

ASPECTS OF VENDA POETRY

(A REFLECTION ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF POETRY FROM THE ORAL
TRADITION TO THE MODERN FORMS)

BY

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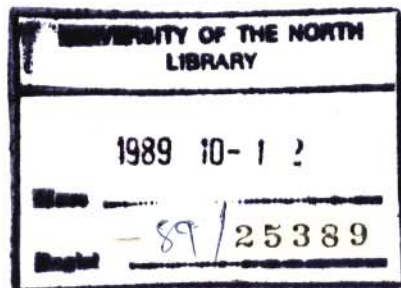
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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my grandfather **Milubi (Muḡo)** for his bravery and valorous efforts during Mphephu - Boer war at Swongozwi mountains.

DECLARATION

I DECLARE THAT THIS THESIS IS MY OWN WORK BOTH IN CONCEPTION
AND EXECUTION.

[Handwritten signature]

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I feel deeply indebted to my promoter for his guidance and an unwaning patience.

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CHAPTER I

1.00 INTRODUCTION

1.01 AIM OF RESEARCH

The aim of this research project is to discern, assess and reflect on the development of Venḍa poetry from the traditional to modern forms. A reflection on a variety of aspects that characterize Venḍa poetry, be it traditional or modern, will be made. The investigator would also like to show how the traditional spirit has dominated the early forms of poetry - the kind of creative profusion which is brought into existence when emotions are interfused with thought and memory, while 'sensibility' suggests both aesthetic sensitivity and the ability to integrate previous imaginative experience into the process of composition. It is imperative to show that the traditional poetry was handed from one generation to another by word of mouth, and that it took the form of praise poetry.

The investigator intends that the matter of deviation from the aesthetic of traditional poetry to that of the modern be the rubric that draws our attention to the words of thought and experience which are encompassed in the two different perspectives. The purpose of this study is to indicate how Western poetry has affected the traditional poetry. The Western poetry, with its written form, has diluted the vitality and spirit of traditional praise semi-traditional and western in both form and feeling.

In modern poetry, unlike in the traditional forms, poets tend to shed off the traditional norms that serve as barriers to a

perceptive reflection of one's environment. The importance of the traditional spirit in modern poetry does not in itself suggest an ungoverned outpouring of emotions, but implies the impulse to transmute the confusion of experience into the order of poetry. Modern poetry, reveals again, the ability of poets to respond to the immediate world of 'eye and ear' and to integrate that response into the texture of poetry, so that there is no sense of discontinuity between spontaneous exuberance of feelings and the demands of artistic creation.

The investigator further wishes to show how modern poetry in Venda has found fulfilment in the protest poetry which is a reaction to the poet's own socio-political environment. In the course of my investigation of Black protest poetry as found in Venda and written in English as also in protest poetry written in Xitsonga, N. Sotho, Sesotho and Setswana reflection will be made on the fact that protest is typically directed at the white man in authority. This fact will be set in perspective by showing that in protest poetry originating in independent Africa as represented by Wole Soyinka and John P. Clark of Nigeria and Henrie Peters of Gambia, has as its target the Black successor to the white man's office. It thus becomes clear that the essential object of protest is the authority figure whether he be white or Black.

In this study, a literary background is given so as to reveal the embracing scope of Venda Oral tradition. In Venda oral tradition, like any African oral tradition, there has never been a compartmentalization of poetry as a genre distinct from other genres. Myths, legends, folktales, proverbs, riddles, children's rhymes and lullabies as well as songs, formed a coherent entity of Venda oral tradition. Most of the children's rhymes, songs and lullabies make use of myths, legends, folktales, riddles, proverbs as their point of departure. This is also the case with praise poetry where use is made of forms

such as proverbs. In our review of the literary background, a reflection is made on the various forms of the Venda traditional lore so as to reveal the totality of Oral tradition. These forms actually constitute a vital foundation for poetry. On folklore as the fulcrum of poetry, Ntuli says:

Apart from basing his poetry on some aspects of izibongo, Vilakazi borrows freely from traditional oral stories. He sometimes makes very brief allusion to these tales probably because he knows that the mention of characters and actions will remind the readers of the full stories. 1)

1.02 METHODS OF RESEARCH

In this study the thematic approach will be used for the analysis and differentiation of the various poems according to their respective themes. The thematic approach is a kind of approach that elucidates on the different themes of poetry. It addresses itself to the central ideas of poetry, illuminating various elements in a coherent, artistic whole. For example, poems may be classified according to themes such as 'Despair' 'Human nature' 'Religion' 'Hope' 'Satire' 'Natural phenomena' and 'Protest'. In praise poetry, the diversity of the theme lies in the object which is praised. For instance, 'Praise for initiates' 'Praise for chiefs' 'Praise for animals' 'Praise for divining bones' et cetera. This method has to be complemented by other methods such as the Textual method, Sociological, Historical and Comparative methods.

1) D.B.Z. Ntuli: The Poetry of B.W. Vilakazi. P. 29.

Textual analysis is the method that will be used as well. Through this method, the meaning of specific literary texts will be analysed in greater depth. This method will be complemented by the Historical and Sociological methods which relate to the writer's life and society, and also serve as the source for background information. Besides Textual Analysis, use will be made of the Comparative method. The Comparative method seeks to reflect on a variety of bases, the similarities and differences in theme, subject matter, imagery, symbolism, sense, feeling and tone.

1.03 A LITERARY BACKGROUND

Africa has been regarded since time immemorial, as a dark slumbering giant devoid of any good. In the field of literature, the continent has been viewed either as being in want of literature or after the realization of its literary richness, to be regarded as the crude, backward and uninteresting forms not worthy of any serious literary attention by a student of the western world.

This view is reiterated by Burton when he says:

The savage custom of going naked we are told, has denuded the mind, and destroyed all decorum in the language. Poetry there is none... There is no metre, no rhyme, nothing that interests or soothes the feelings or arrests the passions. 2)

2) W.F.P. Burton : Oral Literature in Lubaland.
African Studies 2, P. xii.

Burton's opinion reveals the negative attitude held by many students of the western world. It is evident that African poetry was judged by Western standards. The absence of poetic devices such as rhyme, metre, enjambment, et cetera rendered poetry as no poetry at all. Kunene makes a reflection on this attitude by French missionaries on the Sesotho traditional poetry. Their comment on Sesotho praise poetry is as follows:

In these eulogies, there is neither rhythm, metre nor rhyme, in other words, nothing that constitutes proper verse as we know it. 3)

Moloi in his A comparative study of the poetry of Ntsane and Khaketla has also revealed the same negative attitude held by Tucker, A.N. towards Zulu praise poetry. Tucker's remarks are:

Savage poetry is disorderly and without any formal pattern acceptable in our languages. 4)

This view shows that African traditional poetry was considered to be haphazard in nature and lacking in poetic depth.

Lenake in his 'Inaugural address delivered on the 18th of June on an appointment to professorship in the Dept of African Languages at the University of South Africa' refutes views such as that of Tucker. Lenake refutes Tucker's position in this way:

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- 3) D.P. Kunene : The Heroic Poetry of the Basotho. P. xi.
4) A.J.M. Moloi : A Comparative Study of the poetry of Ntsane and Khaketla. Unpublished M.A. Dissertation, Unisa, 1973. P. 2.

While earlier critics such as Tucker, Dieterlin and Köhler doubted the existence of African poetry in Southern Africa, later generations consisting of African and non-African critics such as Jabavu, Vilakazi, Lestrade, Jordan, Groenewald, Kunene, Guma, Swanepoel, Ntuli, Marivate, Satyo, Taljaard, Grobler, Serudu, Msimang, Shole and others, have proved that poetry and prose narrative in our languages is a fait accompli. 5)

The appearance of Venda publications by missionaries was meant for an easy and swift communication and interaction between the so called heathens and the missionaries.

The paramount objective of the missionaries was to find fulfilment in scriptural calling. They had to see to it that they mould new beings that would shed off a sheath of heathenism.

For them to attain this objective they had to produce learning materials that would enable their converts to read the Bible. Mathivha in her 'The Berlin Missionary Venture in Education at Tshakhuma Venda 1872 - 1954' says:

It is true that modern education for blacks in South Africa was first introduced by the missionaries. To be able to teach the Gospel to the people, they had to introduce a certain restricted amount of learning. The object, was

5) J.M. Lenake : Inaugural address on 18 June 1987 on an appointment of a professorship in the Dept of African Languages at Unisa. P.3.

to produce clergy to preach the Gospel and win system to meet the needs of the people. Rather, somewhat the contrary was the case. In most instances it was designed for the destruction of the traditional culture of the people. This, to a large extent, has caused the blackman to develop an inferiority complex about his own traditions. 6)

The attitude of missionaries towards Africa has been negative. This holds for oral tradition as well. Such an attitude is revealed by Roscoe in his 'A study in West Africa Literature' when he reflects as follows:

- and attitudes inherited from colonial days and early missionary evangelising, they assert that the African has no choice because he has no cultural traditions of his own, no religious, economic or political background worthy of serious attention, and certainly no history of glory in the creative arts. 7)

Europe is in this case regarded as a model for Africa. Europe is regarded as the teacher and Africa as the pupil. Europe is said to know what is good for Africa, better than Africa herself.

6) R.N. Mathivha : The Berlin Missionary Venture in Education at Tshakhuma Venda 1872 - 1954. Unpublished M.Ed Dissertation. UNIN, 1985. P. 71.

7) A.A. Roscoe : Mother is Gold. A study in West African Literature. P. 1.

The lofty advice is summed up in the exhortation to westernise as quickly as possible. 8)

From this point, one could understand why Venḍa poets have shunned their own poetry of praise and emulated and regurgitated Western poetry.

Despite shortcomings in the missionaries, one may mention that their contribution in putting the Venḍa language into writing is remarkable. Missionaries such as P.E. Schwellnus and Th. Schwellnus have made commendable literary efforts in the Venḍa language.

The efforts of these missionaries served as a cradle for the writing of modern poetry in Venḍa. It was through the missionaries' educational endeavours that Venḍa poets were able to put their language into writing.

Finnegan believes that a new perception towards African literature began to take a new dimension in the late 50's and 60's. She avers that a rapid increase in interest of African Studies was realized. 9)

One may say that a renewal of interest in African oral tradition was gradually recognized. This reawakening discarded the tendency to regard African literature as no literature at all, and in its place, it instilled readiness to accept oral tradition as a literature that should be considered on its own terms.

8) Roscoe : Mother is Gold. A study in West African Literature. P. 1.

9) Ruth Finnegan: Oral Literature in Africa. P. 28.

Ntsukunyane also feels that the African work of art should be assessed and be accepted according to its own worth and not on the basis of the Western standard. He says:

The present practice of judging African literature by Western standards is not only invalid, (sic) is also potentially dangerous to a development of Art. It presupposes that there is one absolute artistic standard and that of course, is Western standard. 10)

Oral tradition, like any subject of study, has lately attracted the attention of scholars as a field of academic research. Those who have been ignoring oral tradition, because of their theoretical misconceptions or because they were alien to the culture they studied, have come to the realization that they have trodden on hidden treasure.

The naive and a sense of negativism is discerned when Finnegan reflects as follows on African oral literature:

Most prevalent of all, perhaps, and most fundamental for the study of African oral literature is the hidden feeling that this is not really literature at all: that these oral forms may, perhaps, fulfil certain practical or ritual functions in that supposedly odd context called 'tribal life,'

10) T.V. Ntsukunyane : The Interpretative value of the Cultural factor applied to the Sesotho Novel. Univ of the North Communique. P. 13.

but that they have no aesthetic claims, for either local people or the visiting scholar, to be considered as analogous to proper written literature, let alone on a par with it. 11)

It is impressive to realize that the negative views on African oral tradition have given way to growing signs of a fuller sense of appreciation. Oral tradition has actually become a systematic and a serious field of study with an appeal to a large body of diverse disciplines.

In Venḍa, oral tradition has always been part and parcel of the educational setting. The life and world views of the Venḍa people were reflected through the narration of myths.

1.03.01 Myth

Venḍa folk-lore constitute a vital foundation for poetry. Praise poetry for example, borrows freely from traditional stories. Many poems allude to certain aspects of fables, myths, legends, folk-tales, riddles and proverbs. This reveals the coherent nature of the traditional folk-lore as opposed to modern literature which is compartmentalized into distinct genres such as poetry, prose and drama.

According to 'The Concise Oxford Dictionary', a myth is regarded as, 'Purely fictitious narrative usually involving supernatural persons and embodying popular ideas on natural phenomena'. 12)

11) Ruth Finnegan: Oral Literature in Africa. P. 47.

12) H.W. Fowler and
Fowler F.G. : The Concise Oxford Dictionary. P. 789.

Guma, regards a myth as:

A tale, that professes to relate some happening in which supernatural beings are concerned and probably in so doing to offer an explanation of some natural phenomenon. 13)

Besides myths, the Venda folk-lore also includes fables, legends, folk-tales, riddles and proverbs.

1.03.02 Fable

Jobs, regards a fable as:

A short tale related to teach a moral and the characters are usually animals or inanimate objects. 14)

Fables are didactic in nature and the Venda people used them in discouraging vice among children.

In fables, animals are actors and assume human qualities. For example, Sankambe (the clever hare) plays a successful role against Muzhou (a big elephant). A conflict between Sankambe and Muzhou arises. Sankambe is too small to face the elephant.

13) S.M. Guma : The Form, Content and Technique of Traditional Literature in S. Sotho. P. 2.

14) G. Jobs : Dictionary of Mythology, Folklore. P. 564.

He takes a pumpkin and bore a hole. After having bored a hole, Sankambe jumps into the pumpkin. The elephant sees a pumpkin, and decides to swallow it. When the elephant had swallowed the pumpkin, the hare, Sankambe, gets out of the pumpkin and starts cutting the intestines of the elephant. The elephant writhes in pain and dies in the end. This was a defeat for the elephant, Muzhou. The lesson of this fable is that the weak can defeat the strong.

1.03.03 Legend

A legend according to Guma, unlike a fable that is didactic in nature, is:

an historical story that contains a nucleus of historical fact, such as the name of a particular character, but whose historical existence is now shrouded in mystery, to be mythical or semi-mythical. 15)

A legend includes an account of something that happened long ago, for instance, in the Venda legend, Dimbanyika disappears and dies in the cave, (Udzama ha Dimbanyika Tshiendeulu).

The difference between a legend and folk-tale lies in the fact that a folk-tale is a popular story handed down by tradition from generation to generation and which was told for the sake of amusing, while a legend is an historical story that contains a nucleus of historical fact but whose historical existence is now shrouded in mystery, to be mythical or semi-mythical.

15) Guma : The Form, Content and Technique of Traditional Literature in S. Sotho. P. 2.

1.03.04 Folk-tales

In folk-tales, animals and human beings are involved in inter-relationship. Folk-tales involve narrations such as:

Musidzana we a funana na nowa
'A girl who fell in love with
a snake'

Muntse a tshi lela hwana
'Muntse 'a springbuck'
baby-seating.

The legend, like a fable and folk-tale is preceded by an introductory catch-expression of 'Salungano Salungano'.

Riddles and Proverbs

Riddles and proverbs also served as part of the oral traditional literature. Proverbs are educative in nature while riddles are meant for mental alertness.

1.03.05 Riddles

Cassell views a riddle as a description of something which the hearer is asked to name. It is really a test of wit, in which a speaker does his best to tease by combining an accurate description of an obscure thing with deliberate misleading of audience. 16)

16) Cassell : Encyclopaedia of Literature. Vol. 1. P. 372.

Nkoki says of riddles:

This genre includes educational prose which is based on experience and observation. The primary aim is entertainment. A riddle describes a person or a thing in obscure expression calculated to exercise the intellectual skill of any who may attempt to solve it. 17)

In Venda, riddles are characterized by the basic formula of "Thaii" which implies 'Guess'. The expression 'Guess' always precedes the utterance of a riddle. This is followed by a mental exercise which culminates in a solution. Blacking says that the form of a riddle resembles that of 'milayo' formulae, which must be known by anyone who claims that he has been to certain initiation schools. 18)

The riddles may be presented in the following manner.

- (i) Thaii! ngulungulu mufaroni.
'Guess, that which rolls in a basket.'

The answer will be as follows :

Ndi i_xo
'It is an eye'

- (ii) Thaii! tsha nkunda ndi lipo
'Guess, that which I am denied of even
if I were to be near to it.'

17) G. Nkoki : Traditional Prose Literature of the Nqika.
Unpublished M.A. Dissertation, Unisa 1968. P. 24.

18) J. Blacking : Venda Children's Songs. P. 1.

The answer will be as follows :

Ndi damu la khaladzi

'It is one's sister's breast'

Characteristics of riddles.

Riddles are characterized by a number of aspects like humour, rhythm, et cetera.

Humour

Humour is a characteristic feature of most riddles.

For example: Vhana vha mme anga vha dubekana vha tshi ya mukotoni.

'My mother's children make a line toward the main gate.'

'Mukotoni's is a place where they dump refuse. The expression 'U ya mukotoni' suggests going to toilet. The riddle, 'Vhana vha mme anga vha dubekana vha tshi ya mukotoni' may imply to the hearer, that children have a running stomach. This sounds humorous. The answer to this riddle is : 'vhudada' (red ants). The riddle suggests a line made of red ants and not children experiencing a running stomach.

Classification of riddles.

Riddles may be classified according to their aspect of reference. Riddles in Venda may be classified as follows:

Riddles dealing with natural phenomena.

The following are riddles that deal with natural phenomena.

- (i) Thaii! Muri wo wa vhakegulu vha gidimela ma^xasana.
'Guess, a tree has fallen, and old women went for wood'

Answer : Ndi dūvha.
'It is the sun'

(ii) Thaii! mutanda mutshena thavhani
'Guess, a white stick above the mountain'

Answer : Ndi n̄wedzi
'It is the moon'

(iii) Thaii! kukuru - kukuru mufaroni
'Guess, 'kukuru - kukuru' in a basket'

Answer : Ndi mvula
'It is the rain'

Riddles that deal with living creatures.

(i) Thaii! ngululu yo rwa mupfudze thavhani
'Guess, 'ngululu' has released manure in the mountain'

Answer : Ndi nnda
'It is a louse'

(ii) Thaii! Vhana vha mme anga vha dubekana vha tshi ya
khoroni
'Guess, my mother's children queue toward 'khoroni''

Answer : Ndi vhudada
'It is red ants'

(iii) Thaii! tshokotshoko mavhuvhuni
'Guess, 'tshokotshoko' in the refuse'

Answer : Ndi mbevha
'It is a rat'

Riddles dealing with plants.

The following is an example of a riddle that deals with plants.

Thaii! nguvho ya khotsi anga yo wa nda si tsha kona u i fara.
'Guess, my father's blanket fell down and I could not hold it anymore'

Answer : Ndi țari
'It is a leaf'

Riddles dealing with clothing

(i) Thaii! lutiitii lusera - muunga
'Guess, lutiitii that passes through muunga tree'

Answer : Ndi tsindi
'It is a loin - cloth that protects the private parts'

(ii) Thaii! gapa-gapa ȷa muomva.
'Guess, a leaf of a banana tree'

Answer : Ndi tshirivha
'It is a loin-cloth'

Riddles dealing with the human body

Thaii! ȷimphompho ȷi namela thavha
'Guess, 'ȷimphompho' climbs the mountain'

Answer : Ndi maȷo
'It refers to the eyes'

Thai! n̄wana o bebelwa vhaloini a hulela vhaloini.

'Guess, a child has been born among the witches and grew among them'

Answer : Ndi lulimi

'It is the tongue'

The value of riddles.

The game of riddling serves as an entertainment for children. Riddles stimulate the minds of children. As children are asked the question, they learn to think, observe and imagine. They also learn to be accurate through the careful selection of words and the formation of apt metaphors.

1.03.06 Proverbs

Of the proverb, The Concise Oxford Dictionary says:

It is a short pithy saying
in general use, adage. 19)

Dickenson regards a proverb as an old saying expressing the accepted truth. 20)

Junod views proverbs as responses of people to the influence of their surroundings and in the same vein, the result of their outlook of life in general. 21)

19) Fowler and Fowler : The Concise Oxford Dictionary. P. 985.

20) H.J. Dickenson : Phrase and Idioms. P. 128.

21) H.P. Junod and Alexandre A.A. : The Wisdom of Tsonga - Shangaan people. P. 13.

e.g. Nwana wa tshidzulahuvhuya huvhi hu a vhidza.
'A pampered child ends being a failure in life'

Wa sa ɓi pfa u vhudzwani u do ɓi pfela vhulaloni.
'He who does not listen will regret in the end'

Literary devices in proverbs.

Proverbs are characterized by literary devices such as alliteration, rhythm, imagery, et cetera.

Rhythm gives proverbs, a sense of flow, and alliteration adds to this aspect.

ɓi naka ɓi tshi hoha ɓiñwe didinngwe, lone ɓi tshi hohwa ɓi ri mavhala anga.

'One good turn deserves another'

The literary device of alliteration is realized in the ɓ speech sound.

Proverbs teem with images. For example, if one were to say : 'Pfumo ɓi ɓa vhavhandameli' literally, it means death and destruction brought about by a spear. Figuratively, 'pfumo' represents the chief. It stands for authority. The proverb suggests therefore, that traditionally, the chief would be taken to his grave with his immediate aides.

Classification of proverbs.

Proverbs dealing with parts of the human body

Mulomo a u daledwi nga mulambo
'Pride goes before fall'

Munwe muthihi a u ṭusi mathuthu

'One person may not be able to carry out a duty on his own'

Proverbs reflecting disappointment

Mmbwa yo naiwaho a i na muḡe.

'A person without something of his own usually suffers a lot'

Mutsinda ndi khwine shaka ndi bulayo.

'One should hardly trust a friend'

Proverbs dealing with laziness.

Mubva ha na nzie dzi khoroni

'A lazy person will easily die of hunger'

Mufuvha u lambisa thakha.

'Laziness does not pay at all'

Proverbs may reflect on any aspect of human existence. They chide, give courage, warn both the young and the old. They serve as a reflection of one's life and world view.

Conclusion

The fore-going reflections reveal the attitude of students of the Western world who regarded African oral tradition as no art at all. African oral tradition has for long, been regarded as being backward and uninteresting. The student of the western world assessed the oral tradition by western standards. This gave the wrong notion of regarding African oral tradition as void of any artistic qualities.

African Oral tradition has always been part and parcel of the traditional man. It was composed of the following established formal ingredients.

- (i) Myths
- (ii) Fables
- (iii) Legends
- (iv) Folk-tales
- (v) Riddles
- (vi) Proverbs
- (vii) Praise poetry, which will be dealt with in Chapter III.

A myth was a means of explaining certain phenomena beyond human understanding. Fables are short tales which are narrated to teach a moral lesson and the characters are mostly animals.

A legend, unlike a fable, is an historical story that contains a nucleus of historical fact, but whose historical existence is shrouded in mystery so as to turn it mythical or semi-mythical. On the other hand, folk-tales are narrations meant for entertainment. In folk-tales, animals and human beings are usually involved in inter-relationship.

Riddles and proverbs also formed part of African oral tradition. Proverbs have a moral purport while riddles are meant to encourage mental alertness. From the fore-going discussion, it is evident that myths, fables, legends, folk-tales, riddles and proverbs reveal a treasure of African oral tradition and form a coherent entity of the whole Venda life and world view. These aspects of oral tradition form a tangible background to poetry.

CHAPTER II

2.00 ORAL TRADITIONAL POETRY

2.01 CHILDREN'S RHYMES, SONGS AND LULLABIES

The oral traditional poetry, is a survival of an indefinite past which was handed down from one generation to another by word of mouth. Such poetry was never put into writing, hence its oral nature. It was a repeated recital with a touch of individual variations.

