAY](#) - 17 Feb 2017 @ 11:22

Mrs R Behari,

The novel, written by Tsitsi Dangerembga, is called *Nervous Conditions*. This novel is set in the 1980's in a country called Rhodesia which is now commonly known as Zimbabwe. The protagonist of the novel is Tambu and she and her family are members of the Shona tribe. Tambu's family is poverty stricken but, with the help of Tambu's uncle- Babamukuru, they manage to stay afloat. Babamukuru is the wealthiest of the family members, as he is a headmaster at the mission, and, therefore, has been allocated as the head of the family as he sustains his family.

The reason the novel is called *Nervous Conditions* is central to the fact that the members of the Shona culture live very minimalistic lifestyles, besides of course Babamukuru and his family who live in a large house on the mission. Members of the Shona culture, when Rhodesia became colonised, maintained their ways as, in this culture, change is not seen as an option- everyone must conform and stay in line. Thus, *Nervous Conditions*, which is described as "the condition of native" is a disorder which arises when natives yield themselves and allow themselves to be submissive to the colonial power and ways of life as they step out of their boundaries and roles which the Shona culture clearly sets out for them. This so called disease or affliction has the ability to make a person mentally ill and in extreme cases, psychotic, as the mind of a Shona member is not able to cope with the pressures and roles of a colonial lifestyle.

Tambu, though not directly and literally affected by the Nervous Condition- unlike her cousin Nyasha, is constantly, consciously, plagued by the disorder. She sees herself changing in her mannerisms and her civility but not so much in her mental

functionings. She lives in fear of the unknown as she is given the opportunities to depart from the family home and to leave all she has ever known. Although this is all she has ever dreamed of and she accepts this honour, she is constantly at war in her mind. She is at war between her desire to grow within a colonised society and become an educated woman and not wanting to lose her Shona roots and, thus, succumb to the influences of the colonised society as this is what opens up the mind and the body to the dreaded ailment- Nervous Conditions.

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