Oral traditional poetry may be divided into children's rhymes, songs and lullabies as well as praise poetry. Praise poetry is meant to extol human efforts while children's rhymes and songs are meant for entertainment and enjoyment.

Children's rhymes, and lullabies are such that they can be sung. Usually, there is a playful rhyme, which makes them enjoyable. The musical nature of rhymes and lullabies has an inviting effect on children.

On songs, 'The Concise Oxford Dictionary of current English' regards a song as:

Short poem set to music or meant
to be sung; short poem in rhymed
stanzas. 22)

Lestrade as quoted by Guma views songs as follows:

22) Fowler and : The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current
Fowler English. P. 1220.

South Sotho songs constitute the lyric and dramatic poetry of Bantu. 23)

Blacking regards songs as poetry that has been shaped tonally. To him, words and music come into the singer's mind as one, and like poetry, songs have economy of expression, so that words will fit the metre of the music. 24)

Although the relationship between spoken verse and song is an important one, I would prefer not to place the two types in any evolutionary hierarchy. It is interesting that for the Venda, they are united in the same category by virtue of their metrical difference from ordinary speech.

Of lullabies, Vilakazi says:

These are nursery songs, sung by nurses as they carry the babies on their backs, inducing them to sleep. 25)

2.02 Lullabies

Lullabies have good poetic qualities like rhythm, parallelism, et cetera, and should as a matter of fact, be regarded as poetry in their own right. The rhythm and cadence of lullabies are devices of rocking a child to sleep. Finnegan sees lullabies in the following manner:

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- 23) Guma : The Form, Content and Technique of Traditional Literature in S. sotho. P. 102.
- 24) Blacking : Venda Children's songs. P. 155.
- 25) B.W. Vilakazi: The Conception and Development of Poetry in Zulu. Bantu Studies, Vol. 12. P. 120

Lullabies provide a good example of the way in which might be expected to be a simple, "natural" and spontaneous expression of feeling in all societies - 26)

As in any other form of poetry, lullabies are able to evoke feeling. They evoke a gentle and soothing feeling in one's ears. This could be the reason why children are easily put to sleep as they are sung.

Lullabies could be sung by mothers and nurses or grandmothers when they induce children to sleep. Again, they may be sung by children who have grown up to a certain level of maturity where the singing could be meant for self-entertainment and not inducement to sleep.

The following is a lullaby that may serve a dual purpose, that is, a lullaby sung by elderly people to induce sleep or something that could be sung by children for entertainment and enjoyment. It goes thus:

Lili n̄wana n̄wananga
Lili n̄wana n̄wananga vhasa mulilo
Lili vhasa mulilo
Lili vhasa mulilo khotsi vha a vhuya
Lili khotsi vha a vhuya
Lili khotsi vha a vhuya vha vhuya na nnyi?
Lili vha vhuya na nnyi?
Lili vha vhuya na nnyi vha vhuya na Donga
Lili vha vhuya na Donga
Lili vha vhuya na Donga, Donga u t̄odani?

26) Finnegan : Oral Literature in Africa. P. 301.

Lili Donga u ṭodani?
 Lili Donga u ṭodani, Donga u ṭoda vhasikana
 Lili u ṭoda vhasikana ku sa ɓi mavhele
 Lili ku sa ɓi mavhele
 Lili ku sa ɓi mavhele ku ɓa ndovhodzhane
 Lili ku ɓa ndovhodzhane
 Lili ku ɓa ndovhodzane ndovhodzha muṭanga
 Lili ndovhodzha muṭanga
 Lili ndovhodzha muṭanga seli a hu welwi
 Lili seli a hu welwi hu na mupfa wa muṭunu
 Lili hu na mupfa muṭunu
 Lili hu na mupfa wa muṭunu wa khotsi-munene
 Lili wa khotsi munene
 Lili wa khotsi-munene wa khotsi-matshelo
 Lili wa khotsi matshelo
 Lili wa khotsi matshelo vhasidzana vho bva
 Lili vhasidzana vho bva
 Lili vhasidzana vho bva vho ya khunini
 Lili vho ya khunini
 Lili vho ya khunini thavhani ya Thengwe. 27)

'My grandchild
 My grandchild kindle a fire
 Kindle a fire for your father will be coming
 The father is coming, but with whom is he coming?
 He is coming with Donga,
 He is coming with Donga, but what does Donga want?
 Donga needs small girls
 He needs small girls who do not eat mielies
 Who do not eat mealies but would eat ndovhodzhane
 Yes ndovhodzha muṭanga - do not cross over to the
 other side
 For there is Muṭunu thorn

27) D.M. Ngwana : Vhakale vha hone. P. 25.

That belongs to the uncle, who holds the morrow
Girls have gone out to fetch wood
To fetch wood from Thengwe mountain'

The word 'Lili' may be viewed from two points. The first being a contracted and a completed form of 'Si Lile' which means 'do not cry'. One needs to understand that the child is being rocked to sleep. An appeal is being made that he should sleep and not cry. The other point could be that 'Lili' is used in a gesticulative sense. The repetition of 'Lili' should be viewed in the light for which it was created, that is, to rock the child to sleep.

Oral traditional poetry is characterized by poetic devices such as **refrain** and **parallelism**. The afore-written lullaby reveals that it has been tinged with both **refrain** and **parallelism**.

2.02 Refrain

Marie Heese says that the refrain depends largely on rhythm and rhyme and was probably characteristic of the most ancient poetry.

A refrain is a line or several lines
repeated at regular intervals throughout
the poem. 28)

28) Marie Heese and
Robin Lawton : The Owl Critic. P. 43.

A repeat of certain lines of the previous lullaby, for example,

Lili khotsi vha a vhuya
Khotsi vha a vhuya
vha vhuya na Donga, Donga u toḁani?
Donga u toḁani? --- befits the definitions
of a refrain.

The following poem is an example of refrain, where a line or several lines are repeated at regular intervals throughout the poem.

Tshidimela

Ndi bva kule ndi bva kule
Ku dobo nda tenengedza
Hu ḁa na vha si no ngo ḁa
Wee! Wee! Wee!

Mbabvu dzanqa, mbabvu dzanqa
Dzi a vhavha, dzi a vhavha
nga zwitavha, nga zwitavha
Fhee! Fhee! Fhee!

Muduba ntsholi, muduba ntsholi
Hu ḁa na a si no ngo ḁa
Hu ḁa na a si no ngo ḁa
Fhee! wee! Fhee! wee! 29)

29) Ngwana : Vhakale vha hone. P. 38.

'A train'

'I come from far
I pick up everybody
People come from afar

My ribs are painful
Because of hills

Take care that I do not overrun you
I do overrun one who stands on my way.

The queue is long
People come from far'

A refrain pervades the whole poem. The reflected lines in the poem are indicative of refrain.

2.03 Parallelism:

Schapera defines parallelism as follows:

It is a correspondence, in sense or construction, of successive clauses or passages where, in each pair of lines, the first halves are identical in wording and the second are basically alike in meaning. 30)

30) I. Schapera : Praise Poems of Tswana Chiefs. P. 19.

The definition of parallelism fits well in Nwananwananga lullaby, for the first halves are identical in wording and the second are basically alike in meaning. The following is actually cross-parallelism which Schapera regards as chiasmus, where the first half of one line corresponds to the second half of another.

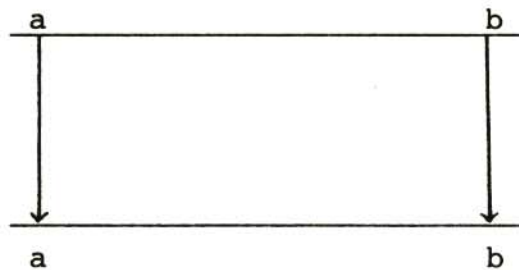
Lili n̄wana n̄wananga
Lili n̄wana n̄wananga vhasa mulilo
Lili vhasa mulilo khotsi vha a vhuya
Lili khotsi vha a vhuya
Lili khotsi vha a vhuya vha vhuya na nnyi
Lili vha vhuya na nnyi vha vhuya na Donga

The first halves underlined are identical in wording while the second protruding portions not underlined are alike in meaning.

On parallelism, Ntuli says:

In parallelism we expect each unit in the first member of a verse to be balanced by another in the second member. If this correspondence is found between all the units, we have perfect parallelism. 31).

The pattern of parallelism resembles that of linking. The pattern is as follows



The lullaby, 'Lili n̄wananwananga' can fit well into this pattern.

31) D.B.Z. Ntuli : The Poetry of B.W. Vilakazi. P. 191.

Lili

↓
Lili

Lili

↓
Lili

Lili

↓
Lili

n̄wanan̄wananga

↓
n̄wanan̄wananga

vhasa mulilo

↓
vhasa mulilo

khotsi vha a vhuya

↓
khotsi vha a vhuya

The following nursery rhyme may fit well into this pattern of parallelism.

Ee! Ee! vhasidzana
Ndilindee! Ndilindee!
Ee! Ee! idani ri vhe ri tshi tamba
Ndilindee! Ndilindee
Ee! Ee! N̄ne ri tamba na nnyi?
Ndilindee! Ndilindee!
Ee! Ee! hu na buka livhi
Ndilindee! la matambo mavhi
Ndilindee! Ndilindee
Ee! Ee! Taku-taku zhoto

'Ee! Ee! girls
Ndilindee Ndilindee
Ee! Ee! come let us play
Ndilindee Ndilindee
Ee! Ee! whom shall we play with?
Ndilindee Ndilindee
Ee! Ee! there is a monster
Ee! Ee! that will destroy us
Ndilindee Ndilindee
Ee! Ee! it pounces upon its victims'

A look at the nursery rhyme reveals parallelism of 'Ee! Ee!' and 'Ndilindee Ndilindee'

The pattern is as follows.

Ee a
 ↓ ↓
 Ee a

Ndilindee b
 ↓ ↓
 Ndilindee b

Ee a
 ↓ ↓
 Ee a

Ndilindee b
 ↓ ↓
 Ndilindee b

There are incidents where 'Ndilindee' establishes parallelism on its own.

Ndilindee b
 ↓ ↓
 Ndilindee b

Ndilindee b
 ↓ ↓
 Ndilindee b

Ndilindee b
 ↓ ↓
 Ndilindee b

Ndilindee b
 ↓ ↓
 Ndilindee b

The following nursery rhyme exposes parallelism as well.

Mmbwa yanga

Ahee ho tshatsha ho tshatsha
 I huvhani
 Ahee ho tshatsha ho tshatsha

↓

Ndi mukwasha

Ahee ho tshatsha ho tshatsha

U todani

A hee ho tshatsha ho tshatsha.

'A dog barks

Why is it barking?

It is a bridegroom

What does he want

A girl'

One notes that 'Ahee' forms parallelism with 'Ahee' that appears in the following line, while 'ho tshatsha ho tshatsha' does likewise.

Example Ahee

↓
Ahee

ho tshatsha ho tshatsha

↓
ho tshatsha ho tshatsha

Ahee

↓
Ahee

ho tshatsha ho tshatsha

↓
ho tshatsha ho tshatsha

The pattern of the above - parallelism is as follows.

a
↓
a

b
↓
b

a
↓
a

b
↓
b

One could say that parallelism and refrain work in unison. A dichotomy may not be drawn between the two especially when one comes to oral traditional poetry. Parallelism and refrain may be regarded as two aspects of poetry that augment each other.

2.04 Linking

The lullaby is also characterized by a poetic device known as **linking** which Schapera regards as:

a word or idea occurring in the second half of a line and is repeated in the first half of the succeeding line. 32)

For example :

Lili vhasidzana vho bva
Lili vhasidzana vho bva
Lili vha ya khunini
Lili vha ya khunini
Lili vho ya khunini thavhani ya
Thengwe. 33)

The linking brings in repetition which could be significant in heightening the effect. One could say again, that linking also serves to enhance the melodious effect of the lullaby.

One may distinguish between two types of linking. The first one being vertical linking. On vertical linking, Ntuli says:

This usually happens when similar words (or stems or roots) appear at the beginning of successive lines (initial linking) or at the end (final linking.) 34)

32) Schapera : Praise Poems of Tswana Chiefs. P. 19.

33) Ngwana : Vhakale vha hone. P. 25.

34) Ntuli : The Poetry of B.W. Vilakazi. P. 192.

Vertical linking is represented by the following diagram.

Initial linking

a
↓
a

Final linking

a
↓
a

In the lullaby 'Lili nwananwananga' the words 'Lili' form an initial linking, for the word 'Lili' is repeated in its initial position and again in the second line.

If the lines were to be in the following manner,

Khotsi vha a vhuya
Vha vhuya, na donga

In these two lines, the repetition of 'vhuya' is according to Cope, a final linking. Cope's final linking resembles Oblique linking.³⁵ On final linking, Ntuli prefers Mzolo's idea where the root of the final word is repeated in the final position of successive lines.

Ngoba uSidinane wayehlaba inkomo yemithi
Ethi inkomo kayimithi

I find Mzolo's view tantamount to a rhyming scheme. Cope's idea on final linking sounds plausible, although it resembles oblique linking.

The following rhymes are characteristic of vertical linking.

35) A.T. Cope: Literacy and Oral tradition. P. 38

Mmbwa yanga

Ahee! ho tshatsha
ho tshatsha
I huvhani
Ahee! ho tshatsha
ho tshatsha
Ndi mukwasha
Ahee! ho tshatsha
ho tshatsha
U todani
Ahee! ho tshatsha
ho tshatsha
Musidzana
Ahee! ho tshatsha
ho tshatsha
Ahee! ho tshatsha

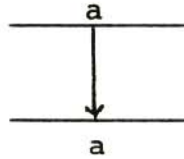
'My dog
ho tshatsha
Why is it barking?
Ahee, ho tshatsha
ho tshatsha
It is a bridegroom
Ahee, ho tshatsha
ho tshatsha
What does he want
Ahee! ho tshatsha
ho tshatsha
A girl
Ahee! ho tshatsha
ho tshatsha'

The repetition of 'Ahee!' at the beginning of each line renders 'Ahee!' as an initial linking

The second, 'ho tshatsha' following Cope's view, is a **Final linking**. In the nursery rhyme entitled, 'Funguvhu' the repetition of 'kula kwe' renders the expression an initial linking of the vertical linking.

Example **Vertical linking**

Initial linking



Kula kwe ndi vhoneyi vhalā?
Kula kwe ndi Vho-Muragweni
Kula kwe vha itani fhala
Kula kwe vha via kholomo yavho
Kula kwe ida ri yo tumbela
Kula kwe nne ndi na mota
Kula kwe ida ndi u rumbule
Kula kwe nne ndi tata u fa

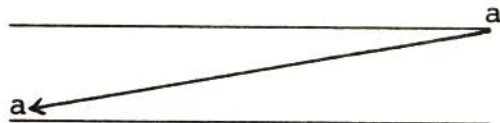
'That one said who are those?
That one said it is Muragweni
That one said what is he doing?
That one said, he slaughters his cow
That one said come lets go and beg
That one said I have an ulcer
That one said come let me remove it
That one said I am afraid to die.'

The repetition of the expression, 'kula kwe' serves as an initial linking. This linking runs throughout the nursery rhyme.

On Oblique linking Ntuli says:

We prefer to call this linking oblique because it can be represented with lines having a slant from one side to the other. 36)

A right - left swing type of linking could be presented in the following way.



The right - left swing type of linking, concurs with Cope's idea of final linking. The following is an example of this type of linking.

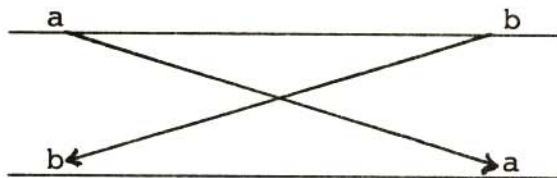
Nyambilingwane - Nyambilingwane

Nyambilingwane

Swe kubwanana - Nyambilingwane

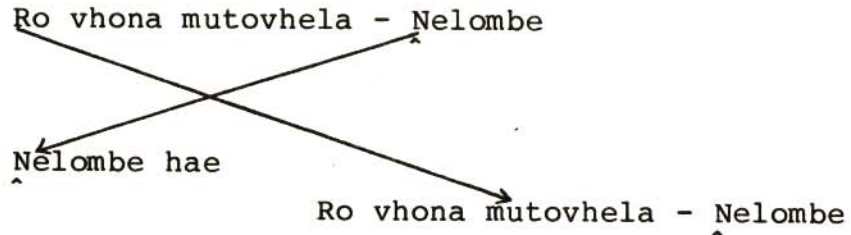
Nyambilingwane

Besides right - left swing, there is cross - linking. This type of linking could be represented as follows.



36) Ntuli : The Poetry of B.W. Vilakazi. P. 195

The following is an example of cross-linking



The following is a lullaby given by Vho-Nyadenga.

MAINDA

Hii - hii - hii - hii
Mainda - mainda
Thumbu yo fura ndi a la
Ndi a la- ndi a la
Hii-hii - hii-hii

The lullaby is characterized by repetition and linking, where 'ndi a la' in the third line is carried over to the fourth line. The repetition of 'Hii-hii-hii-hii' is meant for emphasis, so as to lull a child to sleep.

NWANA U A LILA

Nwana u a lila
U lilela nnyi
U lilela mme awe
Mme awe vho yafhi
Vho ya mulamboni
Mulamboni Dzondo

Zwikumbu zwingana
Zwikumbu zwiraru
Tshiñwe ndi tsha mini
Tshiñwe ndi tsha maḁi
Tshiñwe ndi tsha ṭhumbe
Tshiñwe ndi tsha nḁuhu.

'The child cries
Who is he crying for?
He cries for the mother
Where has the mother gone to?
She has gone to the river
Which river?
The river Dzondo
How many gourds
What is each for
One is for water
Another for 'thumbe'
The third one for nuts.'

This lullaby is distinguished by a question - answer recital process. The lullaby, like others, is characterized by parallelism.

Tshiñwe ndi tsha mini'
Tshiñwe ndi tsha maḁi
Tshiñwe ndi tsha ṭhumbe
Tshiñwe ndi tsha nḁuhu

In the lullaby, the speaker appeals to the child to stop crying. The speaker goes on telling the crying child where the mother has gone; that is, the river by the name Dzondo. It is interesting to realize the communicative efforts of the speaker to induce somebody too small to speak. This could be due to the speaker's understanding of the child, that the child understands

whatever is said to him, no matter how small he may be. This view could hold since most children stop crying when an appeal to them is made. They usually stop crying and allow themselves to be lulled to sleep.

NGA A TITIYE RI T_xUWE

Nga a titiye ri t_xuwe
Nga a titiye ri t_xuwe
Ri yo vhona gole-gole
Gole-gole wa mafumo
Wa mafumo na misevhe
Nga a titiye ri t_xuwe

'Sleep that we go
Sleep that we go
That we go and see gole-gole
Gole-gole of spears
Spears and arrows
Sleep that we go'

The voice in this lullaby persuades the child to sleep. After having fallen asleep, the child would be taken with ease to a land of distant horizons, where he would be able to see gole-gole. Gole-gole seems to be a warrior of note. This is revealed by the image of a spear and arrow. Parallelism is notable in the lullaby in the first and the second line.

Nga a titiye ri t_xuwe

Nga a titiye ri t_xuwe

Linking is evident in the third and fourth line through the words **gole-gole**.

2.06 Children's rhymes or nursery rhymes

A look at children's rhymes or nursery rhymes reveals a playful eye rhyming scheme. Such a rhyme comes through a constant repetition of certain words. This could be due to the fact that most of the children's songs, rhymes and lullabies are characterized by repetition of lines and words. One is bound to believe that the children's rhyming schemes may not be taken in a serious light as one would do with that of Western poets. The reason being that children's rhyming schemes come spontaneously without any enforcement.

There is actually no deliberate intention on the part of children, to create such a rhyming pattern. This should not be seen in conjunction with the rhyming scheme of poets like John Milton, Robert Browning, John Donne, Shakespeare, et cetera, whose basic concern was to create poems that have a definite rhyming pattern.

On rhyming, Vilakazi says:

By trying to adopt this rhyming I have found that there is a feeling among European critics that Zulu can achieve a limited success with rhyming, since most of the words in Zulu end in vowels, and thus do not permit variety of sound that makes successful rhyming possible. Although the rhyme schemes of children's rhymes and songs do not presuppose a concerted intention of creation yet they bring forth an alluring melody. The rhyming scheme should be regarded as an eye rhyme and not in terms of Western thinking. 37)

37) Vilakazi: The Conception and Development of Poetry in Zulu. Bantu Studies. Vol xii, 1938. P. 128.

For example : FUYU

Mme anga vho fela fuyu
Dzadza phinimini dzadza
Mukomana wanga o fela fuyu
Dzadza phinimini dzadza
Mukomana o fela fuyu
Dzadza phinimini dzadza 38)

The rhyming scheme of this song is :

a
b
a
b
a
b

'My mother has died for a fig
And died and disappeared like a phinimini bird
My brother has died for a fig
And died and disappeared like a phinimini bird'

From the third line, the speaker makes use of repetition, which is meant for emphasis.

The following is another nursery rhyme with a playful eye rhyming scheme.

38) Ngwana : Vhakale vha hone. P. 13.

FUNGUUVHU

Funguvhu tanzwa <u>mulomo</u>	a
Tanzwa <u>mulomo</u>	a
Ri kone ri tshi la <u>rothe</u>	b
Ri tshi la <u>rothe</u>	b
Vhomme vha ka enda <u>pi</u> ?	c
Vha ka enda <u>pi</u> ?	c
Vho lima davha la <u>khombe</u>	d
Davha la <u>khombe</u>	d
Vho lima ndima <u>ngana</u> ?	e
Ndima <u>ngana</u> ?	e
Vho lima ndima <u>ntharu</u>	f
Ndima <u>ntharu</u>	f
Ya vhuṅa ndi ya u <u>fhedza</u>	g
Ndi ya u <u>fhedza</u> 39)	g

'Crow, wash your mouth
That we may eat with you
Where are the mothers?
Where have they gone to?
They have gone to plough.
How many acres have they tilled?
They have tilled three acres
The fourth is the last one'

The eye rhyme scheme goes as follows:

a

a

39) Ngwana : Vhakale vha hone. P. 50.

b
b
c
c
d
d
e
e
f
f
g
g

It is interesting to realize that the rhyme scheme comes into being because of linking. Had it not been for the **linking and repetition** the rhyme scheme could hardly have come to fruition.

In this nursery rhyme, children extend their invitation to a crow. A crow, which is a bird, is personified so as to communicate with children. Children go to the extent of inviting it to their meal.

They ask about whereabouts of its mother. The mothers of crows are also personified so that they may be involved in ploughing. The poem also teems with Shona words such as:

Vha ka enda pi?
'Where have they gone to?'

This reveals a close genetic relationship between Venda and Shona.

Muṭani is another lovely nursery rhyme by Madima.

The rhyme scheme is such that it makes singing void of tediousness.

Duvha ɓo kovhela	a
Vhashumi vho awela	a
Hu tshi anwa ngano	b
Dza u funza maano	b
Vhoṅemuḍi vh takala	a
Zwi tshantshalala	a
Vho dzula nga tshavho	d
Miṭa mihulu shangoni	e
Notshi ngei phakhoni	e
Li tsha ndi thaha-thaha	f
Dzotho na vhakalaha	f
Dza awela dzo lala	a
Zwe tshantshalala	a
Dzo dzula nga tshadzo	g
A ni vha vhambadzi	h
Ni vhudzise khaladzi	h
Musi ni tshikoloni	e
Ndi hone vhuṭoloni	e
Musanda khe ɓo lala	a
No dzula nga tshaṅu 40)	

40) E.S. Madima : Ndi vhudza nnyi? P.9.

The repetition of the line 'Zwi tshantshalalaa' is made in every stanza, and this brings a lovely sense of melody.

'When the sun has set
Workers have taken a rest
Telling legends
So as to instil wit
When the homeowners are relaxed
Everything is good.

Big trees have established themselves
Bees being in the beehive
At sunrise, flying to all direction
Every bee at last
Takes a rest
Everything becomes good?'

The nursery rhyme reflects joyfulness. The lines 'Ro dzula nga tshashu' 'Vho dzula nga tshavho' pervades all the stanzas and reveal this state of joyfulness.

2.07 Children's songs

Children's songs should be viewed as poetry in their own right. They have poetic devices that characterize any good poetry. They are discernible by their playful rhyme, rhythm, refrain, parallelism, et cetera.

Finnegan views traditional poetry in terms of songs. She says:

Most of the traditional poems were
meant to be sung, for poetry
was born of the rhythmic dances
of the primitive man. 41)

Blacking says that the Venda people observe certain artistic conventions in songs.

- Each 'line' of a song is in itself a total pattern, which can be sung once or any number of times, without affecting the structure of the song as a whole. 42)

On children's songs, Mathivha says :

In this group we usually find songs that are sung in the evenings when children are seated round a fire. Some are sung by the herdboys while looking after cattle, sheep and goats. 43)

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- 41) Finnegan : Oral Literature in Africa. P. 299.
42) Blacking : Venda Children's Songs. P.159.
43) M.E.R. Mathivha : A Survey of the Literary Achievement in Venda. Unpublished D.Litt Thesis Unin, 1972, P. 312.

RATHAVHA

Nyamutsa-nga-davhi	a	'A baboon that jumps from a tree branch
Thongisa - makovhi	a	Taking pride against giant rats
Luwa a thi shavhi	a	Fearing no precipice'
Thongela vho - ndoyhi	a	44.)

Rathavha is a song that has a baboon as its theme of reference. The baboon is regarded as the owner of the mountain-Rathavha. Personification is made use of, where a baboon is made to acquire human qualities. The prefix Ra- refers to possession of something, which in this case, is a mountain.

Rathavha, a baboon, becomes proud in that he has the know how of getting down from the tree through the branch. Its pride becomes more pronounced especially when seen against Ndovhi which is a humble animal that knows no artistic manoeuvres performed by the baboon.

The poem, Rathavha shows a good rhyme and a rhyming scheme that comes on its own without any enforcement. The rhyming scheme is that of:

- a)
- a)
- a)
- a)

The combination of this rhyming scheme with rhythm gives the poem a musical touch which allures children more and more.

In a song Mafula one easily discerns parallelism, which adds to the comely musical flow.

44) P.H. Nenzhelele: Zwirendo na Zwiimbo zwa vhana vha Vhavenḑa. P.8.

The song goes thus:

To - to
Who mme vho ya ngafhi?
'Where is the mother?'

To - to
Who ya u fhonda mafula
'They have gone to process Mafula drink'

To - to
Mfula ndi a mini?
'What are Mafula for?'

To - to
Mafula ndi a u la
'Mafula are for eating'

Dzingi - dzingi mafula
'Shaking the mafula from the tree'

The use of 'To - to' and 'Dzingi - dzingi' mafula, which are repeated several times, is meant to maintain and heighten the musical fibre of the song. Actually, 'Dzingi - dzingi mafula' and 'To - to' should be viewed in terms of parallelism which serves to enhance the beauty of the song.

e.g. Dzingi - dzingi mafula
 To - to
 Dzingi - dzingi mafula
 To - to

Besides the song Mafula, there is another titled Ndilindee - ndilindee which makes use of a combination of both refrain and parallelism.

The song goes as follows:

Ee! Ee! vhasidzana
Ndilindee! Ndilindee!

Ee! Ee! dani ri vhe ri tshi tamba
Ndilindee - ndilindee

Ee! Ee! nne ri tamba na nnyi?
Ndilindee - ndilindee

Ee! Ee! hu na buka livhi
Ndilindee - ndilindee

Taku - taku zhoto
Ndilindee - ndilindee

'Ee! Ee! You girls
Ndilindee - ndilindee

Ee! Ee! come let us play
Ndilindee - ndilindee

Ee! Ee! whom are we to play with?
Ndilindee - ndilindee

Ee! Ee! There is a notorius monster
Ndilindee - ndilindee

It pounces upon someone
Ndilindee - ndilindee'

The song's objective is to deter children from going where they could endanger their lives. It encourages collective ventures

and discourages waywardness. The dangers of waywardness are resonant in 'Taku - taku zhoto' which infers extermination of human existence. The poem is characterized by a **refrain**, namely:

Ee! Ee!

Ee! Ee!

The refrain is augmented by **parallelism**

Ndilindee! ndilindee!

Ndilindee! ndilindee!

Ndilindee! ndilindee!

The combination of refrain 'Ee! Ee!' and parallelism 'Ndilindee - ndilindee' makes the singing more sweet to the ear.

There are other children's songs that are characterized by interrogatives. Mueni is one of such songs.

Mueni

Fhano ho da nnyi wee?

Mueni

Mueni ihi!

Na mu bikelani wee?

Manyimba

Manyimba ihi!

Anga no a vheafhi wee?

Patala

Patala ihi!

Fhahululani ri vhone?

Thi swiki

Thi swiki ihi!

In short the song goes thus:

'Who has come here?
A visitor, a visitor - yes
What have you given him
Food, food - yes
Where is mine
Far, far - yes
Reach it for me
It is too far - too far - yes'

The song, like many others, makes use of parallelism. This is evident in the repetition of:

Mueni
Mueni ihi!

Manyimba
Manyimba ihi

Patala
Patala ihi

Thi swiki
Thi swiki ihi

This song is not only peculiar with its parallelism, but with its linking as well. The second 'Mueni' links to the first one, the second 'manyimba' links to the first one while 'patala' follows suit.

It is through repetition that children come to grasp a song, and parallelism and linking serve the purpose. Besides, they also make the song more musical and worthy of enjoyment by children.

In the song 'Mvula - Tshirulu' (Torrential rain); a depiction is made of children's joy about rain.

Children sing as follows:

Nga i vhuye mulobilo
kolongonya
Nḽu khulu dzi na biko
kolongonya
Ri tshi imba mulobilo
kolongonya
Gondo fulu ḽi na thophe
kolongonya
Thumba dzashu dzi na shotha
kolongonya
Ri ḽo lala muḽangoni
kolongonya 45)

'Come rain in fullness
Our big huts had been too hot
The pathway is muddy
Our huts are drenched
We shall sleep by the doorside
Rain while in joy
We sing mulobilo'

The song depicts the children's cry for rain, and now that it has come, their joy is combined with a sense of regret. They regret that their huts will be drenched and they will

45) Nenzhelele : Zwiendo na Zwiimbo zwa vhana vha
Vhavenda. P.8.

be forced to stay awake in it. Their pathways would be muddy and as such they would no longer enjoy walking around. The repetition of 'Kolongonya' adds to the rhythmic nature of the song. The repetition of 'kolongonya' also heightens the musical nature of the song, a thing which has an appealing effect on children.

There are songs that show the significance the Vhavaṇḁa attach to certain animals, birds et cetera. This is realized in songs sung by children. A song such as 'Tshiṇoni tsha nkuku' reveals the life and world view of the Vhavaṇḁa. In the song, children appeal to 'Tshiṇoni tsha nkuku's sense of watchfulness. The Vhavaṇḁa believed that there were birds that watched enemies. Should enemies come, then, they, would give a signal. 'Tshiṇoni tsha Nkuku' is a bird of such a type. Unfortunately, it has become negligent and children call it and accuse it of not performing its duty, because the enemies are driving their cattle away.

Tshiṇoni tsha Nkuku

Iwe Nkuku wee!
Tshiṇoni tsha Nkuku
Kholomo dzi a tuwa
Tshiṇoni tsha Nkuku
Dzi tuwa na vhafhio?
Tshiṇoni tsha Nkuku
Dzi tuwa na Malema
Malema madyavhathu 46)

46) Ngwana : Vhakale vha hone. P.7.

'You Nkuku - you!
The bird called Nkuku
The cattle are disappearing
The bird called Nkuku
Who are disappearing with the cattle?
Malema, the enemy
The bird called Nkuku.

The children thus show the failure of the bird called Nkuku, in its watchfulness over people against the enemy. The repetition of, 'Tshinoni tsha Nkuku' now and then, is to attach importance to this kind of bird, over others.

Fuyu

The song 'fuyu' shows that one's life can be claimed by things regarded as being of less significance. The fig in this instance, suggests a destructive element despite the attractive qualities it possesses.

The song says:

Mme anga vho fela fuyu
Dzadza phinimini dzadza
Mukomana wanga o fela fuyu
Dzadza phinimini dzadza

'My mother has sacrificed her life for a fig
Like a phinimini bird she disappeared
My brother has sacrificed her life for a fig
Like a phinimini bird he disappeared.'

The song is didactic, teaching children that small as they are, they should not sacrifice their lives for a trifle. The song unveils the cloak of selfishness and discourages

vice among mankind. The song warns children to guard against adopting a certain kind of behaviour whose end leads to self-destruction.

Blacking regards Venda songs as consisting of basic patterns with melodic variations that depend on changes in dance - steps, with a harmonic framework that remains stable --- and with extended forms that depend on factors such as the social situation.

Blacking asserts that the repetition of basic patterns brings a sense of continuity in a song.

Because their music consists of repetitions of basic patterns, they have no concept of rests in performance 47)

A dichotomy is drawn by Blacking between songs that are sung during the day and those that are sung in the evening.

The following is one of the songs sung during the day.

Ha matshutshuru - banga
Banga mangongori
Mangongori avho
Ha matshutshuru - banga na tshi
Pune - pune rango ra mushiku - shiku
Shi vhuya kurangwe

The following is an example of songs sung in the evening.

47) Blacking : Venda Children's songs. P.17.

<u>Khethani</u>	'choose'
Khethani	
Ripe a vha ri khethi	'choose, they don't choose us'
Khethani	'choose'
Vha khetha vho nakaho	'They choose the beautiful ones'
Khethani	'choose'
Vha maḍamu matzwororo	'With sharp-pointed breasts'
Khethani	'choose'

This is a song that is sung in the evening when boys and girls are playing together. In the midst of the singing, a girl goes out of her way to choose a boy of her own taste. The expression 'Khethani' is repeated now and then, so as to add to a lovely cadence of the song.

There are also other songs that are sung in the evening. These are:

- b) Kuḷa kwe : Ndi vhoneyi vhaḷa 'who are these'
- c) Fhano ho ḍa nnyi-vho 'who has come here'
- d) Thathatha, thanda dzi a swa 'logs are burning'
- e) Ndo bva na tshidongo tsha ḡama 'I have come with an earthenware for meat'

Besides songs meant to be sung during the day and in the evening, there are certain action songs for both girls and boys. Such songs are sung accompanied by actions.

Ndo ima nga ḡhoho 'I am standing on my head'
 Nzhelele, nzhelele, ndo ima nga ḡhoho 'Head
 down, head down, I am standing on my head'

This song is sung while children pin their heads down to the ground, trying to stand on their heads.

Blacking also reflects on songs for amusement for both girls and boys. Some of the expressions may sound vulgar when in actual fact, they are not. For example, the expression, 'Nyameau' may sound vulgar, for it refers to one's mother's private parts. 48')

Nyameau, ma_hhora, o, o 'To hell with you Mathora'
Wo bva wo _lani, o, o 'What did you have for break fast'
Ndo _la muladza, o, o 'I ate the left-overs'
Wa sevha nga mini o, o 'And with what did you flavour it'
Ndo sevha nga _nama o, o 'I flavoured them with meat'
Nga _nama ya mini, o, o 'With what sort of meat?'
Nga _nama ya ndovhi o, o 'With rat's meat'
Nama i bvafhi, de, de 'Where does the meat come from?'
'Seli ha Luvuvhu de, de 'By the other bank of Luvuvhu'

It is interesting to note that each line ends up either with, o, o or with de, de. This is meant to enhance the musical flow of each line.

It is note-worthy to realize that in Venda, children are made to learn counting through songs. This eases the burden of drumming facts into their heads. On this view Blacking says:

Venda children generally accompany
counting songs, and most action songs,
with body movements, which give
some indication of their basic metre 48)

48) Blacking : Venda Children's Songs. P. 43.
49) Blacking : Venda Children's Songs. P. 157

The following is an example of a counting song.

Poçilo
Hangala
Hangala
Nda tema
Temiso
Tshiṇoni
Tsha gala
Mutanda
Mandule
Gumi - wee

Counting songs are among the first items in a child's musical repertoire. They are very easy to remember since they are accompanied by the action of counting with the fingers.

From all that have been reflected on children's songs, one cannot but agree with Blacking when he says that "children's songs are poetry shaped tonally. For, to him, words and music come into the singer's mind as one.

Children's rhymes, songs and lullabies form a significant entity of the whole oral traditional literature in Venḡa. Although some of them were meant for the entertainment of children, others had a didactic overtone. Through rhymes, songs and lullabies, children were in a very subtle way, imbued with the people's life and world view.

Children's rhymes, songs and lullabies need to be regarded as poetry in its own right, which is characterized by singing. The singing comes to the fore for the sake of enhancing the interest of children. Children songs are also poetry, for John Blacking says that children's songs are poetry shaped tonally.

2.08 CONCLUSION

The study of children's rhymes, songs and lullabies shows the unique position which they occupy in the field of poetry. They differ from other forms of poetry because they are characterized by singing. An evaluation of these rhymes, songs and lullabies indicates that they too, have poetic devices such as rhythm, parallelism, refrain, linking et cetera.

Nursery rhymes are characterized by an eye rhyme which contributes to its musical nature. It is important that a difference be drawn between the rhyming scheme of the nursery rhymes and that of modern poetry as we find it in the western world. One may not place the eye rhyme of the nursery rhymes on the same footing with that of western poetry. One may say that the eye rhyme is meant to add to the rhythmic cadence of the nursery rhymes.

Besides nursery rhymes, there are lullabies which are meant to lull a child to sleep. Lullabies are sung by elderly people with the idea of rocking the child to a deep sound sleep. Lullabies may also be sung by children who have attained a certain level of maturity. In this instance the singing of the lullaby is not meant to lull a child to sleep, but it is meant for entertainment.

Besides lullabies, there are songs that are sung for entertainment. Some of the songs may contain a moral lesson while others may not. In most cases, songs are sung by children for enjoyment only. There are those songs that are sung in the day and those that are sung in the evening. Some songs help children learn counting.

CHAPTER III

3.00 PRAISE POETRY

Praise poetry ostensibly attaches value to specific personalities, events, places, ceremonial and symbolic objects. It is a means of giving value to the society as a whole, and it awakens the awareness and induces a sense of good feeling in that society.

Hodza and Fortune regard praise poetry in Shona as 'nhétémbo dzamadzinza'. The word 'nhétémbo' is a noun derived from a verb radical - 'tetemba', which suggests praising or greeting ceremoniously.

Like the praise poetry of other kindred peoples, that of the Shona consists in the main of a litany of eulogistic phrases. They are addressed to a clansman or clanswoman, not merely as individuals, but also in their representative capacity as members of their patrilineage. The keynote of each clan praise poem is provided by the clan totem, its 'mutupo'. The totem is often the first of the praise names uttered in a laudatory address, and much of the content of praise poems is expressed through imagery suggested by the totem. 50)

50) A. Hodza and Fortune, G : Some Current Structures in Shona Praise Poetry. African Studies Vol. 43. No. 2. P. 161.

Praise poetry is characteristic of Africans. In most cases, praises are recited for the warriors who have gone to battle and proved their valour. Praises could be recited in praise of chiefs, cattle, clan, mountain, et cetera.

In praising, it is not customary for one to praise oneself, although a person such as a warrior could stand up and praise himself amidst the cheering and ululations. The normal practice is that of being praised by another person rather than praising oneself, for praises are a record or prowess of great personalities.

Praise poetry is regarded in Zulu as 'izibongo', in Southern Sotho as 'Dithoko', while in Venda they are known as 'zwickhoḁo'

On praise poetry, Nyembezi says:

Izibongo or praises are a feature of the South Eastern Bantu. In Sotho they are called lithoko. These praises were recited in praise of kings, their indunas and all others who for some reason or other gained public recognition and distinction. 51)

According to Vilakazi praise poetry or izibongo suggests any phrase, sentence or sentences, where the emotional language is employed to describe something. 52)

51) C.L.S. Nyembezi : The Historical Background to the Izibongo of the Zulu Military Age. African studies Vol. 7. P. 110.

52) Vilakazi : The Conception and Development of Poetry in Zulu. Bantu Studies, Vol. 12. P. 105

Praise poetry evolves around events and aspects that evoke much feeling. It may neither be confined to a specific incident nor to historical records. It would be inappropriate to view praise poetry in terms of historicity. Cope says that praise poetry has often been regarded as historical records, and that praise poetry does not record events but simply refers to them. In as far as Cope is concerned, 'events are not important in themselves but only in so far as they are milestone in the life of the subject'. 53) This view implies that praise poetry needs to be looked at in terms of the subject it refers to within a certain period of time.

There is a misconception in most people who believe that praise poetry is meant for kings and warriors only. Praise poetry is a reflection of one's feelings towards a specific subject and these feelings cannot be governed by any sense of social stratification. Praise poetry goes down to the level of a layman. It goes down to the level of a beast, mountain, rivers, initiation ceremonies, et cetera.

Praise poetry is characterized by a stable and a typical form as well as literary, historical and even philosophical qualities. This implies that praise poetry has literary devices like any other poem. It addresses itself to important events that form important historical evidence as well as reflecting on the life and world view of the people. Cook says that izibongo have two characteristics that render them important to the student of Swazi customs. Their form is typical and they have historical and even philosophical interest. 54)

53) T. Cope : Izibongo Zulu Praise Poems. P. 158.

54) P.A.W. Cook: History and izibongo of the Swazi Chiefs. Bantu Studies. Vol v 1931. P. 184.

Some people have asked whether praise poetry may be regarded as poetry in the true sense of the word. This question needs to be understood in terms of viewing poetry from the Western norms and standards. The author in this case feels that praise poetry should be regarded as another form of poetry. It would definitely be improper to judge praise poetry by the very same norms used to judge Western poetry. The author feels that praise poetry should be regarded as poetry like any other since it is the language of the heart. It reveals the intensity of feeling of the poet and as in western poetry, it is also characterized by poetic images.

On poetry, Bateson says that T S Eliot regards it as language at its maximum potency, the best words in the best order. 55)

Lewis says of poetry that it is a special way of using words in order to create a special effect upon the reader and to light up the world for him. 56). On the other hand, Percy Marshall says that poetry speaks directly to our feelings and our imagination. He goes on to say that poets are those who are able to stand still, to capture the passing actions and ideas of the traffic of life and to shape them, turning impermanence into permanence. 57)

Praise poetry, viewed from the above-given definitions of poetry, justifies its description as poetry.

On this aspect, Vilakazi says:

55) F.W. Bateson : English Poetry. A critical Introduction.
P. 15.

56) C. Day Lewis : Poetry for You. P. 1.

57) Percy Marshall: Masters of English Poetry. P. 80.

The problem to be solved is whether izibongo can be considered poetry. Personally, I contend that they are poetry, because in studying the language of their composition, one does not fail to discover a deep and genuine imaginative tone, for the composer of izibongo apprehends experience, both in its intensity and its subtlety, and shows an undeniable power of revealing unknown modes of being through his creation and association of images. 58)

Vilakazi goes on to say that each individuality, even in the world of language should be respected as sacred and even the smallest and most despised dialect should be left to itself and to its own nature, because it is sure to have some secret advantages over the greatest and most highly valued languages.

Schapera in his 'Praise - Poetry for Tswana chiefs' says that praise poems are a form of traditional literature common in all clusters of Southern Bantu.

Schapera goes on to say that praise poems are not only composed about the chiefs, headmen, famous warriors, and other prominent tribesmen, but about ordinary commoners also. 59)

58) Vilakazi : The Conception and Development of Poetry in Zulu. Bantu Studies Vol 12, 1938. P. 107.

59) Schapera : Praise Poems of Tswana Chiefs. P. 1.

Mashabela views praise - poetry in terms of the spirit of popular tradition.

Matsepe's praise poetry is traditional in that it creates the whole atmosphere of traditional life, both in the themes alluded to and the language employed. 60)

Praise poetry extols the individual's success. The nature of success heightens the state of emotionalism in the reciter. This contributes to the lengthy nature of the poem. Chiefs could either compose their own praises or they could be praised by official praisers. The praise poem would in this case, appear in the third person form. In most cases, ordinary people would compose their own praise poems and praise themselves. This is the reason why this type of praise poetry appears in the first person.

Praise poetry usually assumes a musical form. There are times when a poet praises and his praising culminates in music. There are moments when a poet praises and in the midst of his praises, people interrupt with a chorus. The musical form of praise poetry could be attributed to the richness in rhythmic cadence.

Es'kia Mphahlele says that in evaluating praise poetry one has to consider the total performance.

60) P.H.D. Mashabela : Theme and Expression in Matsepe's poetry. P. 33.

--- the voice, facial features and other body movements, the context of ritual that takes in an audience as participants, the alternation between song and speech in the recital. 61)

RHYME

On rhyming, praise poetry's rhyme addresses the eye rather than the ear. Steere as quoted by Vilakazi says that African poetry does not rhyme because all the final syllables are unaccented, and that this destroys the feeling of rhyme.

Vilakazi says: 'I am inclined to agree with Steere in such criticism when I look at Zulu, because in rhyming the Bantu syllables, one has to take into account the penultimate syllable which not only has prominence to the ear because the succeeding final syllable is generally (in Zulu) devocalised, but also attracts the eye in that the poet will run his rhyming through two syllables : the penultimate and the final.

Um'ukukhala kwezinyoni zaphezulu	a
Nobusuku obuqhakaz' izinkanyezi zezulu	a
Um'nkwezane yokusa nezinkanyezi	b
Ezikhanyis'umnyama njengonyezi 62)	b

-
- 61) E. Mphahlele : African Literature and the Social Experience in Process. Inaugural Lecture Delivered in October 25 1983 at Witwatersrand. P. 3.
- 62) Vilakazi : The Conception and Development of Poetry in Zulu. Bantu Studies Vol 12. 1938. P. 128

Vilakazi says that he has tried to make a rhyme scheme for Zulu poetry. To his amazement, he found that his rhyme was rude and contrived.

By trying to adopt this rhyming I have found that there is a feeling among European critics that Zulu can achieve only a limited success with rhyming, since most of the words in Zulu end in vowels, and thus do not permit variety of sound that makes - successful rhyming possible 63)

Feeling and tone play an important role in praise poetry. The interest of the audience is able to be evoked by the feeling reflected by the reciter as well as his tone. In content, praise poetry consists of phrases and sentences in praise of tribe, clan, animal, be it wild or domestic animal or a lifeless object which may be the subject of the poem.

Praise poetry cannot, as a matter of fact, be tied to a specific subject or object. The content of praise poetry evolves around the following:

- (i) Chiefs
- (ii) Warriors
- (iii) Divining bones
- (iv) Animals
- (v) Initiates
- (vi) Mountains
- (vii) Rivers, et cetera.

53) Ibid; P. 128.

3.01 PRAISE POETRY FOR CHIEFS

In moments of great achievements, or ceremonial occasions like the installation of a chief, the chief and his subjects come together. In that gathering a praiser would rise up and start praising the king. Chiefs are also praised during remarkable functions, while in certain instances, some praiser would start praising the chief as soon as the eye catches hold of him.

The praise poem may go as follows:

Ahee! u a vhaḍwa - mifhululu
Ndi vha ha mutumbuka vhathu
Vhana vha Mwali Mudzimu wa Matongoni
Mwali Mudzimu wa Vhasenzi

Ramaano, maano ndi lupfumo
Lwa lushaka lwa Vhavaḍa
Vho-Mphephu silamulela vhakalaha
Ahee! u a vhaḍwa mufhululu 64)

'Ahee! an ululation goes out for
The discoverer of mankind
The descendants of Mwali, God of Matongoni
Mwali the God of the Vhasenzi.

Ramaano, whose wisdom is the wealth
Of the Venda People
Vho-Mphephu, the defender of oldmen
Ahee! an ululation goes out'.

64) Ngwana : Vhakale vha hone. P. 48.

Mphephu is not only regarded as a God - chosen leader but as a defender of his people. A praise for a chief would differ from chief to chief. In the following poem, chief Raluswielo Mphaphuli is being regarded as a man who has brought enlightenment and progress in his land.

Ima kha ǀa ha Magidi
U lavhelese zwo fhomaho dzunde ǀa
Vho-Mphaphuli
Ho tshena he wee, ndi zwisikwa nga
Vho-Rathogwa
Vho imisa masiandaitwa a kholitshi khulwane
Lwone lwenzhe luhulusa lwa mvelaphanda
Tshisima tsha maǀi a rotholaho a nwiwaho nga
Vhatuka na vhasidzana.

Ndi maǀembe na maǀalimbo
Gambani yo ambara mavhaivhai
Zwone zwiala zwa vhalanda Vha Vho-Mphaphuli
Zwo tewaho nga vhanna vha tshi zwi funa
I khakhathi i khangaǀela nwana a tshi mamela
lurumbu. 65)

'Stand and take a look at Magidi
And see what goodness lies all over
Mphaphuli's land
The whole place has gone bright - a creation
of Vho-Rathogwa
He has established a college
A real lantern for progress
A fountain of cold water
That would quench thirst in both boys and girls.

65) R.R. Matshili : Fhululedzani. P. 19.

This is a miracle - a wonder
Gambani shines amazingly
A pride for Mphaphuli's subjects
Erected with concerned efforts
With sweat streaming down the faces'.

It is a widely accepted practice that a Muvenda subject would pay homage to the chief and would recite a praise for the chief before he could reach where the chief is. Such a praise would suggest that the subject is not proud and that he humbles himself before his Chief. The praise is started from a distance away and it is stopped when the subject has reached where his chief is.

Khedebu ya Mahosi muḽe wanga
Khakha u mela muḽe wanga
Dzhatsha muthombeni muḽe wanga
Mbila-u-lume, phosho u wela vhathu 66)

'The greatest of all the chiefs
Forgive my untimely presence
The owner of mankind my lord,
My highness, the mighty one'

Praises made as a subject advances towards a chief have no definite and rigid pattern. Any person may start the way he wishes and utter whatever he likes.

Mboloma muhali
Tshivhavhala tsha shango
Lwenzhe lwa shango

66) Ngwana : Vhakale vha hone. P. 48.

Dada ɫa u ɫa vhathu
Marunga dzi ndevhelaho
Thindi ndi a midza
Ndi balelwa nga shambo
Lutiitii lubeba thathanana
Dambantshekwa ɫi na segere.

'My Lord

The owner of the whole land
The light of the world
The destroyer of mankind
One who destroys when provoked
A piece of meat I do swallow
Not a bone for it is hard to swallow
Lutiitiibird has given birth to a very big species
A crab has a saw'.

There are praisers who may add an element of mock in their praising. The mocking is never taken in a serious vein but it is regarded as a touch of humour.

e.g.

Vha fa lini shango ɫa lala.

'When will you die that peace reigns'

There are instances when the subject reveals his feelings in the process of praising. It is up to the Chief to take note of them and respond accordingly.

In Venḡa, chiefs are praised by their subjects, but there are instances where a chief does praise himself. This has been the case with the late Chief Phiriphiri Tshivhase who used to praise himself in the following manner.

Ndi nḡe Phiriphiri Tshivhase
Muri wa u vhavha
Ndi a vhavha sa phiriphiri
A thi ḡiwi
Ndi muri wa makhuwa
Tshivhasa - miḡi - ya - vhanwe
Wanga wa sala wo tshena
Marikili - marikili

'I am Phiriphiri Tshivhase
(The word Phiriphiri refers to pepper)
The bitter tree
I am bitter like pepper
I am inedible

I am the tree of the whites
The man who burns down other people's homesteads
While his shines untouched
Marikili - marikili'

Phiriphiri Tshivhase was a great chief who was averse to the Whites. The image of 'phiri-phiri' (pepper) suggests his unbending nature. The expression "marikili" shows the sense of self-satisfaction.

Chief Makhado is widely known for his successful battles. He fought the whites and defeated them, and he subjugated many tribes. His domain stretched from the Limpopo to some portions of Lebowa. for example Moletšhi/Matlala. Makhado ambushed and fell on the whites in the midst of the night. He has since been named (Tshilwa-Vhusiku-tsha-Haramabulana' (The night fighter of Ramabulana) Makhado has been praised as follows:

Makhado ndi tshilwa-vhusiku tsha ha Ramabulana
Ene ha koni u dia nga swiswi Makhado

U dia nga ḥwedzi murwa Libulana
Vha ri o dia ḷari makhuwa
O kunda Mamphodo, a thuba na dzimbongola makhuwa
Magota othe zwanda-nguvhoni, ri luvha Makhado
Magota oṭhe-oṭhe a lwisa Tshikokomba
Vha lwisa tshisele vhukati ha matombo.
Phunguhwe ya lila Muledzhi
Ḷa Hamadala ḷi a fhalala. 67)

'Makhado is a night fighter of Ramabulana
He doesn't conquer in darkness
He conquers in moonlight-the son of Libulana
He defeated even the whites
He defeated Mamphodo, and possessed the donkeys
of the whites
All headmen pay homage to Makhado
All headmen fight against Tshikokomba.
The hyena has raised an alarm
The whole of Madala (Matlala) is annihilated'.

The image of a hyena and the idea of annihilation suggest Makhado as a fighter of great standing.

3.02 Totem praise

A totem praise is that praise that is recited for a specific totem. People may have different surnames yet be bound together by a specific totem. When people of the same totem come together, they praise one another by the totem. For example, if a child sits down and claps hands for his seniors, they in turn would praise him by his totem.

67) N.J. Van Warmelo : The Coppermines of Musina and the History of the Zoutpansberg. P. 162.

For example.

Singo
Nḡou
Mundalamo
Mbedzi
Kwinḡa
Mulaudzi
Mutwanamba
Munzhelele
Munyai

An elderly person may in response, say, Ahaa! Singo, or Ahee! Mundalamo. The praiser may lengthen the praise if he or she wishes. The idea of praise in this case is to encourage the child to do good.

3.03 Praise name

A praise name may be viewed in terms of the totem of the person who is being praised.

On this aspect, Malepe says!

'Every Tswana tribe, besides having its proper name, has a praise name associated with it, which in many cases is the name of the animal or object which it venerates, its totem and which serves as a more or less formal and polite, mode of salutation or address towards any member of the tribe. 68)

68) A.T. Malepe : Some Aspects of Tswana Traditional Poetry. Limi, Unisa, 1966. P. 53.

In Venda, a praise name for a person of a Singo totem would be Tshavhumbe

Totem	Praise name
Mundalamo	Mbobvu
Mbedzi	Mavhumbe or Tshiembe
Mulaudzi	Tshinavha
Mufamaḽi	Mashau wa Ramutsindela
Munzhelele	Luvhengonyike or Tshivhande
Mukwevho	Matidze
Dau	Dombwe 69)

The praise name for the nephew of the one praised would start with the prefix **Mpha** - For example, **Mphwa-Mbovu** for the nephew whose father belongs to a Singo totem; and **Mphwa-thuwa** for the child whose father belongs to Ndou totem. The praise name for each child will be determined by the totem of his father.

e.g.	Praise name	Totem of his father
	Mphwa-mbobvu	Singo
	Mphwa-mbobvu	Kwindḽa
	Mphwa-thuwa	Nḽou (Maḽenzhe)
	Mphwa-Dombo	Dau (Tshakhuma)
	Mphwa-masale	Mulovhedzi
	Mphwa-vhatwa	Mutwanamba
	Mphwa-Tshilongo	Mufamaḽi 70)

59) Van Warmelo : The Copperminers and the History of the Zoutpansberg. P. 134 - 135.

70) Ibid; P. 135.

3.04 Praise for names of individuals

There are praises for names of individuals. These names unlike praise names that are associated with the totems, may not necessarily reflect on a totem. It is a name given to every Muvenda child without referring to the child's totem. Such names are praised in their own right.

Mmbengwa : Ndi kholomo ya nyeni, i rungwa na nga zwiṅamana
ya sokou ṭalela.

(It is a new cow that is pierced even by calves)

Mulambilu : A si ḷe mbilu a ṭanganya mikoto, mulambilu u ḷa e
muṭani

(One should contain himself in moments of stress)

Mutshakwa : Khovhe ya vhimbi, a u fhiraho a nga vha e nnyi
shangoni.

(Mutshakwa is as big as a whale)

Mushaisano : O shaisa na mme lukuna vha tshinyala vha rwa
tshanzie na shango.

(Disgrace and lack of good has come to parents)

Mutali : U ḷa kaḥwe, tsilu ḷa ḷa kavhili

(Once beaten twice shy)

3.05 Praise verse and Praise Stanza in Praise Poetry.

Lestrade regards a praise verse as a single phrase or sentence. 71)

71) G.P. Lestrade : Bantu Praise Poems. The Critic. Vol IV.
No. 1. P. 3.

- i) Vhalisa vha mbudzi tshiwela
- ii) Musidzana wa thaha dza mapango

It is important to note that praise verse in Venda praise poetry may not be taken in the same light as a verse of Western poetry. In terms of western poetry, a verse is a line of metrical writing, which has symmetrical pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables.

The praise verse in Venda is not characterized by adherence to a strict and rigid pattern of stressed and unstressed syllable. The idea of stressing and not stressing certain syllables hardly dawns in the mind of the praiser. He is only guided by a sense of flow. One may as a matter of fact say that Venda praise poetry does not have verse as is the case with western poetry.

3.06 Praise Stanza

On praise Stanza, Lestrade says:

A praise stanza is made up of a succession of such phrases and sentences knit together, loosely enough, it is true, but still forming some sort of unit meaning. 72)

According to Lestrade's view the following may be regarded as a praise stanza.

Tshakhuma tsha Mabodo tshi bodomedza tsiwana
na muoi

72) Lestrade : Bantu Praise Poems. The Critic Vol IV No. 1.
P. 3.

Zwira zwi huma Tshakhuma (enemies turn back at Tshakhuma)
Mafhorro a vulelwa mudivhiwa (Gates are opened to the known one)
Mutsinda a nga vha thoi (A foreigner may be a spy)

In Venda praise poetry, the idea of stanza was unknown. The concept of stanza came with the Western influence. Traditionally, the praise poet would recite his praises without the consciousness of stanza. His recitation would be guided by a sense of onward flow. Now and then, the praises may have a pause in want of breath and this may easily be mistaken for a stanza.

Martin Gray regards a stanza as a unit of several lines of verse. He says that stanzas are made up of metrical lines of three, four, five or more.

What distinguishes the stanza from being a mere section of verse is the fact that it is a regular and repeated aspect of the poem's shape. According to him, the examples of stanzas forms are :

Ottava rima
Quatrain
Spenserian stanza
Terza rima 73)

The view of Martin Gray on a stanza buttresses the idea that the concept of stanza is a terminology for a Western poet and not for a Venda praise poet. It would be worthwhile to look at Venda praise poetry not in terms of foreign concepts such as verses and stanzas, but according to an idea expressed and deep-seated spirit that characterize the poem.

73) Martin Gray : A Dictionary of Literary Terms. Longman
York Press. P. 196.

3.07 PRAISE FOR PLACES.

There are praises meant to boost the image of certain areas, districts. In most cases, the praiser would be a person who is native to the same area. The area could be praised for having sustained its citizens during moments of dire need or for having offered refuge to its citizens from a foreign invasion. The refuge could have been in caves and the thick bush. In many wars that have been fought in Venda, the Vhavenda were able to drive back their enemies because of the bush, mountains and their caves. In most cases the enemies would be unused to such a setting with the result that their defeat would have been easy. The Vhavenda would in turn, praise their area for having made it possible that they attain swift success. Tshakhuma is one of those praises.

Tshakhuma tsha mma ndi a huma
Ndi teledza tsanga ya Radzaga
Tsanga ya tshiala tshitswuku
Muregu wa tshiala tshitswuku
Nangana ya tshipembe
Muregu ha direguli
Tsho no vha Tshakhuma tsha Mabodo ndi a bodomedza
Tshakhuma tsha Madzivhandila nduhulu ya Vhandalamo 74)

'Tshakhuma of mother I-go-back
I fear the battle axe of Radzaga
The axe of the red tshiala ornament
Muregu of the red ornament
The little flute from the south

74) Van Warmelo : The Coppermines of Musina and the History of the Zoutpansberg. P. 182.

The doctor who cannot treat himself
Tshakhuma of Mabodo who gives sanctuary
Tshakhuma of Madzivhandila the grandson of
the Vhandalamo'

Tshakhuma is also praised as follows:

Tshakhuma tsha Mabodo ndi bodomedza tsiwana na muoi zwira zwa
huma.

Tshakhuma tsha Madzivhandila mafhoru a vulelwa mueni mudivhiwa
Mutsinda a nga vha thoi ya tshira tshi re sei
La Luvuvhu na thavhani dza vhuaudzi

'Tshakhuma of Mabodo that gives sanctuary to the destitute
and evildoer

Enemies turn back at Tshakhuma of Madzivhandila

Gates are opened for a known visitor

The stranger might be a spy of an enemy lying beyond
the Luvuvhu and in the hills of Vhulaudzi'

Tshakhuma is praised for having turned back the enemies. It is not only praised for driving back the enemies but for having offered sanctuary to both the destitute and the evildoer. The words 'muoi' and 'thoi' are normally written with an 'l' so that they read as: 'muloi' and 'tholi'. The absence of an 'l' is indicative of the dialect differences. This dialect is regarded as 'Tshironga'. The expression, 'tshiala tshitswuku' suggests the bloody war that was fought at Tshakhuma and the success that was attained immediately thereafter.

Dumbwi

Dumbwi is an area in Zimbabwe falling under Chief Mposi Sadiki. Dumbi is also known for the wars fought there and for the way it was able to defend itself against invasion.

Dumbi la Mposi
Mafumula misifha ya zwifhanga zwa vhatthanga
Maphwea a dinea daka
Nga u pfa mikosi ya vha landulaho
Zwa vhutshilo ha lino 75)

'Dumbwi of Mposi
That tears the muscles of the chests of youngmen
The cowards disappear into the bush
When hearing the cries of those dying
Departing for life hereafter'

Dumbwi is portrayed as a place that has young men who are always ready to come to its defence. It is also reflected as a place that can defend and retain its total integrity.

Vari

Vari miṭangoni shangoni la ha Nyathophi a i fholi
I fhola nṭha, dasi i tshi fhisa.

'Vari is a country that appears cool at the top
When deep-down, it is very hot'

Vari is regarded as a country characterized by civil strife. An outsider may not be able to discern the presence of the conflict.

75) Mathivha : Mposi. P. 8.

NZHELELE

Nzhelele is praised as follows:

Nzhelele ndi musanda wa Venḁa
A hu lili khuhu Nzhelele
Khuhu dzaho hu lila mavhoḁa
Khosi ya ṭudza, vhalanda vha a ṭudza 76)

'Nzhelele is the capital of Venḁaland)
no cock crows at Nzhelele
Instead calves do
If a chief falters, his subjects do likewise'

Venḁaland is praised as follows:

Venḁa la ha tshika-muroho
Iwe u sa ladzi ḁwana na nḁala

'Venḁa, a country of much abundance
A country that never lets its subjects go hungry'

The praise reveals Venḁa as a country of much abundance; a country that is rich in natural beauty, natural greenness and this richness is realized in the crops it yields.

3.08 PRAISE FOR INDIVIDUALS

There are praises addressed to individuals who have distinguished themselves, either in battle or in one way or another. In certain instances, warriors who have proved their bravery in

76) Ngwana : Vhakale vha hone. P. 72.

battle compose praise poems for themselves. Such individuals, would in a gathering, rise up, jump this way and that, wielding the spear sky-high, and would start praising their valour. The following is an example of how Muregu praises himself.

Muregu wa tshiala tshitswuku
Tshiala tsha khanga-vhanna
N̄amana ya Ratshiangwana
Tsanga ya Radzaga-a-Dovhoni
Phaladza Shango ɭa ha Madzivhandila

'Muregu of the red tshiala ornament
Which deceives the men
The calf of Ratshiangwana
Battle axe of Radzaga-a-Dovhoni
Vanquisher from Madzivhandila clan'

Muregu praises himself for his valour. The expression 'tshiala tshitswuku' implies his fierceness in battle. He regards himself as a warrior who descended from the Ratshiangwana.

Tshiala

Tshiala is a warrior who in battle, wiped out an invading army. When the army succumbed, Tshiala danced in delight and started praising himself.

Ndi n̄e Tshitinya-tinyane
Tshin̄oni tsho tinya vhulimbo Nzhelele

'I am the elusive one
A bird that eluded a trap at Nzhelele'

Tshirundu

Tshirundu tsha makundumuke (Tshirundu of Makundumuke)
Tsha harandau yo wa Gandwani (A lion has fallen at Gandwani)
Khundamutama ndi fa nayo. (I would rather die with it)

Tshirundu praises himself for having defeated a lion.

3.09 Praise for dancing

An individual may prove his worth not in battle but in dancing. A good dancer would praise himself as follows:

Ndi n_xe tshilombe tshiwisa vhulombo
Ndi n_xe Thidzinginyi muno
Thi dzinginyi mu_xo nda nga mukhwakhwa
Ndi mufula ndi wa nga ndo_xthe
A thi ngi mahwasane, _xihwaihwei
_xine _xi tshi shavha _xa nga nguluvhe

Ndi Ramulenzhe matangwani
Matangwa a lila thi sali
Ndi sala nga u lwala nombe
Ndi re_xwa nga t_xhoho ndi a ya
Musidzana a tshi t_xonga ka_xwe
Ndi tshi fhufha vhavhili vha sera.

'I am a dancer of good standing
I am not like Mahwasane
Who runs away like a pig

I am an expert in dancing
I dance despite headache
And refrain only if bleeding
I dance to the amazement of people'

3.10 PRAISE FOR THE INITIATES.

At the age of maturity, the Vhavenḁa boys would be taken to an initiation school. Boys of a certain level of maturity are allowed to go to the initiation school although of late, children are also taken for initiation. The practice of allowing children at the initiation school nowadays is much more a matter of economic consideration rather than the fulfilment of the traditional initiation values. The current belief is that the more the initiates, including children, the more the money. Traditionally, the initiation school would take a period of three months or so. With the advent of Western education, the period is shortened to a few weeks and the practice has become a matter of 'papering over the cracks'.

Traditionally, the initiation school would be burnt down after a period of three months or so. The initiates are taken to the river for bathing. As soon as the initiates emerge from the river, they come out with new names. The new names suggest a transition from boyhood to manhood. An initiate is called by the new name all the time.

Such names sometimes became so popular
as to supersede the real one(s) 77)

The new names of the Vhavenḁa initiates are characterized by the prefix Ra-

77) Guma : The Form, Content and Technique of Traditional Literature in S. Sotho. P. 136.

For example:

Rafumbedzani
Razwimisani
Ratshilumela
Rathiyaya

Rathiyaya

An initiate with the name of Rathiyaya would praise himself in the following manner.

Ndi n_ue Rathiyaya mu_uani
Ndo tou iswa
'I never meant to go to the initiation school
Yet I was taken there'

Ratshilumela

Ratshilumela tshi bva tshi mu_uani
Tshi tshi ri vha n_uda ni mphalale.

'Ratshilumela emerges from the homestead
In search of outside help'

R.R. Matshili views the new names of the initiates in the following manner.

Vho yaho vha vhuya na madzina maswa
Rasivhetshele, Rasilingwani, Razwimisani, Rasalanavho
O_uthe madzina a murundu a thoma nga RA
A songo raloho ndi mapambuwi
Ndi ngoma-mbuya ya Vhalungu 78)

78) R.R. Matshili: Zwiala zwa Venda. P.65

'Those who go to the initiation school come with new names.

Rasivhetshela, Rasilingwani, Razwimisani, Rasalanavho

All the names start with the prefix RA-

If not, it is a wrong name

This is an initiation rite of the Vhalungu'

The 'Vhalungu' referred to are descendents of the Jewish nation. They are the people who introduced the initiation rite among the Vhavaṅḁa.

3.11 PRAISE POEMS FOR ANIMALS

The Vhavaṅḁa people composed praises for both wild and domestic animals. The praises for the animal may have been made when it had made an indelible impression on the praiser. This could be the reason why most people's totems find realization in certain animals.

Praises were composed for wild and domestic animals, thus indicating that the praisers were intrigued by them and their habits. Their observed habits and characteristics, such as hunting and their methods of running, are included in their praises 79)

3.12 Praise for Wild animals

Wild animals are praised after a certain behavioural pattern. A lion is known for its fierceness towards other animals like antelopes and the springbok. It is praised in the following manner.

79) Guma : The Form, Content and Technique of Traditional Literature in S. Sotho. P. 145.

Ndau.

Ndau buka ɿa mamvele kha khana
Tshivhanda tshi si na khathutshelo

'The lion, a beast with mane of the breast
A beast without mercy'

I ri phalakhasha mudavhini
Buka ɿa mutshimbili
Buka ɿa mafumo maɿanu
I ri : kurr : Ndandaa - ndandaa - ndandaa.

'It emerges in the open
A hunting beast
A beast with five spears
It goes kurr : ndandaa - ndandaa - ndandaa'

The metaphor 'Buka ɿa mafumo maɿanu' suggests its ability to catch and destroy its prey with much ease.

An elephant is known for its strength and many people's totems evolve around it.

Nɿou buka ɿihulwane
ɿine nga musingo waɿo miri ɿa tupukanya

'An elephant, the big beast
Whose trunk uproots trees'

A jackal is associated with ominous eventualities.

Phunguhwe yo lila Muledzhi
ɿa Hamaɿala ɿi a fhalala

'A jackal has given a cry at Muledzhi
The whole of Maḍala is crumbling down'

3.13 Praises for domestic animals

Domestic animals, like wild animals, are also praised according to certain qualities they reveal. It could be that a goat or a bull fights well and a praise is then made for it.

Praises for goats

Tarilamuxe

Tariḷamuxe muḍifha nga u vhavha
'A muxe leaf whose good taste lies in its bitterness'

Nyatshidekwana.

Nyatshidekwana gidimela nḍuni vhaḥwe
Vha tshi ya u lala
'Nyatshidekwana head for the house when
others go for sleep'

Tibanikhali

Tibanikhali mamvele tshi a vhuya, tshi
sa ḍo gudu tsha ni ḥea mutshinyalo.
'Tibanikhali, the hairy one comes, that it
does not bring destruction'

Praises for cattle.

Phioro

Phioro mboho yo fhenya dziñwe
'Phioro has defeated others'

Dangala.

Dangala ndi a fhufha a thi londi mutshinyalo

'Dangala goes about and cares less about destruction'

Nyamuvhuya

Nyamuvhuya ha shayi thando a sa vha mbava ndi muloi
'A good person has his own shortcomings'

Thithwa

Thithwa mupfa wa mulenzheni, wa pfa
manyaḁi u a vuwa.

'Thithwa, a thorn in the leg, whose painfulness
is felt on a rainy day'

3.14 Praise for natural phenomena.

There are Vhavenḁa praisers who praise natural phenomena such as rain. The falling of rain brings much happiness to people for it is regarded as a source of life. On the other hand, rain may serve as a source of destruction especially when it is not a hailstorm.

I ndi tshi vhuya ndi u medza
Hu ḁo vhuya yone ya Hatshikamba ya maḁumbu
Ya maḁumbu a no kumba na vhathu.

Ye vhai! Vhenge! Ye ngindii
Ye ndi nḁe mvumelavhalimi

Vhalisa vha vhuya nga ḁuvha u kovhela
Ye khasa wo ya khasa wo vhuya
Vhalisa vha mbudzi tshiwela
Ye madekwana ndi ḁa na makumba 80)

'It says that when it comes back it would bring
germination.
It would rain that of Hatshikamba which is full
of tempest
The tempest that even carries people away
The lighting goes 'vhai' and there is thunder
'ngindii'
It traps those ploughing
Cattle-herders come only at sunset
It goes, it comes
it says that it comes with eggs in the evening'

The praise poem personifies rain as a being that brings both
good and bad. The image 'makumba' (eggs) implies hail with
all its destructive tendencies.

ḁuvha

There are moments when the sun becomes extremely hot.
The sun is then personified as a being that scorches
and destroys everything that lives.

ḁi a fhisa ḁuvha ḁiani
Vhukalanga ḁi otsha ḁama.

'It is hot at ḁiani
Vhukalanga it scorches the meat'

80) Ngwana : Vhakale vha hone. P. 109.

3.15 PRAISE FOR ṬHANGU (DIVINING BONES)

When a calamity strikes a homestead or a disease that is beyond the understanding of man, the Muvenda would go and consult a traditional medicineman. By far the greatest number of practitioners are 'dziṅanga', and they are consulted on practically every occasion when an event occurs outside the natural order of things. The medicineman has his or her own divining bones that are known among the Vhavenda as 'ṭhangu'. He who consults the medicineman would have to enter the hut where divination is made without shoes on. One is expected to pay a certain amount known as 'luputulula thevhele' which suggests payment for the opening of the 'ṭhangu' pouch. The 'consulter' blows his breath onto the divining bones, and the divination is then carried on. In the process of divination, the medicineman would praise his 'ṭhangu'. Each moment he throws them down, praise is addressed to those 'ṭhangu' that reveal and tell more. 'Ṭhangu' have names from which praises come. According to Stayt a 'hwami' represents the old man 'tshilume' the old man while 'thwalima' represents an old woman. 81)

Van Warmelo sees 'hwami' as representing the father's side, while 'tshilume' represents the mother's side. 'Thwalima' may stand for a woman outside the family, whereas 'luṅwe' represents the wife at home. The exact meaning varies according to the circumstances which they are required to elucidate. 82)

When 'ṭhangu' have been thrown down, they are called 'mawa' which comes from the prefix 'U' and the verb 'wa' which means to fall. They are then praised as follows, depending on the way they have fallen.

81) Hugh A. Stayt : The Bavenda. P. 263

82) Van Warmelo : Contributions towards Venda History, Religions, and Tribal Ritual. P. 198.

Thwalima:

Tshivhasa mulilo dugudugu, musadzi mutswuku
ha malwi, ndi tshiṭangu tsha phaladza muḍi
'A light-coloured woman is not to be married
for she is a seed of conflict and confusion'
This suggests a very bad omen. It may also
imply danger to everything.

Tshilume:

Ndi mbandambanda muḍini, masiari ndi
pfumbupfumbu ya musanda.
'He is a man who slouches about the village
at night and mid-day he is the encourager of
the head kraal'

Tshiṭangu reflects sorrow associated with lobola. For
instance, the girl may have run away with a man without the
payment of lobola. The child may get ill and the 'malume'
(uncle) must be approached that he 'phasa' for the child,
that is appeasing the spirits so that the child gets well.

Tshiṭangu

Kunga tshiṭangu ri ende, u sa nge munyadzi
wa lwendo.
'Entice the shield that we may undertake a journey.
Do not be like despisers of the journey'.
This suggests a good omen.

Luñwe

Ndi nga thenga a tho ngo dzula, ndo dzula
nga u tenyama 83)

'I am like a feather that does not have
a firm seat. I am poised uncertainly'

Luñwe reveals a bad one. It may also suggest that the illness is of the blood or stomach. It may again, reveal the conflict between a man and a woman and in this instance the woman is at fault.

The interpretation of 'mawa' vary according to the purpose for which they are to be used by each 'ñanga', be it the detection of witches, smelling out stolen and lost articles or an illness whose origin cannot be understood.

3.16 STRUCTURAL PATTERN OF PRAISE POEMS IN VENḂA

Structural pattern in VenḂa praise poetry varies from poem to poem. Some poems may be characterized by parallelism, alliteration, et cetera.

There are those praises that are made of a single word and an interjection. The word may be a noun used with or without an interjection, depending on a situation.

Noun :

NḂou

KwinḂa

Mulaudzi

Mundalamo

83) Stayt : The Bavenda. P. 289.

Noun with an interjection

N̄dou!

Kwind̄a!

Mulaudzi!

Mundalamo!

Khomola!

The interjection may also appear in the sentence.

Ahee! u a vhaḍwa mufhululu.

'Ahee! an ululation goes out'

The structure of the praise may be made up of a **prefix** and a **noun**. This is evident in praise names such as Mphwa-mbobvu.

Prefix		Noun
Mphwa	-	Mbobvu
Mphwa	-	Dombo
Mphwa	-	Tshinavha
Mphwa	-	Masale
Mphwa	-	Tshiṭanzu

There are praises that are made of **idiophone**. The following is an example of an idiophonic expression.

Ho tshena he wee, ndi zwisikwa zwa Vho-Raṭhogwa

This is an idiophone that does not follow the sound pattern like in:

O gidima e gidi!

Tshivhavhala tsha Shango

Lwenzhe lwa shango.

Repetition

Repetition dominates most of the praise poems. In repetition, words appear more than once either in the same lines or in different lines.

Repetition is used for amplification and emphasis.

Repetition creates the sense of pattern and form. 84)

- a) Ene ha koni u **dia** nga swiswi
U **dia** nga űwedzi
Vha ri u **dia** -----
- b) **Marikili - marikili**
- c) **Nzhelele** ndi musanda wa Venḡa
Nzhelele a hu lili khuhu
- d) Tshivhavhala tsha **shango**
Lwenzhe lwa **shango**

Parallelism

Parallelism is the building up of a sentence or statement using repeated syntactic units.

- a) Ene ha koni u **dia** nga swiswi
U **dia** nga swiswi
Vha ri u **dia** ...

84) Gray : A Dictionary of Literary Terms. P. 150.

This example benefits in both **Repetition** and **Parallelism**

Linkage

Linkage is another device that appears in many praise poems. In linkage, the idea in one line is carried over to the next one.

for example

- a) Nzhelele a hu lili **khuhu**
Khuhu dzaho hu lila mavhoḁa

- b) Ndi Ramulenzhe **matangwani**
Matangwa a lila thi sali

Linkage helps both in emphasis and a sense of rhythmic pattern.

3.17 SIGNIFICANCE OF PRAISE POETRY IN VENḁA

Praise poetry in Venḁa plays the important role of reliving past successful attainments. In other words, praise poetry has a historical function.

Guma says :

There are moving figures on the African scene, men and women who have left their footprints on the sands of time and whose achievements on behalf of their people are a genuine source of inspiration to the few that know about them. 85)

Praise poetry is needed in reliving the victories of both Chiefs and warriors.

85) Guma : The Form, Content and Technique of Traditional Literature in S. Sotho. P. 184.

Through praise poetry, Chief Makhado's success in his fight against the Whites and other tribes has been imprinted indelibly in the minds of both the young and the old.

Makhado ndi tshilwa-vhusiku tsha Haramabulana
Ene ha koni u dia nga swiswi Makhado
U dia nga h̄wedzi murwa Libulana.

'Makhado is a night-fighter of Haramabulana.
He doesn't conquer in darkness
He conquers in moonlight - son of Libulana'.

Aesthetic

Praise poetry has an aesthetic significance. The process of recitation brings a feeling of contentment and self-satisfaction. Listeners develop a sense of appreciation. To listeners, praise poetry becomes a lovely piece of art.

Social

Praise poetry has a social function. It enables people to come together as a social unit. It helps them share an important experience.

Ven̄ḁ ḁa ha tshika-muroho
Iwe u sa ladzi h̄wana na n̄ḁala
'Ven̄ḁ, a country of much abundance
A country that never lets its subjects go hungry'

Religious Significance.

Praise poetry has an important role to play in the religion of a society. It is used during 'thevhula' (religious rites). At this function, a praiser would praise the ancestors, mentioning

their names in their hierarchy. People would feel satisfied that their ancestors have been appeased. This is followed by the conviction that all would go well, and that at rainy seasons, rain would fall in downpours and the country would be covered in green. Praise poetry, as a matter of fact, enters every facet of the life of a Muvenda.

One could as a matter of fact, regard praise poetry as that type of poetry that characterize the traditional man. It was the 'people's poetry' that has welled up from the traditional spring so as to quench the thirst of all. Praise poetry covered a wider spectrum, be it animals, inanimate objects and ultimately, extolling human efforts to the highest rung of human achievements.

3.18 Poetic Devices in Praise Poetry

Poetic devices form the basis of poetry and these include rhythm, alliteration, refrain, et cetera. The figures of speech such as metaphors, similes, euphemism and others form the basis of imagery which is very important in poetry. The poetic devices characterize praise poetry and they help ensure that the poetry achieves a unity of impression.

Rhythm.

Rhythm is an effectual movement or 'flow' that is brought about by the poet's use of emphasis and tempo 86)

Rhythm is there to indicate physical movement; create a certain atmosphere and to express feelings.

86) Heese and Robin Lawton; Op cit; P. 14.

To the skilled poet, the regular metrical beat is a foundation, a norm from which to depart and return. It is an element in a larger movement, his rhythm. 87)

Rhythm is affected by certain aspects. These are the poet's combinations of different metrical patterns, pauses, length of words, ease or difficulty of pronunciation.

In praise poetry, a reciter declaims the poem with a swift tempo. This could be attributed to the fact that the poem is his own composition and that he hardly experiences the difficulty of pronunciation. The following praise is characterized by a swift tempo.

I ri phalakhasha mudavhini
Buka ɿa mutshimbili
Buka ɿa mafumo maɿanu
I ri kurr : ndaandaa - ndandaa

'It has emerged in the veld
The ferocious beast
The beast with five spears
It roars; kurr - ndaandaa - ndandaa'

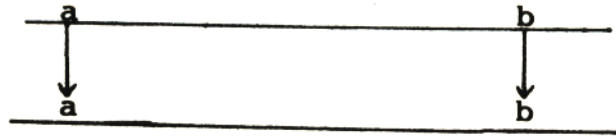
Parallelism

Parallelism is viewed by Schapera as a correspondence, in sense or construction of successive clauses or passages where, in each pair of lines, the first halves are identical in wording and the second are basically the same in meaning. 88)

87) R.L. Brett : An Introduction to English Studies. P. 13.

88) Schapera : Praise poems of Tswana Chiefs. P. 19.

The pattern of parallelism resembles that of linking, where there is a similarity of speech sounds in the first half of the line, followed by another similarity in the second half of the line. The pattern of parallelism may be represented as follows:

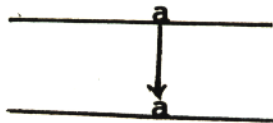


There are instances in Venḁa where we have initial parallelism. for example

Nzhelele ndi musanda wa Venḁa

Nzhelele a hu lili khuhu

The first Nzhelele and the second one may be represented by the following diagram.

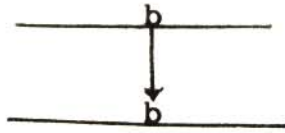


Parallelism may also be realized at the end of verses. This may be regarded as final parallelism.

e.g.

Tshivhāvhalā tsha shāngo
 ↓
 Lwenzhe lwa shāngo

The parallelism of 'shango' may be represented by the diagram as follows:

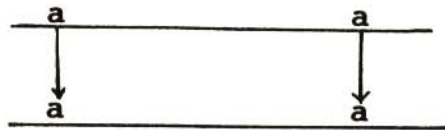


There are instances where initial parallelism and final parallelism is brought about by the same wording.

e.g. Marikili - marikili

Marikili - marikili

In the diagram, such type of parallelism may appear in this manner.



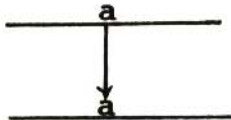
Linkage

Linkage is another device that characterizes many praise poems. In linkage, the idea in one line is carried over to the next one.

In the following praise, linkage may appear as initial linkage or as cross-linkage.

Initial linkage

Initial linkage the pattern is as follows:

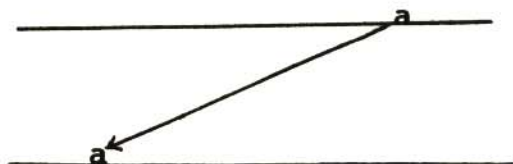


Khuhu a dzi lili Nzhelele

↓
Khuhu dzaho hu lila mavhoda

Cross-linkage

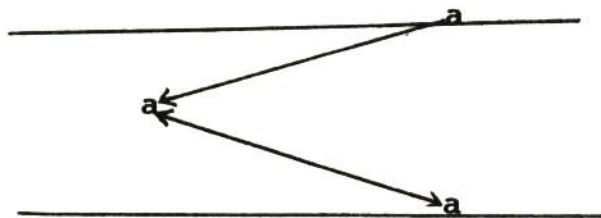
In cross-linkage, the pattern is the following :



Nzhelele a hu lili khuhu

←
Khuhu dzaho hu lila mavhoda

There are instances where the pattern of linkage is as follows.



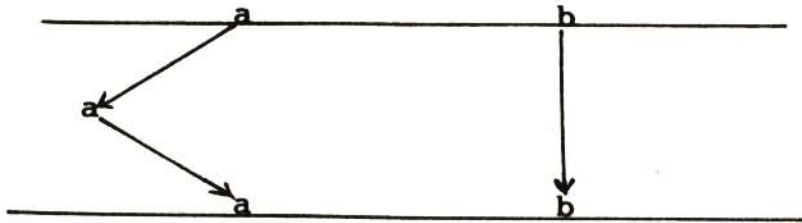
e.g.

Ene ha koni u dia nga swiswi

←
U dia nga swiswi

↘
Vha ri u dia.

Note that 'swiswi' makes its own parallelism. Ultimately, we end up with something like this.



e.g.



Imagery in praise poetry

Praise poetry makes use of imagery as much as modern poetry does. Imagery is a significant poetic device for intensifying, clarifying, enriching and giving the readers an insight into what is being described. Cox and Dyson regard imagery as anything descriptive and evocative in poetry which helps the readers to visualise a sense of situation. 89)

The image enables the poet to describe his object or situation with precision, vividness and force. Imagery makes use of figures of speech and related literary devices. A figure of speech is the use of a word, phrase or an expression in other than its plain or literal meaning in order to produce a special effect.

89) C.B. Cox and : The Practical Criticism of Poetry.
A.E. Dyson : P. 18.

The simile, 'fana na' in the praise of Nzhelele girls reveals beauty at its best. U nga fana na vhasidzana vha Nzhelele.

'Your beauty cannot be compared with that of Nzhelele girls'.

On the other hand, chief Tshivhase used to praise himself in the following way.

Ndi vhavha sa phiriphiri
'I am as hot as pepper'

This simile reveals the ferocious nature of chief Tshivhase.

Metaphors also help in compounding imagery.

In praise of the chief, the subordinates would praise him in the following manner.

Lwenzhe lwa shango

'The light of the world'

The metaphor, 'Lwenzhe lwa shango' suggests the good qualities of leadership.

An analysis of praise poetry in terms of poetic devices, reveals that praise poetry is not different from modern western poetry. Both make use of poetic devices so as to produce a special effect.

3.19 Praise poetry as a base for modern and protest poetry

Praise poetry serves as a base for modern poetry. The tone of praise is still discernible in both modern and protest poetry. Although modern in form, the feeling and thought expressed is very reminiscent of praise poetry. The poem, 'Ramaremisa' is an example of a poem with the aesthetics of praise poetry. For example:

Pa - Haa! Pa - Haa! Haa!
Ahee! Mahwasane u a vhang
Ahee! Mahwasane u a vhang
Ko -kaa! Ko- kaa! Ko- kaa!

The spirit of praising and the concepts found in praise poetry also find expression in the modern poem entitled 'Tshalovha tsha Lwamondo!'. The expression, 'Hee Tshalovha tsha Lwamondo' is characteristic of praise poetry. The use of 'Hoomu' 'Hoomu' reinforces the feeling of praise in the poem.

One may say that praise poetry is not only a base but a bridge to both modern and protest poetry.

It is interesting to note that protest poetry makes use of the rhythmic pattern and concepts of praise poetry. This may be seen when protest poets refer to the traditional heroes and chiefs who have distinguished themselves and proved themselves valorous in battle. This is evident when names such as those of Chaka, Makhado, et cetera, are referred to. In such instances, protest poetry, although modern in nature, slips into the place of praise poetry.

This buttresses the idea that praise poetry serves as a base for both modern poetry and protest poetry.

3.20 Conclusion

This chapter has revealed the significance of praise poetry. It is a means of extolling human achievements, and it attaches value to specific events, places, symbolic objects, et cetera. Praise poetry is regarded in Zulu as 'izibongo' in Sotho as 'Dithoko' while in Venda, it is known as 'zwickhoḁo'. In most cases, praises are recited for warriors who have gone to battle and proved their

worth. Praise poetry reveals the intensity of feeling of the poet and as in Western poetry, it is also characterized by poetic images. Praise poetry could be used in praising the chief.

For example. The praise for :

- i) Mphephu
- ii) Raluswielo Mphaphuli
- iii) Tshivhase, and others.

Praise poetry may centre on totems.

for example Singo
Nḁou
Mundalamo
Mbedzi
Kwinḁa
Mulaudzi
Munzhelele
Munyai

Besides the totem praise, one may have a praise name.

for example Mbobvu
Mavhumbe
Tshinavha
Mashau wa Ramutsindela
Matidze
Dombwe

Praise poetry does reflect on certain areas. The area could be praised for having sustained its citizens during moments of dire need or for having offered refuge to its citizens from a foreign invasion. In many wars that were fought in Venda, the Vhavenda were able to drive back their enemies. This could have been

possible as a result of many caves and dense forests. After the battle, they would in turn, praise the area for having given them a refuge.

for example Tshakhuma
Vari, et cetera,

A praise poem may be addressed to a dancer, or an individual who has proved his valour in battle.

Praise poetry may also be focused on the following.

- i) initiates
- ii) Animals
 - (a) Wild animals
 - (b) Domestic animals
- iii) Natural phenomena
- iv) Diving bones.

Praise poetry has a social function, for it enables people to come together as a social unit. It has a religious significance, for it is used during the 'thevhula' ceremonies. Its aesthetic significance lies in instilling in the audience, a sense of appreciation.

CHAPTER IV

4.00 MODERN POETRY

The coming of the missionaries to Vevdaland as elsewhere in Africa, has had a very strong influence on the life and world view of the Vhavenda. They were forced to forsake their traditional way of life and accept a new one.

Conversion and baptism were the catch - expressions. The immersion of a person in water symbolised the birth of a new being. Such a person would sever his ties with the old ways of life and assume a new life-style. This also implied discarding his tribal name and adopting a new biblical one. If a person was known as Maḡodzi, he or she would renounce it and would select another name from the Bible; for example, Peter or John. A Muvenda convert, if she be a woman, would be distinguished by a new name, say, Maria and a new style of clothing. A new name and new clothing distinguish such a woman from others who were generally regarded as heathens.

The missionaries had a tremendous influence on both the music and the poetry of the Vhavenda who were obliged to adapt their traditional poetry to new standards in the same way they were obliged to forsake their traditional way of life and adapt to a new religion.

Children were orientated to a new type of education, and the poetry they were learning at school was quite different from what they were used to. They started assimilating western poetry with its own characteristic features. When these children had imbibed the missionary education, the tendency was to emulate the new masters.

Most of these children came to assume positions of responsibility. Many became teachers and they had a tendency of writing Venda poetry imitative of the Western standards. This had a debilitating effect on the traditional praise poetry. Through the influence of the missionaries, poetry was no longer an expression of the traditional spirit. There was no room for the recitation of poetry with the movement of the body, stamping the feet or the interjection of the song. It was no longer a poetry of the people where everybody participated in the spirit of the poem. It had become the poetry of an individual whose spirit evokes the personality and emotions of the individual only.

Concerning the influence of missionaries on Zulu poetry, Vilakazi says:

...His whole imaginative setting had to be re-adjusted, and his musical emotions moderated or sublimated, not to be expressed in the thundering stamp of the feet, but a spiritual interpretation, the body playing very little part. The Christian era had nothing to do with izibongo, but appealed to amahubo. 90)

Songs, like poetry, could not evade the hold of the missionary spirit. Foreign hymns were made to appear in Venda verse. Seemingly, the missionary viewed the hymns as a total embodiment of poetry, for they were mostly written in a specific rhyming pattern.

90) Vilakazi : The Conception and Development of Zulu Poetry. Bantu Studies Vol xii P. 124

Modern poetry in Venda, appeared first in the form of hymnal songs. These songs were mostly a direct translation from the Western hymns. For example, most of the Venda hymns were translated from those written in German, since the dominating church was Lutheran, and had originated in Germany. The Vhavanḁa who composed the hymns were forced to adhere to foreign standards. All the hymns were expected to follow the pattern of a poem. They were to have rhythm, to rhyme, et cetera.

Ngcongwane, says:

Dit was harde werk. Die liedere moes
nie alleen vertaal word nie, maar dit
moes korrek, ritmies en singbaar
vertaal word sonder om die oorspronklike
lied of gesang wat vertaal word, geweld
aan te doen. 91)

The hymns were based on christmas carols, praises, et cetera. Ngcongwane says that a hymn may be regarded as a creative work.

Hymns, like poetry, are characterized by poetic devices such as imagery, repetition, eye rhyme, linkage and so on.

Moloto, feels that the translation of Western European hymns into Tswana has added a distinct genre of modern poetry. 92)

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- 91) S.D. Ngcongwane : Die plek van die kerklied in die Letterkunde van 'n Bantoetaal. M.A. Dissertation, 1974. P. 53.
- 92) E.S. Moloto : Growth and Tendencies in Tswana Poetry. D.Litt. Et Phil. UNISA 1970. P. 120.

The introduction of the Western hymns among the Vhavenda has had the effect of watering down the traditional spirit of their poetry. The hymns became a new norm for poetry. In fact, hymns ushered in a new period of written poetry, for traditional poetry was oral in nature.

Since hymns were a direct translation from Western European languages, they were forced to take on the spirit and form of western poetry. The Vhavenda who composed their own hymnal songs, for example, S. Dzivhani, were also forced to adhere to the forms of spirit of western hymns.

Hymnal songs, as the first form of a written poetry, became the yardstick of subsequent poetry written by Vhavenda.

The Venda hymnal songs, were tied to western metrics. Their hymns, like the western ones, were expected to have rhythm and they were to rhyme as well. Many songs in Venda were strait-jacketed, and ended up with a false rhyme.

Let us take a look at the following hymn

1. Kha ri ye u rabela
Kha ri ye u imbela
Murena, Muṅe washu
Muvhavhaleli washu

2. Ro fhedza ṅwaha wothe
Ro ḍi londolwa rothe
Vhonani, ri tshee hone
Ro lindwa zwone

3. Mutungu o ri wela
Milingo yo ri dela
Na nyofho dzo ri dzhena
Ra lwelwa nga murena
4. O ita sa mme ashu
We e muleli washu
A di ri tsireledza
A tshi ri kuvhatedza
5. Ndi zwe a ita hothe
Na nga maduvha othe
Ho tonda tshanda tshawe
Ro vha ri vhana vhawe
6. Murena, mune washu
U vhushavhelo hashu
U dzivha la dakalo
La maanda na mulalo
7. Ri u livhuha rothe
Zwe wa ri ita zwothe
Ri khoda maanda au
Ri renda vhuthu hau
8. Ri pfe ri tshi humbela
U di ri vhavhalela
Ri vhuse, U ri lwele
Ri linde, ri si xele
9. U ri fhe vhuswa hashu
Takadza mbilu dzashu
Thivhela dzinndwa dzothe
Hu lale shango lothe

10. Na kha mishumo yashu
Na kha dzindila dzashu
U thakhe vhana vhau
Nga phathutshedzo yau

'Let us go and pray
Let us go and sing
For the Lord, Our God
The One who takes care of us

Suffering has come our way
Temptations have also come our way
Fear has seized us
And God had defended us

He acted like a mother
Who, being a protector
Protected us all the time
This He did all the time

And all their days
His hand has been merciful
We have always been His Children

Lord, Our Lord
You have been our refuge
You are the Lake of joyfulness
Of power and peace

We are thankful to you
All that you have done to us
We are thankful to you
We praise Your sense of humanity

Listen to us, when we ask
That you be merciful to us
Take care of us, defend us
Protect us, that we may not get lost

Give us our food
Soothe our hearts
Prevent wars
That there be peace

Even in our work
And all our ways
Bless our children
With your blessings.'

The hymn has the following rhyme scheme:

1. a
a
b
b
2. c
c
d
d
3. a
a
e
e
4. b
b
f
f et cetera

One can easily discern that the form of the hymn is that of Western poetry. Each stanza retains a specific rhythmic and rhyming pattern. The hymn exalts the Lord and reveals the worthlessness of human nature.

Like western poetry, the hymn makes use of images. The image of a lake "dzivha" in the sixth stanza reveals the inexhaustible nature of God's love and mercy.

The following is another hymn that has been written to a certain rhyming pattern.

Sambi ɭau ɭithihi
ɭi ɖo kuvhangana ɭini?
Hee Mulisa muthihi!
Shango ɭi ɖo naka ɭini?
Iwe wo zwi ambaho
Ndiwe U ɖo shumaho.

The rhyming pattern is that of:

a
b
a
b
c
c

The hymn treats of the greatness of God. The images of 'Mulisa' and 'Sambi' suggest the power of God and the Oneness of human race.

A look at hymnal songs in Venḍa, reveals a direct reproduction of Western forms. Venḍa hymnal songs may be regarded as the steppingstone of modern Venḍa poetry.

They have served as a basis, and the yardstick for the writing of good modern poetry in Venḍa.

WHAT IS MODERN POETRY

Modern Venḍa poetry is the kind of poetry written according to the norms and principles that govern the writing of western poetry.

According to 'The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English', the term 'modern' refers to the period from 1500 onwards. It also implies the period subsequent to Middle Ages. 93)

Modern poetry would, according to 'The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English' cover all poetry that falls within the time defined above.

According to Martin Gray, modern poetry refers to poetry that has thrown away all the old formal convention. 94.)

In modern poetry the tendency is to write in free verse, which is not bound by strict metrical pattern. Martin Gray cites Ezra Pound, Eliot and W.B. Yeats as some of the representative poets of this period. He goes on to say that the term 'modern' is not used by critics to mean 'contemporary' or 'of the present.'

93) Fowler and : The Concise Oxford Dictionary of
Fowler Current English. P. 778.

94) Gray : A Dictionary of Literary Terms. P. 78

In Venda, one would not view modern poetry in the same light as Martin Gray does. Modern poetry in Venda would refer to a period when Venda poets started discarding the traditional spirit of praising in their poetry in favour of the pattern followed in western poetry. This is a moment when most of the poets shy away from praise poetry to the type of poetry written by western poets such as S.T. Eliot, W.B. Yeats, et cetera.

Moloto, regards modern poetry in Tswana as that poetry that bears the marks of Western European influence, as opposed to indigenous poetry, which, whether written or unwritten, has been handed down from generation to generation, dressed in indigenous techniques. 95). Cope on the other hand says of traditional and modern poetry:

Traditional literature differs from modern literature not only in that it is oral but also in that it is essentially the product of communal activity, whereas work of modern literature is the result of individual effort and bears the stamp of its author. 95)

Modern Venda poets have tried their best in developing a sense of individual uniqueness in their poetry. Their poetry was no longer a communal activity. These poets have employed European techniques in their poetry. These are rhythm, rhyme, stanza and the metrical patterns.

95) Moloto : The Growth and Tendencies of Tswana Poetry. D.Litt Et Phil UNISA. P. 117.

95) Trevor Cope : Izibongo: Zulu Praise Poems. P. 24.

One should note the stanzaic forms of modern poetry in Venda. In traditional poetry, stanzaic forms were unheard of, since the poetry was oral in nature. A reciter would just recite without being controlled by any stanza. What the reciter would do was to take a breath at certain intervals. The in-take of breath at intervals may be mistaken for a stanza. This should not be so.

In modern poetry, poets are impressed by the vast range of Western poetry. Such poetry, handles a variety of objects, situations, subjects and many other aspects of interest.

Moloi views modern poets in terms of making an adaptation to their traditional praise poetry. He says that such 'revised' praises sound hollow and monotonous. He attributes the hollowness and the monotonous nature of poetry to deviation from the traditional idiom.

This was a clear indication that they were deviating from the original form which was based on the idiom of Southern Sotho. 97)

97) A.J. Moloi : A comparative study of the Poetry of Ntsane and Khaketla. P. 10.

On taking a look at publications dealing with Venda poetry, one realizes that the publications are still meagre. They are not as many as one would expect them to be. D.M. Ngwana's 'Vhakale vha hone' may be regarded as the first substantial collection of Venda traditional poetry. It was published in 1958. Nenzhelele's 'Zwirendo na zwiimbo zwa vhana vha Vhavana' also has traditional poetry as its theme. Ngwana and Nenzhelele's publications were followed by those that may be regarded as falling within the ambit of modern poetry. Most of the books listed below contain poems that are both modern and traditional. There are, as a matter of fact, books such as those of Sigwavhulimu which are invested with the ^{form} ~~form~~ and feeling of western poetry. The publications on modern Venda poetry are as follows:

Author	Title	Publisher	Year
Matshili, R.R.	Zwiala zwa Venda	Van Schaik	1967
Sigwavhulimu W.M.R.	Tsoko - tshiphiri	Van Schaik	1971
Mashuwa, Tshindane	Mutambo wa Muhumbulo	Van Schaik	1972
Matshili, R.R.	Fhululedzani	Van Schaik	1972
Nemukovhani, M.N.	Tshibvumo	Van Schaik	1972
Ratshitanga, T.R	Vhungoho na Vivho	Van Schaik	1972
Ratshitanga, R.F.	Tsengela Tsiwana	Van Schaik	1973
Ratshitanga, T.R.	Ndi nne nnyi?	Van Schaik	1973
Madima, E.S	Ndi Vhudza nnyi?	Van Schaik	1974
Maumela, E.T.	Tshiwandalani	Van Schaik	1975
Sigwavhulimu, W.M.R.	Mirunzi ya Vhuvha	Van Schaik	1975
Makhado, J.R.	Thetshelesani	van Schaik	1977
Maumela, E.T.	Mutakadzi	Shuter & Shooter	1979

Milubi N.A	Muhumbuli - Mutambuli	Van Schaik	1981
Milubi N.A.	Vhufungu ha Vhupfa	Shuter & Shooter	1982
Netshivhuyu	Nyangalambuya	Van Schaik	1982
Ligege, N.M.	Dziedzi	Van Schaik	1983
Netshivhuyu, N.N.	Lupfumo lwa Muvenda	Van Schaik	1984
Netshivhuyu	Ntivhiseni Khulo	Shuter & Shooter	1984
Tshindane, M.	Zwa Vhutshilo	Van Schaik	1984
Maqadzhe, R.N.	Khonani Yanga	Van Schaik	1985
Milubi, N.A.	Ipfi la Lurere	Morester	1986

The content of most of the Publications oscillates between the traditional and the modern spirit of poetry while others ~~while others~~ see-saw between the modern and the protest type of poetry. This will become more evident during the course of the analysis.

Of late, there is a mushrooming of manuscripts on Venda poetry. One may only hope that such a renewal of energy will help augment the meagre nature of the present publications of poetry in Venda.

4.01 MODERN VENDA POETRY UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF THE TRADITIONAL SPIRIT

This is a kind of poetry that has become modern in form yet remaining praise poetry in conception. It may be regarded as semi-praise poetry.

On modern poetry with the traditional spirit, Moloi says:

Even though these poets continued the tradition of the missionaries to reduce Southern Sotho poetry to writing, traditional poetry remained stubborn and did not easily bend to the new tune of European poetry. The music and rhythmic pattern were still those of the untamed mountains of Lesotho. 98)

This view reveals the dominance of the traditional spirit in modern poetry. Poets try their utmost to shun the traditional spirit in their poetry and only to witness its re-emergence. The theme and content of the poetry also show the traditional fibre. They reveal the experiences of the people. The greatness of this poetry lies in the spirit of extolling the highest human achievements. Those modern poets who have decided to sever ties with the traditional spirit in their poetry have not succeeded, for in most cases, their modern poetry, has become merely an adaptation of the praise poetry.

98) Moloi : A Comparative Study of the Poetry of Ntsane and Khaketla. P. 10.

It is interesting to note that most of the Venda poetry written in the post-missionary period is still suffused with the traditional spirit. Although the aim has been to discard the traditional spirit in the writing of 'new' Venda poetry, this has not been possible. What actually happened was that the poetry resembled that of western poets in terms of form only, and not of the total aesthetic.

On the imitation of Western poets, Vilakazi says:

There is no doubt that the poetry of the West will influence all Bantu poetry because all the new ideas of our age have reached us through European standards. But there is something we must not lose sight of. If we imitate the form, the outward decoration which decks the charming poetry of our Western masters, that does not mean to say that we have incorporated into our poetry even their spirit. 99)

Vilakazi's view bolsters the idea that the imitation of Western poetry may succeed only in form and not in spirit. It is understandable why most of the poems in Venda are written in western form yet retaining the traditional aesthetic.

99) Vilakazi : The Conception and Development of Poetry in Zulu. Bantu Studies Vol xii, P. 127.

One could take a look at the following poem.

VHUMBEDZI

Lavhelesani Vhumbedzi no dzula mirunzini
Ndi hone ni tshi vhona u naka haḽo na guma
Hune makwara na midavhi na dzinngwa na magovha
Zwoṽthe hezwi zwa nakisa Vhumbedzi.
Dzithavhani ho ḽala mitshelo ya tshaka dzoṽthe
Vha Vhumbedzi vha ḽa vha ḽiphina

Lavhelesani ngei midavhini ya Vhumbedzi
Hu vhonala maṽtambi mahulu a zwifuwo
Vhalisa vhadzo vha thavhani mitsheloni
Lavhelesa u vhone dzi tshi vhuya hayani
U ḽo pfa ḽilogo dzi tshi imba tshikona
ṽamana hu vhumoomoo hayani.

Vhanna vha bva nga lufhima vhaeni
Vha yo u lugisa zwilibana na milavhu
Vha ṽoḽa u fasha dzone phukha
Ngei khoroni maswuhana o no vhasa mulilo
Vhanwe vha khou ṽhaṽha zwiṽoni
Vhanwe vha tshi khou amba zwa masiari

Vhafumakadzi ngei muṽtani vhe mishumoni yavho
Vhaṽwe vha tshi khou ṽohola
Vhana vha tshi khou gotsha nzie
Ho no lalewa vha thoma u ita khube na ngano
Na vha ngei khoroni vho vhuya tshiṽangani
Vhoṽthe vho dzula zwavhuḽi tshiṽangani.

Idzou hali maṽo afho magovhani
Ndi mavhele fhedzi o pakataho nga tharu
Maranga na mafhuri a ri tsha amba

Ndi tshini tshine Vhumbedzi vha shaya
Vhañwe asivhaḽaa! Vha ya u rafha ḽotshi
Vha khou lidza zwiḽiringo na zwipoḽolio. 100)

'Take a look at Vhumbedzi while sitting in a shade
It is then that you will realize its beauty
Where hills, precipices and valleys
Decorate the whole of Vhumbedzi
The mountains abound with fruits of everything
All those at Vhumbedzi eat to their heart's content

Look at the valleys of Vhumbedzi
And see the herds of cattle
The herdboys feeding on fruits on the mountain
Look at the cattle when they are homeward bound
You would hear their bells as they come
While the calves are also in a jocund mood.

Men leave at dawn
To prepare the traps for wild animals
So as to catch wild animals
By the entrance boys have kindled fire
While others are roasting birds
And others narrating day-time events.

Women are busy at their work
Some are stamping the mealies
While children are roasting locusts
After supper, they play and narrate.
Everybody in a happy mood

100) Ngwana : Vhakale vha hone. P. 72.

Take a look at the valley
You will notice a good crop of mealies
Pumpkins are in abundance
What is it that Vhumbedzi lacks
There are others, heading for bee-trapping
While playing the flutes'

The poem has been written in a western stanzaic form, yet the spirit is traditional in nature. One is able to discern here, a subtle reflections of the praise aesthetic.

The speaker in the poem is praising the area of 'Vhumbedzi' for having offered the fullness of life to its inhabitants. A good crop, wild fruits, teeming herds of cattle, all contribute to this impression. The images of 'notshi' 'mafhuri' (pumpkins) 'Mitshelo' (fruits) 'nzie' (Locusts) 'mavhele' (mealies) 'phukha' (wild animals) imply the fullness of life at Vhumbedzi, hence the praise in the poem. This spirit of praise immerses the poem in the well of a traditional poetic tradition.

'Ramaremisa', a poem by Z. Mutsila, is another poem with a Western form, yet it retains the traditional spirit. The poem is about the strife and conflict for chieftainship.

The poem reads as follows:

Kha vha ntshejele xanga Vho-Nyamuofhe
Ndi yo lidza tshikona Thononda
Ngauri arali zwi zwone zwauri mativha o xa
Ramaremisa u yo dzhena Luaṅame
Pa - Haa ! Pa - Haa ! Haa !
Ndi lufhalafhala lu lila Tshivhungululu
Lu vhidza Vhumbedzi dzithavhani

Tsho swika hafha Maḍaliana
U dzhena vhukoma Luaḅame
Ahee ! Mahwasane u a vhangā
Ahee ! Mahwasane u a vhangā
U ri vuhosi a vhu dzheni Mpuna
Ḷigegise o beba vhatuka
Ko-Kaa Ko-Kaa ! Ko-Kaa !

Ndi tshigidi tsha Thilivhali
Mogodini ya Gondeni
Ni vha litshe Vharonga vha ḑo fhela
Nga dzinnda mishashani
U a i pfa naa Muḷulagole?
I a divhitha Mukumbani
Khosi ndi Ramaremise 101)

'Prepare a flute for me Vho-Nyamuofhe
That I go and play tshikona at Thononda
For if it be true that the chief has died
Ramaremisa is going to be enthroned at Luaḅame
Pa-Haa ! Pa-Haa! Haa!
It is a horn blowing from Tshivhungululu
It entreats Vhambedzi from the mountain

Maḍaliana has appeared
He is going to be enthroned at Luaḅame
Ahee! Mahwasane is making a strife.
Ahee! Mahwasane is making a strife
He syas that chieftainship cannot be attained
by Mpuna
When Ḷigegise has heirs
Ko-Kaa! Ko-Kaa! Ko-Kaa!

101) Ngwana : Vhakale vha hone. P. 49.

It is Thilivhali's rifle
In Gondení valleys
Let Vharonga perish
Through lice in their tents
Do you hear mutulagole (the drum)
It throbs at Mukumbani
Ramaremise is the King.'

The poem reveals a striving for chieftainship. The speaker presents the conflict in a war-like spirit. Actually, the voice exposes a sense of war. The expression, 'Ahee! Mahwasane u a vhangá' is repeated twice and it carries a touch of praise for those who are in favour of the strife for chieftainship. The expression, 'Pa - Haa! and that of 'Ko - Kaa! Ko - Kaa! Ko - Kaa! Ko - Kaa! adds and intensifies the traditional spirit for war.

Most of the modern poets in Venda have tried to write their poetry according to Western poetic norms and standards. To a certain extent, their attempt to emulate and imitate western poetry has been realized. Unfortunately, the traditional spirit pervaded and held its ground in most of the modern Venda poetry. In some poems the spirit surges up in the full light of day, thus exposing their traditional quality. In other poems, the spirit appears in a very subtle manner and such poems need a critical mind to discern.

The following are a representative sample of poets whose poetry, is partly of course, tinged with the traditional spirit. One easily perceives the spirit of praise in most of the poems.

In M.J. Netshivhuyu's 'Nyangala Mbuya', the following are his poems, (although modern) which express the traditional spirit.

Vhahali vha Venḁa
'Heroes of Vendaland'

Tshimange tshanga
'My cat'

Musanda Ṭhohoyandou
'The Capital Ṭhohoyandou'

Tshivhindini tsha ḁorobo Tswana
'In the heart of Pretoria'

Zhalapanaiwa.

'Zhala' means 'hunger' and 'panaiwa' suggests 'rain'. This implies starvation brought by crop-failure due to excessive rain. In the poem, 'Zhalapanaiwa', the voice addresses the rain that comes in lovely downpours. The rain is praised for quenching the thirst-stricken ground.

Masase
'Star' (Morning Star)
Dzivha tshiswibe
'Lake Tshiswibe'

T.R. Ratshitanga has written 'Vhungoho na Vivho' (Truth and Greed) Ratshitanga suggests through this title and some of his other poems, that the world is engaged in a dual conflict of virtue and vice, and that the two are hardly reconcilable. He believes that these two elements are responsible for human conflict and suffering. His two poems, 'Venḁa ḁa Mulovha' (Venḁa of yesterday' and 'Zwiḁa Mulovha' (The yesterdays) are poems with the traditional spirit and are nostalgic in nature.

Tshindane Mashuwa has been no exception in this regard. In his 'Mutambo wa Muhumbulo' he comes out in praise of a lover; 'Thinawanga' (My dear Thinawanga). He also praises Mvula (Rain). His admiration of Venda_{land} is revealed in the poem 'Venda_{land} tshilimo' (Venda_{land} in summer).

The following is an example of a modern poem sullied by the traditional spirit

Mvula 'Rain'

He Malimandila lavhelesa Tshipembe
U do vhona lukole lusumba vhugala
Lu tshi vhidzelela lu tshi sea-sea
Lu ahee, thi tafwi, wa sa fulela u a naiwa

Vhukovhela ndi vilinga a shavha nga dzinzambo
O pandamedzwa nga nnyi-ha iwe vhathu?
Hune a guma aredi, a hu na tshinaki
Tshiga wa lala wo vhekanya, zwa vhusiku a zwi
konei

Asiila i senga dzithavha sa i sa dzi vhoni
Ri vona nga vhalisa uri yo swika
Khombole dzi lila dzi si tsha fhumula
Tsanwa u vha lwo no vha luimbo 102.)

'Malimandila, look southward
You will see the rain cloud
Calling and laughing
Saying, I come, woe to the roofless

102) Tshindane Mashuwa : Mutambo wa Muhumbulo. P. 7.

Westward baboons hurry in haste
Who has chased them?
At their destination nothing good will emerge
It is safer to be ever prepared for nightfall

There it is, meandering with the mountains
Its presence is noticed by the running of herdboys
Whistles are blown one after another
Dissatisfaction reigns for those caught unaware'

This poem exposes much of the praise spirit. The spirit is not even implicit, but emerges fully. Rain is the source of life and the cause of joy. This could be the reason why the speaker is praising it. The metaphor, 'Lu tshi vhidzelela lu tshi sea-sea' implies the emergence of life in total fullness. 'Khombole dzi si tsha fhumula' that is, the constant whistling by herdboys suggests a sense of welcome to this rain that burgeons life in both animals and plants.

In 'Venḁa Tshilimo' the spirit of the poem is almost the same as that of the previous poem, 'Mvula'

Yo na fura - u lale
Shango ɓo naka ɓo ɗilila
Miedzini, magovhani na mivhunduni
Hoṭhe hu na lukuna

Shango ɓoṭhe ndi ɓidala
Maṭo a lavhelesa hoṭhe a takala
Matsina maṭo a a sea-vho sa mulomo?
A mbo fura sa thumbu?

'It has rained indeed
The country lies in beauty
Dongas and valleys
All reveal the beauty

The whole county is green
Eyes find satisfaction from the scene
And laugh like the mouth
Then gets satisfaction like the stomach'

The poem resembles the previous one in that both praise rain and its effects. In this poem, rain is associated with a carpet of green and a spark of new life.

Tshindane's second poetry book entitled Zwa Vhutshilo published in 1984, reveals the spirit of praise in the poem 'Venda shango la mulalo.' (Vendaland the country of peace). This shows the extent to which the traditional spirit pervades and finds its way in the modern Venda poetry.

R.R. Matshili has written 'Fhululedzani' and 'Zwiala zwa Venda'. Both publications vibrate with the traditional spirit. In 'Zwiala zwa Venda' Matshili comes in praise of 'Mbelengwa' and 'Murundu' (Initiation ceremony' M.N. Nemukovhani has also reflected on the same spirit in his 'Tshibvumo'. His poems are mainly traditional in nature.

Sigwavhulimu W.M.R. may be regarded as a successful modern poet. Most of his poems are modern in the sense that they take much of the Western spirit. Unfortunately, he too,

could not evade the abiding nature of the traditional spirit.

In his first publication, Tsiko-Tshiphiri (The secret of creation) which was published in 1971, the spirit of praise is realized when he starts extolling Phaswana in 'Phaswana I. 'Phaswana II'. P.N. van Eyck as well as in praise of the late N P van Wyk Louw.

In his second publication Mirunzi ya vhuvha (The Shadow of being) published in 1975, Sigwavhulimu's sense of praise is noticeable in the poem 'Kha S M Dzivhani' 'O sima luimbo Phaswana' and 'Phaswana na Sigwavhulimu'.

This point is exemplified in Sigwavhulimu's poem.

Kha S M Dzivhani

U Dzivha la vhudzivha vhu si na muelo
Na vhuphara vhu sa elwi nga tshanda - vhuthu
U ditukufhadza hau ndi vhuhulu hau
U muri mutokola, muri u sa kuvhiho
Muri mitshelo midifhela mirafho na mirafho

Ndi a wanafhi a tshigidi?
Tshigidi tsha maipfi a pfano tshirendoni
Ane nduko yao
Ya mmbumbela Dzivhani a sa fiho

Zwisima zwine khazwo madi ra ka
Mupe wazwo ndi nnyi?
No mu livhuha nga mini?
Dzivha tshisima sogani la Sahara
Ndi fulufhelo la vhutshilo vhu sa fheliho

Rothe kha ri livhuwe Ramaanda
A ri kapele zwisima zwi sa xi
Hu thunyuwe Dzivha vhukati ha soga-vhuthu
Ri sheledzwe ri titime nga hu sa fheli. 103)

'You are indeed a lake of immeasurable depth
Of width that cannot be measured by human-hands
Within your humbleness lies your greatness
You are a vine, ever bearing fruit
A fruit tree whose fruits are sweets for all
generations.

Where do I get a thousand voices?
That they join one another in praise
Whose unity in praise
Creates a life-long Dzivhani

The springs from which we draw water
Who is the owner?
How did you thank him?
Dzivha, a spring in the Sahara desert.
A hope for human existence.

Let all of us praise God
That He creates springs that never dry up
That a lake emerges from the human-desert
Like plants, to be watered and flourish
endlessly'

103.) W.M.R. Sigwavhulimu : Mirunzi ya vhuvha. P. 19.

S M Dzivhani has been one of the first products of missionary education. He became a teacher who was dedicated to his profession. He learned to play musical instruments like the piano, the lyre and others. He was also a composer who wrote hymnal songs in Venda. Dzivhani distinguished himself in many facets of life.

The speaker in this instance, exalts Dzivhani's image. The symbol of Dzivha (a lake) suggests the depth of his dedicated efforts towards the upliftment of human kind.

The poem abounds in rich imagery. There is an image of a vine with its idea of fruitfulness. This implies that Dzivhani has endeavoured much in making life more prosperous to the Vhavana.

The poem on S M Dzivhani, like others, shows that Sigwavhulimu, although he has steeped himself in the Western spirit of poetry, cannot help, but tilt toward the traditional spirit.

Modern Venda poets find it very difficult to escape the hold of the traditional spirit. They try their utmost to cast off tradition by immersing themselves wholly in the 'new western spirit'. Contrary to their expectation, these poets are astounded when they realize that the traditional spirit has suffused through their poetry.

The following is another modern poem with a traditional spirit. It is titled: 'Tshalovha tsha Lwamondo'

Tshalovha tsha Lwamondo
Ndi muḍi muhulu wo fhatwaho
Nḍu dzo vhandekana sa ḍongololo
Vhadali a vha tsha fara lwendo lulapfu
Vhe ḅange-ḅange ndi u swika vha si na maneto

Ro dzula hafhano Tshalovha tsha Lwamondo
Masimu ro phakhelwa nga u lingana rothe
Maḏi ndi dzhia wo lala vhathu vha hashu
We miroho na mitshelo u bvisa kholomo
Vha shisha biko vha pfuma ḷi songo ṭavha

Hee Tshalovha tsha Lwamondo
Ri a u tenda, ri a u renda
Wo tshidza vhanzhi vhe vha ponyokiswa
Wo hanyisa vhabva-vhashaya-nungo
Wo tshidza vha dzula swiswini

Iwe Tshalovha tsha Lwamondo
Wo ri kuvhanganya ra fhaṭa huthihi
Wo ri dzudzanya ra pfana nga tshashu
Wo ri eletshedza ra ḏivha u ḏishumela
Wo ri tonda wa ri fha madzanga avhudi

Hoomu! Hoomu! Hoomu!
Hee vhalaudzi na vhatsinda vha Lwamondo
No ri siela mini ri rothe maṭakani mahulu?
Ni ri laṭelani ri sina tseḏa na vhoiwini?
Ni si vhone tshiswa na edza tshirululu vhannani.

Hee vhakoma. Hee vho-Makhadzi
Ri ḏo tondwa nga nnyi no ri shavha?
Tshalovha tshanu inwi Vhalaudzi
Tshi ḏo ni lovhisa nothe na vhana
Ni ḏo lila ni si wane mafhumudzi.

Vhuyani, vhuyani ngeno dzithavhani
Ngeno hayani hanu havhuḏivhuḏi
Ni litshe Tshalovha tshi tshothe
Ni ḏe ri dzule rothe sa mathomoni
Hoomu! Hoomu! Areḏi vhalaudzi nothe

'Tshalovha of Lwamondo
It is a big village
With houses as if a millipepe
Visitors are fond of Lwamondomo

We are well settled at Tshalovha
We have been given fields to plough
Water is in abundance
Vegetables and fruits are many
People easily get rich

Tshalovha of Lwamondo
We praise you
You have saved the lives of many
You have sustained the destitute

You Tshalovha of Lwamondo
You have brought us together
You made us settle well
You advised us well
You have given us good

Hoomu! Hoomu! Hoomu!
The Vhalaudzi and foreigners of Lwamondo
Why do you leave us in these thick bushes
Why do you forsake us
Don't forsake the old because of the new

Hee vhakoma and vho-Makhadzi
Who will take care of us
Tshalovha will destroy all vhalaudzi
You will cry bitterly

Come back, come back to the mountains
Your real home
Come, that we settle like before
Hoomu! Hoomu! A warning has been
given to you Vhalaudzi'.

The poem, although modern, is traditional in spirit. The persona praises the beauty and the goodness of Tshalovha. Tshalovha is situated at Lwamondo. It provides sufficient fields for its inhabitants. People plough and get rich quickly. Hunger is something unheard of because of vegetables and fruits. The whole of Tshalovha is covered in green.

'Tshaka' is another example of a poem written in a modern form, yet with an evident spirit of tradition. The poem goes as follows:

Tshaka Khosi ya Mazulu 'Tshaka the king of Zulus'

Ndi nnyi a sa divhi Tshaka khosi ya Mazulu
Khosi ya tshitu^hu na tshinyalo vhukuma.
Tshitu^hu tshawe tsho vha tshi tshi mangadza
vhathu
Shangoni lawe ho vha hu si na mulalo na lukuna.

Mudini wawe ho vha hu tshi elela malofha misi
yo^hthe
Lo vha li sa kovheli pfumo li songo nanzwa malofha
Zwililo zwi zwa d^uvha liⁿwe na liⁿwe kha vhathu
Nga Tshaka khosi ya tshitu^hu tshi no nga tsha nowa

Mmbi yawe dzi dzindau dza vhanna vhahulu
Misi yo^hthe vha tshi bva vha vhuya na mifhululu
Magoswi o vha e magwashu a maanga a leled^aho
Vhahali nndwani vhe khonani dzi fhulufhedzeaho.

Nwana a tshi ri u bebwa, a sumiwa thavhani
Luṭongwa lu tshi ya ḍuluni ḷi sa vuliwiho
Mubebi a sala a tshi nununa sa phele i ḍakani
A ḍisumbedza kha ndau u ya murunzini wa vho awelaho

Liboho ḷa mashango ḷa mbiti na tshituḷu
Lo dzinginyisa shango ḷoṭhe ḷa Afrika Tshipembe
ḷa thuba miṭambi minzhi na magogo mahulu
Khuḍa nṇa dzoṭhe dza shango dza dzhenwa nga
ṇowagudu.

Mashango a rengedela na seli ya lwanzhe
Vhatshena vhe ndi 'Napoleon Murema wa Afrika
Tshipembe'
Mahosi manzhi a puta mitshila sa mmbwa ya mutshila
A tshi shavha Tshaka khosi ya Hazulu.

Zwililo zwa vha zwihulu nga lufu lwa Nandi
Ha lila vhakalaha na vhakegulu, vhanna na
vhasadzi
Vho lilaho nga ṇḍila ya muhoyo vho vha maalo a
Nandi
Duvha ilo ha fa vhathu vha si na mbalo.

Zwa gogona Dingane murathu wawe
A langana na Umhlangana u doda ndau khulu
E thetshela u zwi pfe ndau ya Hazulu
Ndau ye gwalagwada, salani ndi ya Tshiendeulu

'Who does not know Tshaka king of the Zulus
The king of tyranny and utter destruction
His tyranny was quite amazing
There was no peace in his country.'

Blood would flow each day
The sun would not set without killing a person
Cries had become the order of the day
Because of Tshaka who was as merciless as a snake

He had a big army
All the time it would come back victorious
Cowards would be food for vultures
The brave were friends indeed.

The birth of a child was to be known at the
'mountain'
The unhealthy would be killed
A parent, like a hyena, would show dissatisfaction
Death would be her friend, if she were to be
discovered.

The man of tyranny
Shook the whole of South Africa
And took possession of herds of cattle and people
All four corners of the country were seized by
fear

His action sent shock to overseas countries
The whites regarded him as a Black Napoleon of
South Africa
Many chiefs paid homage
In fear of Tshaka the king of the Zulus.

People were made to cry when Nandi had died
Old men and old women cried, as well as men and
women
Those who feigned a cry became Nandi's grave-bed
That day many people lost their lives.

These incidents touched Dingaan his brother
Who connived with Umhlaba
That they kill the great lion
They struck the lion of the Zulus
The lion fell down and that was the end of its
existence'

In this poem, the speaker is making use of subtle praise. The spirit of tradition in the poem is not as evident as in the traditional praise poetry, where the speaker would jump up, call at the top of his voice, the name of Tshaka. He would as a matter of fact, start praising Tshaka with the movement of his body. The modern form of the poem has retained the element of tradition despite the introduction of Western forms. According to the Moloi.

'this poetry has remained stubborn and
did not easily bend to the new tune of
European poetry. 104)

A look at the poem reveals Tshaka as a great fighter. A symbol of a lion 'ndau' is used to express his ferocity. The image of blood 'malofha' is seen in the light of his valour and his tyranny.

On the fourth stanza, the image of 'a hyena' is ominous. The omen is realized in the last stanza when Tshaka gets killed by his brothers, Dingaan and Umhlaba. Despite Tshaka's tyranny and his spilling of blood, the speaker shows a high regard for all his victorious efforts.

104) Moloi : Op cit; P. 11.

4.02 MODERN VENDA POETRY DEVOID OF THE TRADITIONAL SPIRIT.

This is a type of poetry that has struggled to shed off the traditional spirit of praise.

Most Modern Venda poets have been strongly influenced by the western spirit in their approach to poetry. This has resulted in the adulteration of the traditional spirit in their work. Although the traditional spirit is to be found in some of the poems, yet the tendency has been to keep it checked. Such imitation of the form and spirit of western poetry has eliminated the traditional style in most of the modern Venda poetry. The modern Venda poet and his poetry, are measured by the yardstick of western poetry. One also notices in modern Venda poetry, a gradual shift from traditional imagery to foreign and unfamiliar images such as "the sea" "the ocean" "flowers", et cetera. Such images hardly dominated the traditional poetry in Venda. This suggests a remarkable shift from the traditional style of poetry to that of the west.

The modern poet like the praise poet, evinces a significant interest in, and delves into, the phenomenon "poetry". Like Wordsworth, he asks himself questions such as "What is a Poet? To whom does he address himself. He tends to view poetry in the same vein as the western poet and critic does. Western poets and critics view poetry from different perspectives. Brooks, Purser and Warren regard poetry as the verbal expression of the imaginative view of the world. 105) To them, poetry is concerned with that feeling of being in love, the feeling of hating somebody, the feeling of standing at deathbed.

105) Brooks, Purser : An Approach to Literature. Fifth
and Warren Edition, P. 333.

Brooks and Warren go on to say:

Poetry, then, is a response to, and an evaluation of, our experience of the objective, bustling world and of our ideas about it. Poetry is concerned with the world as responded to sensorilly, emotionally and intellectually. --- It extends our own limited experience by means of imagination. By imagination, it sharpens our sense of the physical world on the one hand, and on the other, it deepens our sense of the emotional, intellectual and moral implications of human situations and actions.--- it somehow makes us more aware of life outside itself. 106)

Aristotle says that poetry while exciting emotions, somehow controls and channels them. He goes on to assert that poetry is a kind of philosophy.

-- Hence poetry is more philosophical and deserves more serious attention than history, for while poetry concerns itself with universal truths, history considers only particular facts. 107)

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- 106) Cleanth Brooks and : Understanding Poetry. Fourth
Robert Warren Edition. P. 9.
- 107) Dutton : An Introduction to Literary
Criticism. P. 22.

While Horace views poetry as an outflow of innate ability and the response to the dictates of nature, Longinus approaches poetry from the point of sublimity. He sees good poetry only if it relates to the sublime.

As I am writing to you, Terentianus, who are a man of some erudition, I almost feel that I can dispense with a long preamble showing that sublimity consists in a certain excellence and distinction in expression, and that the greatest poets and historians have acquired their pre-eminence and won for themselves an eternity of fame. 108)

Longinus proposes that sublimity may be attained by the emulation of the sublime writers of the past. One could argue that the severing of this ties with the tradition in modern Veda poetry fulfils itself through the emulation of the sublime in western writers.

Longinus suggests that any poetry of sublimity will uplift the soul of the reader. Having borrowed Longinus' view, one could say that only the writing of the highest stature may evoke much feeling in the audience.

It is natural to us to feel our souls lifted up by the true sublime, and conceiving a sort of generous exultation

108) Aristotle Horace : Classical Literary Criticism.
Longinus P. 100.

to be filled with joy and pride, as though we had ourselves originated the ideas which we read ---- there can be no sublimity, when the effect is not sustained beyond the mere act of perusal. But when the passage is pregnant with suggestion, when it is hard, --and when it takes a strong and lasting hold on the memory, then we may be sure that we have lighted on the true sublime 109).

Some Venda poets try their utmost to reach the sublime although others fall far short of it. Poets such as W.M.R. Sigwavhulimu have succeeded in attaining the sublime in modern Venda poetry.

4.02.0 THE NATURE OF MODERN VENDA POETRY

The nature of modern Venda poetry may be viewed from different angles. It may be narrative or descriptive in nature. It may also be religious, may treat of love, man and nature, as well as the aesthetic.

4.02.01 NARRATIVE POETRY

Brooks, Purser and Warren regard narrative poetry as that type of poetry that takes the form directly or indirectly, of a story. It is poetry that indicates the action underlying the poem. [10)

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- 109) Maxwell - Mahon : Critical Text Plato to the Present day. P.42
110) Brooks, Purser : An Approach to Literature.
and Warren Fifth Edition. P. 333.

The following is a poem by Madima that carries the narrative tone. The poem is titled, 'Tshililo tsha dzimmbwa' (The lament of the dogs).

Ndi zwiḍa na ḥwaha 1952 wo sia tshililo
Vha vho u ri vhona vhe ndi mini ilo
Nna vha ambani vha tshi ri ri na havhiya
Muḍivhatshikamba u ḍivha nga tshawe
Tshavho tshipengo vho tou ṭatshilelwa
Ngoho a si na tshawe u fa nga li si lawe
Vho fa tshigidi ndi musu vha kho elelwa

Ho lovha riḥe lushaka lwa vhadzimba vhakoni
Ro shoshwa nga zwitikoni zwa bva nga maṭoni
Zwo vuwa khani tshe ra ni shumela ro takala
Ndi hone ro fhambana Ludzula aneani ngano
Nangoho ro lovha na vhana iwe vhathu
Nndwa i si na makungo iṭali i ya muḷano
Ndi mishumo - vho i no nga zwiḥwe zwithu

Vha a zwifha vha ḍo fa vha tshi tambula
Nethavhani u na ene tsimu u ḍi tandula
Vha a mu pfa a tshi khou vhidzelela
thavhani?
Mitambo ya vhoṭhoho yo no vha ya vhuṭudzi
Na vhukwembe haḥu vha ḍo hama vha pfuḍelwa
Matsina mitsherere i na sambu-vho sa mbudzi?
U lemala honoho ho vha hu songo tendelwa.

Tsiwana o lila a vhuya a zwimba maṭo
A zwo ngo mu farisa u lala o siamela mbaḍo
Mbava dzi ofhani vhalindi vho dobedzwa
Dzo mu tswela a kundwa na u bva ḥuni

Ntsa ino minwaha dzi tou tamba nga u kona
Randevhe zwa vhukhuyekhuye o livhala vhuḁe
Vha nga si mu fare naho a gidima nga magona. 111)

'The year 1952 is heart-rending
They no longer take heed to us
What do they mean when they regard us as
being mad
They too should be mad
Their madness is more pronounced than ours
Indeed, he who has nothing of his own
suffers most
Had it not been for their rifles, they
would have been given the lesson they
would not forget.

They have destroyed us - the hunting race
We were shot in the back and through the eyes
What actually went wrong, for we have been
working faithfully for you.
Our ways have parted - we cannot help it
Oh! we have been shot with our little ones

Worry not, for they will regret their own
actions
Baboons are swarming in the fields
Apes are no longer fearful
Your goats will be exposed to much peril
'Mitsherere' are playing and plundering
freely
Such a thing was unheard of.

111) Madima : Ndi Vhudza nnyi? P. 73

The orphan has cried in helplessness
He has received no help at all
Thieves steal without fear
Springbucks go freely without fear
The hare has no more fear for dogs'

The poem narrates the killing of the dogs in the belief that they had a disease that goes along with madness. This led to a total campaign of killing all the dogs that were not vaccinated and were suspected of carrying the disease. The poem is a narration of how they were shot and what actually happened immediately thereafter. After the killing, the dogs, in their spiritual form, witness a state of havoc that arises because of their absence.

Baboons move freely in the fields and cause a lot of destruction. Wild animals move freely without the fear of being caught by the dogs. In a subtle way, this poem is utter protest against oppression of man by man. The narrative nature of this poem in Venda has a parallel with some narrative poems in English such, as 'My last duchess' by Robert Browning 'The Rime of Ancient Mariner' by S.T. Coleridge, 'Sir Patrick Spens' by an anonymous writer.

Tshindane in his 'Zwa Vhutshilo' has written a narrative poem titled. 'Nwaha wa 1982'. In the poem, the speaker relates how evildoers started with their act of killing, how they were arrested, later to be released without having stood trial.

The poem is actually satirical in nature. M.J. Netshivhuyu in his 'Nyangala Mbuya' has written a poem, 'Zimbabwe' wherein the voice narrates how a bloody war for independence was fought and, again, how the war was won.

The poem reads as follows:

Wo kwingila malofha
Musi u mbonini ya maṭula
Wa fhedza nga u rindila
Ngau vhahali vhau
Vhu angaladza misevhe
Ngeno gulu dzi tshi fhanza mitumbu
Vha fhalala sa thunzi
Zwa sia iwe wo zwimbelwa
Nga yone mitumbu na vhugubugubu. .112)

'You became unfeeling
When war has dawned
Ultimately you became unfeeling
For your warriors
Had stretched out their arrows.
While bullets pierced through human bodies
And they died like flies
To leave you astounded
When you witness corpses and blood'

In this narrative poem, the image of malofha 'blood' implies life and death, a salvation to a new era.

4.02.2 DESCRIPTIVE POETRY

In descriptive poetry, the concern lies on the **object as meaning** and not on the **action as meaning** as is the case with narrative poetry. .113)

112) M.J. Netshivhuyu : Nyangala mbuya P. 30

113) Brooks, Purser : An Approach to Literature. Fifth
and Warren Edition, P. 352.

The following poem by Netshivhuyu is an example of a descriptive poem.

Mvuvhelo dza mushavhi
Ndi dzangamakolo!
Hovhu vhutsila he wa puta
Nalani dzi si na u nengwa
Lone vumba mbumbo yau
Uri li vhe vhutshilo hau
Ndi tshiga tsha khuliso!

Wo bva nga mahwevha
Khathihi na thama dzau
Dzi funaho vumba sa iwe
Uri vhushavhi vhu ye phanda
Ni kone u fusha thumbu
Nga vhushavhimvuvhelo

Luṭandala lwe na hira
Na dzula ntha ne tenya
Ni tshi ya kha vha funaho

Madi a kulaho mano
Musi o dzangelwa
Mvuvheloni dzenedzi
Lwo ni sia mbitini

Lwo tshinya vhugaladakalo
Vhunga lwo mbo di photho!
Ha kundwa na makengevheḁa
Livhuwani no tshila
Zwanda a zwi mahatsi 114)

114) Netshivhuyu : Lupfumo lwa Muvenda. P. 10.

The earthenware of the traders
Is a beauty at its best
Your hands hold real art
The earth which you made use of in your art
Is a fountain of your human pride.

You go out early in the morning
With all your friends
That love earthenware like you do
So that business should flourish
That you fill your stomach to satisfaction
Through your earthenware trading.

The truck which you hired
And took a seat on
Heading for all thirsting
For ice-cold water
In the very earthenware
Has left you in bitterness

It has destroyed all the goodness of art
For it has overturned and destroyed all
earthenware.

Not a single remnant was in sight
Be thankful that you have survived
For your hands may produce yet more.

The image of earthenware in this poem suggests beauty and the fullness of life. The image of a hired truck brings the idea of evil tendencies that are destructive of all good. The earthenware is shown as something of much value, which is used in holding cold water. Water as an image, implies in this instance, a sense of appeasement, renewal and life.

'Vhunga lwo mbo di phoṭho!
Ha kundwa na makengevheḁa' shows the fruitlessness of all human effort. It also gives the idea of the ebullience of all the good qualities in this temporal existence. The last line, 'Zwanḁa a zwi na hatsi' kindles a sense of hopefulness and serves to soothe all the suffering caused by inner loss, anguish, and the crippling of the psyche.

Descriptive poetry in English is represented by some of the poems of William Blake, such as 'The lamb' which depicts innocence. Percy Bysshe Shelley's 'Ode to the West wind' falls within this category. Other poems are 'To Autumn' by John Keats which shows fullness and richness of late summer giving way to the barrenness of late autumn.

In Venda, other descriptive poems are: 'Miḁi ya Matongoni' from 'Ntivhiseni Khulo' by M.J. Netshivhuyu. T.R. Ratshitanga's 'Venda la Mulovha. Sigwavhulimu's 'A thi vha di' which deals with life and death. E.S. Madima's 'Tshifhefho' seems to echo Keats in his 'To Autumn' when he describes the fullness and richness of autumn.

Ndo swika nḁe ndi a ambiwa
Ndi mueni a endaho o hwala
Tshikoli, maranga, mphwe - tsee
Nga vha nthule ndi khou lemelwa
Ndi a swielelwa ndi bva kule.

'I have arrived (Autumn)
I am a visitor who has carried to
overflowing
Mealies, pumpkins and sugar-canes
Help! for the load is heavy
Come to my rescue, for I come from far'

Madima shows Autumn as a period of fruitfulness.
'Tshikoli, maranga, mphwe-' reveals joyfulness and
facundity in life.

4.02.3 LOVE

Most modern Venda poets express the theme of love. This has been a noticeable shift from the traditional poetry which hardly makes an expression of love. The appreciation of a woman or a girl as a flower, has become an experience borrowed from western poetry. Traditionally, a boy and a girl would play together. The boy would hold a girl by the breast without bursting into utterances glorifying her as a demi-goddess. The idea of 'love' and the regard for it have been characteristic of western thought. Having discarded the traditional spirit, Venda poets have come to implant this 'new concept' in their poetry. To them, love is to be regarded as an unfolding, and a life enhancing, experience.

The following poem by Maumela illustrates the point.

Nyanenge Wanga

Nyanenge wanga! He wa ya nga tshanda a hu kwamei
Na ipfi lau ndo li pfa madekwe ndo bonya
Nda karuwa ndi si u vhone ndo fhelelwa
Nda bonya nda pfa tshiseo tshau u difha
Nda tingatinga ndo tulutshelwa zwa mulovha
Yawee, wo mpfungela tshituvho pfamoni
Wo nnyanula khavhu dza nyelelwo nyitoni

Maḍautsha ndo u pfa u tshi femeleka
Nda vhidzelela ipfi la wela thumbuni
Wa bevelela wo fuka nguvho dzila

Wa mmbona wa mpha tshitiko kule
Nda gidima ndi si u fare wo ima
Yawee, u ntambudzelani ndo xeelwa sa zwenezwi
Nyanenge wanga, he wa ya a si n̄e ndo u rumaho

Dovha u vhuye-ha na vhutswu namusi
He wa vhuvha ndi fhethu-de hu sa divhei
He wa ya ndi shango-de li sa vhuyi muthu
O u thubaho u ngafhi-ha ndi luvhelele
A bvumele ndi tuswe misho ya lufunotshiphiri
Yawee! Yawee! Ndo neta nyanenge wanga
Nga ngelekanyo dzisili dzi sukaho mutakalo.

Tavhanya-ha zwino ndo u lindela fhano
Ipfa na khuhu dzi vho renda mutsho
Vhulalo hanga sedza ho kama nga ndodzi
Disumbedze ha n̄e ntsengenedze mbilu
Sedza vhubvavhva mapfuvhi a vho sendela
Yawee, vhone, divha lo tsha ndo zwimbisa mato
Nyanenge wanga, bono lingafha li nthuma dindini. 115)

'My dear love, I cannot reach your destination
Having closed my eyes, I heard your voice last
night
I woke up only to find nothingness.
I closed my eyes and heard your lovely laughter
With perplexity I longed for the yesterdays
Oh! you have struck a sense of longing in my heart
You have kindled the fire of thoughtfulness.

115) E.T. Maumela : Mutakadzi. P. 5.

At dawn I heard your breathing
I called until I could no more
You emerged with lovely attire
I ran for you, yet I could hardly reach you
You ignored me
Oh! Why do you torment me like this
My love, I am not responsible for your
departure.

Come again at dark today
Where have you hidden yourself
Tell me who has snatched you that I beg him
That the stirrings of love may ease
Oh! Oh! I am tired my love.
For my soul is ever in torment.

Hurry, I am waiting for you
Listen, the cock crows for dawn
Look at my pillow, it is wet with tears
Look eastward, it has become dawn
Oh! look, the sun rises amidst tearful eye
My love, such a torment leads me to the grave.'

The poem is about a lover whose soul is in the abyss. The speaker has lost his beloved, and seemingly through death. Despite the beloved's absence, the speaker is able to relive all those happy moments when they were still in love. The good memory is tarnished by the absence of the beloved.

The image of 'maḍautsha (dawn) seems to carry a sense of hopefulness. This image is contrasted with that of 'vhutswu' (darkness) which destroys the seed of hope in the speaker. The exclamations, 'Yawee! Yawee!' imply a soul in disintegration.

The crowing of the cock in the last stanza suggests the emergence of a new life. The image of tears with swollen eyes destroys the hope of a rebirth. The line, 'Nyanenge wanga, bono lingafha li nthuma dindini' shows the continuous torment of the soul.

Sigwavhulimu's poem on love is as follows:

Tshivhumbeo tshau na tshanga
Kha zwi tangane zwi vhe tshithihi
Mihumbulo yashu kha i tangane
I vhe muthihi i bebe, i sike ngoho
Ri humbule tshithu tshithihi
Tanzhe la thalukanyo - mbumbwa
Ri ḁo kona u bula tshibulebule
Ri ḁo kona u rengulula khube
Ri ḁo kona u vhona vhusendekamisi
Ri ḁo kona u vhona zwi re murahu
ha tshedza
Hayani ha ngoho, hayani ha swiswi
Murahu ha shango, murahu ha litḁulu

Lufuno lwau na lwanga a si lwa nama
Zwashu ndi mbofho-pfundo musika
Mbumbano yashu a si ya shango
Ne na iwe ra takadzwa nga zwa nama
Ra takadzwa nga zwa shango
Ri ḁo nga dzuvha line u pfa ḁuvha
La puta la shona la fa. 116)

116) Sigwavhulimu : Tsiko Tshiphiri. P. 46

'Your being and mine
Let them merge into an entity
Let our thoughts be one
That it be one and create truth
That we think in oneness
That we unravel the mystery.

That we go beyond the land of distant
horizon.
That we see beyond light
The source of light, the source of evil
Beyond temporal existence, beyond heaven.

Your love and mine are not of flesh
Ours is a real bond
Our oneness is not of temporal existence
Our love finds temporal realization
We will be like a flower
That never withers despite sweltering heat.

Tshindane's poem 'Ndi funa inwi fhedzi' has been written in
an ordinary prosaic form.

Thi na maipfi a u talutshedza
Thi na zwiito zwa u sumbedza
Thi na vhutolo ha u kholwisa
Ndi a ni funa.

Thi funi zwimangadzo zwa u takadza
Thi tami vhutali ha u akhamadza
Thi lavheleli vhutolo ha u tshuwisa
Ndi funa inwi fhedzi 117)

117) Tshindane Mashuwa : Zwa Vhutshilo. P. 3

'I do not have words to explain my love
I do not have actions to show my love
I do not have magic to convince you
I love you.

I do not need miracles to please you
I do not need wisdom to astound you
I do not need magic to frighten you
I love you'

The style of the poem is too simple. The words used lack imagery that may evoke feeling. The expression, 'Thi lavheleli vhutolo ha u tshuwisa' (I do not need magic to frighten you) sounds misplaced since one would not beg for love in terms of fear.

A comparison between Tshindane and Sigwavhulimu's poetry reveals a remarkable difference. Sigwavhulimu's poetry expresses rich imagery. His poem on love is not a mere juggling with words as is Tshindane's, but a poem in the true sense of the word.

Sigwavhulimu's depiction of love in his poem is as something beyond temporal existence. His love suggests a union of heart and mind. The love in question should be able to unravel mystery. The images of 'vhusendekamisi', 'muruha ha tshedza', 'muruha ha shango', 'muruha ha litadulu' reveal the transcendental nature of Sigwavhulimu's love. The true nature of love he is talking is Godly. For the lovers to reach the true nature of love implies the shedding of the temporal sheath (Lufuno lwashu a si lwa nama) and the attainment of the ultimate good, which suggests Godliness. Such a state is out of reach or unattainable.

The symbol of an undying flower'--dzuvha line u pfa ḍuvha
la puta la shona u fa' connotes the unceasing and perennial
nature of love.

Kha dzuvha (E.T. Maumela)

Ndi amba iwe dzuvha
U fhira hau sa a tovholwaho
Na itofulu u ruma mapfuvhi
Vhonai
Li tshe na lwendo u tavha-vho
Dzulai, ndi a humbela, dzulai

'Oh! flowe
You pass (die) unexpectedly
As if haunted
Look
You still have the right to exist
Stay, I beg, stay.'

The Sick Rose (William Blake)

O Rose, thou art sick
The invinsible worm
That flies in the night
In the howling storm

Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy.
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy 118)

118) J.G. Brown : Verse for You. Book Three. P. 26.

E.T. Maumela's love poem 'Kha dzuvha' (To a flower) betrays lack of authenticity since it resembles in both form and spirit that of William Blake which is titled, 'The Sick Rose'. In the original poem 'The Sick Rose' Blake laments the flow of human innocence. Maumela's flower (dzuvha) is exposed to the same harsh realities as that of Blake. One may suggest that Maumela's flower is a carbon-copy of Blake's 'Sick Rose', and that both show the loss of innocence through the experience of all human kind.

4.02.4 RELIGION

There are a number of poems that deal with religion. Such poems reveal the image of a soul anxiously working out its salvation. In most cases, the poems oscillate between faith in the mercy of God through Christ, and a feeling of personal worthlessness that is very near to despair.

We may illustrate this by citing the following:

KHUMBELO KHA YEHOVA

Yehova! Iwe Yehova
Ri sikele vhuthu vhu sa tshili
Vhuthu vhu sa fi

Ri sikele maṭo a sa vhoni
Maṭo a sa kombodzali
Maṭo a sa pofuli

Ri sikele nḁevhe dzi sa pfi
Nḁevhe dzi sa dzingi

Ri sikulule Yehova
Ri si tshile
Ri tshile ri muhumbulo 119)

'Lord! Oh Lord
If you could create for us an
unending humanity
Humanity that never ceases.

If you could create eyes that see not
Eyes that wink not
Eyes that are never blind

If you could recreate us
That we live not
But live in thoughtfulness'

In this poem the speaker realises the shortcomings of human nature. He notes the sinfulness of man. Hence a request for spiritual eyes (Mato a sa vhoni, ma_Ato a sa kombodzali, ma_Ato a sa pofuli)

The lines: Ri sikulule
Ri si tshile
Ri tshile ri muhumbulo' show a longing for a rebirth into a spiritual life. The poem has the ring of a living voice, admonishing his soul, expostulating with his Maker, defying death and pouring itself out in supplication.

In the poem, one realises that the speaker does not bear a sombre mood, dejection and hopelessness. Instead, he has a sense of hope and the possible redemption of human nature through God's grace.

119) Sigwavhulimu : Mirunzi ya Vhuvha. P. 7.

One may say that in Sigwavhulimu's poem, a habit of mind is realised which has been shaped by the practice of systematic self - examination and he thinks more in terms of sins, failure and redemption than in terms of general and total worthlessness and hopelessness. The line, 'Ri tshile ri muhumbulo' implies being cleansed and a return to an angelic state of being.

Modern Venda poets hardly reflect on the traditional religion in their poetry. This could be understood in the light of their immersion in a new religion which is Christianity. Their approach to religion is similar to that of their western counterparts. For example, the metaphysical poets such as Donne, Herbert, Vaughan and Crashaw, although they make use of metaphysical conceits, reflect much on the religious aspects in their poetry. Religion also dominates the poetry of Richard Crashaw and Henry Vaughan. Crashaw was Catholic, a lover of the baroque, the fantastic, the stylised, and his poems often carry their conceits beyond the reader's threshold of acceptance' 120)

4.02.5 DEATH

An analysis of poetry on death brings to light the regard of death as a phenomenon that conquers only the body and not the soul. The lowering of the wooden box into the grave does not mean the end of it all. The decay of humanness suggests a return to the spiritual world. Venda poets do not regard death as the casting away of the body - without the redemption of the soul.

120) Robert Barnard : A Short History of English Literature. P. 43.

In the poem 'Lufu' Tshindane compares man with a flower that withers in a moment.

Muthu u nga dzuvha, u pembela zwino
E khathihi fhedzi levhu, ho da lufu 121)

'Man is like a flower, that is short-lived
He withers, the realization of death'

The symbol of a flower implies the tenderness of human life. Tshindane views death as a phenomenon that cuts life short.

U tomola vhatete vha tsha di mwemwela.
Wa sia magosha a tshi teta 'draws our attention to the
frightful nature of death.

Sigwavhulimu in his poem 'Lufu' regards death as the culmination of everything. He also views death in terms of its enfolding power.

Lufu ndi fulu
Ndi phedzo ya zwinzhi

'Death has enfolding power
It is the culmination of everything'

The following lines have just been written for alliterative purpose.

Lufu lu fulu
Fulu lu lufu
Fulu la zwi faho lufu ndi fulu.

121) Tshindane : Mutambo wa Muhumbulo. P. 7.

These lines are alliterative, yet devoid of imagery.

Ligege views death in terms of ultimate rest.

Diawetshela zwau Mukwevho
Zwose zwa lino wo diphethela 122)

'Take a rest Mukwevho
You have reached self-fulfilment'

Most of the poems in Venda portray death as a powerful phenomenon. Fortunately, the human soul transcends death. Those who take a traditionalist approach regard death as a bridge that joins the dead with their ancestors.

4.02.6 MAN AND NATURE (AESTHETICS)

Poetry on man and nature reveals a sense of correspondence between the beautiful forms of nature and poets' sense of inner calm. Traditionally, the Venda praiser would praise human achievement, animals and inanimate objects for their value to the family or community. The modern Venda poet does not view, say, nature in terms of traditional praising, but as a source of wonder that instils an inner calm in man. He sees nature in the same light as the Romantic poets such as Wordsworth do. To them, nature was the source of mental cleanliness and spiritual understanding. It was also regarded as a stepping stone between man and God.

122.) N.N. Ligege : Dziedzi. P. 45.

Natural grandeur was not now a question
of prospects, it was an image of God
more glorious than anything Michelangelo
could produce. 123)

We may consider one or two poems on nature. 'Thavha
dza Venda' is one of them by M.J. Netshivhuyu

Dzo aḁamela
Dzo nzwinzwimala
Dzo kikinisa mirunzi
Uri hu swifhalele
Venda li setshelele

Lunako lwadzo
Maḁakani adzo
Ndi vhuphememe
Ho gagadelaho musuku
Vhurena ha Venda 124)

'Mountains have emerged
In their raiment of green
To add to the beauty of Venda

In the forests
A touch of goodliness
A touch of gold
The goodliness of Venda!

123) Barnard : A short History of English
Literature. P. 83

124) Netshivhuyu : Lupfumo lwa Muvenda. P. 50.

The poem depicts on the beauty of Venda. Through this spirit-uplifting beauty, the speaker realises the presence of a closer bond between man and God. His use of the word 'Vhurena' (Kingliness) suggests this. Unfortunately, the image of gold (musuku) and that of green seem not to tally. The raiment of green may not be realised in gold. This may be regarded as the misplacement of an image.

The following is a stanza from Tshindane's 'Venda langa'. The stanza shows the loveliness of the natural scenery in Venda.

Shango la maḍaka na matavha a u naka
Hune milambo ya elela i sa xi ṅwaha wothe
Shango line ra lima a vhibva miṅwaha
ya tevhekana
Naho wa vha wa gomelelo vha faho vha
tou vhaliwa
Wo ntonda nga zwimangadzo iwe Venda langa. 125)

'A country of lovely forests and mountains
Where rivers flow perennially
A country full of fruitfulness
A country hardly beset by drought
You have been decorated lovingly'

Tshindane conveys a sense of wonder and exaltation at the loveliness of nature. To him, nature does not only offer beauty but fruitfulness. Although he shows wonder at the beauty of nature his exaltation of spirit does not equal that of S.T. Coleridge in his 'Kubla Khan' which suggests a false facade of natural paradise with its deep romantic chasm.

125) Tshindane : Zwa Vhutshilo. P. 11.

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
 A stately pleasure - dome decree
 Where Alph, the scared river, ran
 Through caverns measureless to man
 Down to a sunless sea
 So twice five miles of fertile ground
 With walls and towers were girdled round
 And here where gardens bright with
 sinuous rills
 Where blossomed many an incense -
 bearing tree
 And here were forests ancient as the hills
 Enfolding sunnyspots of greenery. 126)

4.02.7 SOCIAL INTERACTION AND THE PAIN OF EXISTENCE.

There are a number of poems that reflect on social interaction and the painfulness of existence. Such poems expose both the harsher nature of reality and a longing for the state of happiness.

In the poem 'Goni' (a hawk) Madadzhe (1985: 10) portrays the goodness of nature and the loss of goodness through social interaction.

Lone lo thothonywa lo naka
 Mithenga yalo i tshi penya sa duvha
 Milenzhe yalo i mitshenatshena
 Phapha dzalo dzi tshi nga thovho

125) Brown : Verse for you. Book Three. P. 26.

Khukhwana dza li vhona ndi nyofho
-- Khalo u batekedza ndi ndivho
Midavhini thavhi - thavhi yo fa 127)

'It was hatched in beauty
Its feathers radiating like the sun
Its claws being white
And the wings being wide as a mat

Chickens run in fear
For its objective is to snatch
Chickens have withdrawn in fear.'

In the first stanza, 'goni' stands for innocence and goodliness. The innocence is suggested by 'penya sa duvha' which means radiating like the sun. The image of 'white' (mitshenatshena) buttresses the sense of innocence which 'goni' is born with. Although 'goni' possesses good qualities, the weakness of nature is inherent in it. Goni is a symbol that may represent man who is born in sin. He is a social being whose social interaction brings pain to the lives of other people. 'Zwikukwana' may imply those suffering because of human interaction. The expression 'thavhi-thavhi yo fa' suggests the feeling of happiness.

In 'A ri tsha tshila' the poet attributes the poverty of human existence to social interaction.

127) R.N. Maḡadzhe : Khonani Yanga. P. 10

Ro oma sa lutanda
Murini u tshilaho
U tshila hula hashu
A hu tsha tshila na luthihi

Maṭari ala ashu
Vhudalani hao
O mbumburea othe
Muri u kha ṭhoni
Dza bunyuni lawo

'We have become dry like a spar of wood
On a living tree
Our existence
Has come to an end

All our leaves
In their greenness
Have fallen down
The tree is in shame
At its nakedness.'

In this poem, the speaker compares temporal life with 'a spar of dry wood on a living tree.' The dryness of the wood shows that man's sense of triumphant vigour is short-lived. God alone, who is represented by the living tree, (Murini u tshilaho) retains the ultimate goodness. The loss of goodness in man is realised through social interaction. This loss suggest the pointlessness and the poignancy of man's destructin of his own kind.

'Maṭari ala ashu
Vhudalani hao

O mbumburea othe
Muri u kha thoni
Dza bunyuni lawo

The images of 'matari', 'vhudalani' and 'bunyuni' imply beauty and destruction. 'Dza bunyuni lawo' suggests that every human being is naked, and in his nakedness he is bestial and bends his purposes to mutilate and destroy his fellowman.

In 'Mitodzi - vhuthu' Sigwavhulimu gives images of humanity in everlasting pain and loss of happiness.

Mitodzi i tsenga matoni
Yo ita zwitivha zwa zwikamba
Zwi kombodzaho ito- vhuthu

Mitodzi ya vhuthu yo nembelela
Sa matavhi a munengeledzi
Yo fulela tsinde-vhuthu 128)

'Tears well in the eyes
Creating lakes of tears
which obscure the eye of humanity

Tears of humanity have drooped
Like munengeledzi branches
Having carried humanity.'

128) Sigwavhulimu : Mirunzi ya Vhuvha. P. 16.

4.02.8 HOPELESSNESS

There are poems that deal with the sense of hopelessness. This could mean that the persona no longer sees value in human existence. To him, life has lost meaning. The following is a poem that reveals a sense of hopelessness.

'Kha ndi moḁe, ndi pute, ndi ome.

(Let me drop like a leaf, to wither and to dry up)

Ndo tshila vhutshilo hanga
Ndi muswa, fhedzi thi swaswi
Kha ndi femeleke ndi tḥoḥeḥe
Kana ndi vhe lupwere ndi elele
Ndi vhe luḁi ndi ḁimuwe
Vhutshilo vhu nenge zwi ye na vhusula
Vha ha nḁe vha vuḁe vha dzwigimedze
Ngwangwangwamutumbu maamba liḁhedzi kule
A si zwavho mutumbu ho ḁala nḁe
Ndi nga ni bulelani ni muthu sa nḁe?
A ri fani ri funana ro tḁangana
Ndi vhutshilo ri vhengana ro dzulelana

Shango li phamasa dzikhwese madendele
Muthu a guludana li tshi mu gadela fhasi
La mu ganyekanya a ganama o gunea
A raha-raha li tshi mu tsonyedzela mavuni
Zwe tsalandanda! He ḁo! He dzokoto!
Mufemo wo tshinyala! Murunzi wo ngalangala 129)

129) Maumela : Mutakadzi. P. 6.

'I have lived my life
Being young, yet now I am serious
Let me disappear
That I be a liquid to flow
That I be a liquid to evaporate
My life to disappear
And my relatives to find contentment
Life has lost meaning

I have lost hope
What can I tell you?
Life is quite amazing
For it tramples upon man
To roll and face upward in helplessness
To be kicked and to be trampled upon the ground
Until he dies.'

The spirit of this poem resembles that of 'Vhutshilo hanga', written by Sigwavhulimu. The speaker realizes that the life he leads is full of emptiness. Sigwavhulimu's 'vhutshilo hanga' (My life) reflects on the emptiness of existence as well. The poem goes thus:

Vhutshilo hanga kha vhu xe
Kha vhu mbwandamele
Vhu ri dza-dza-dza
Vhu ye na muṭavha wa shango

'Let my life disappear
Let it melt
To disappear
To fade into the sand of this land.'

Both poems by Maumela and Sigwavhulimu share a common spirit of hopelessness. In both poems, the speakers would like to disappear and sever ties with this temporal existence.

In Maumela's poem, the metaphor, 'Shango li phamasa dzikhwese madendele' carries the tone of hopelessness. It also suggests that all human efforts are used without avail. Again, the metaphor, 'A raha-raha li tshi mu tsonyedzela mavuni' shows the harshness of living. The sense of hopelessness in Maumela's poem finds fulfilment in the persona's death.

4.02.9 TRUTHFULLNESS

Truthfullness is an aspect that pervades much of the Venda poetry as it must do in any true poetry. Some poems show a longing for truth, while others reveal man's short-comings in the realization of truth. Sigwavhulimu's poem, 'Vhutshilo hanga' exposes a despair that comes through man's short-comings in the realization of truth.

Ma^o anga kha swinge
Ha vhoni ngoho
N^{de}vehe dzanga kha dzi dzinge
A dzi pfi ngoho.

Vhuluvhi hanga kha vhu omele t^hohoni
A vhu humbuli ngoho
Lulimi lwanga kha lu t^uswe
A lu ambi ngoho
Gulokulo l^anga kha lⁱ tumulwe
A lⁱ ambi ngoho

Milenzhe yanga kha i fungwe
A i kandi ngohoni
Zwanda zwanga zwi gakhanywe
A zwi fari ngoho
Muvhili wanga kha u otshiwe
U swe u thuthube
U nyenge u thothele
U nyeliswe u shengedzwe
Nga u shaya ngoho

Muvhili wanga kha u vilinganywe
U tangane na zwa shango
Kha u vilinganywe
U vhe shango
U vhe ngoho
Muvhili wanga a u athu u vha muvhili
Muvhili wanga u shaya ngoho
Muvhili wanga ndi tshifanyiso tsha ngoho

Muvhili wanga kha u fe u tangane na
lwanzhe
U vhe magabelo
Muya wanga kha u fhufhe
U tangane na naledzi
U vhe naledzi
Kha u fhufhe u tangane na duvha
U vhe duvha
Kha u fhufhe u vhe tshedza tsha ngoho

Kha u fhufhe u dzhene tshinoni
Luimbo lwanga tshi imbe
Kha u fhufhe u dzhene muthu
A hangwe khangwa

Kha u vhe zwothe
Ngau ngoho ndi zwothe. 130)

'Let my eyes go blind
They don't see truth
Let my ears go deaf
They don't hear truth

Let my brain dry up in my head
They don't think truth
Let my tongue be removed from my mouth
It doesn't tell truth
Let my throat be cut
It doesn't tell truth

Let my legs be burnt
They don't tread upon truth
Let my hands be stamped
They don't hold truth
Let my body be burnt
To burn and to burst
To burn and to smoulder
To be tormented
Because of lack of truth

Let my body be mixed
To be mixed with worldliness
Let it be mixed
To become wordly
To become truth

130) Sigwavhulimu : Mirunzi ya Vhuvha. P. 11.

Let it fly and enter the bird
And let the bird sing my song
Let my soul fly and enter human beings
To forget all
Let it be all
For truth is everything'

The persona realizes that truth resides with God alone. He also admits that human beings, because of human nature, fail to attain truth. The attainment of truth suggests a transition from 'this world' to the 'other world'. For one to enter the other world, which is a spiritual world, implies the shedding off of the sheath of temporal existence. This could be the reason why the speaker exposes the worthlessness of the human body. He suggests that his body be burnt for it does not reflect truth. He realizes that the important organs of the body, the eyes, ears, hands, legs and tongue, do not contribute toward the attainment of truth.

Towards the end of the poem, the persona reveals the longing for a transcendental type of existence.

The image of 'tshinoni' (the bird) in the last stanza, should be viewed from the Biblical point of view. Biblically, the image of dove is symbolic of either peace or the Holy Spirit; and the Holy spirit is truth. The persona yearns to be like a dove, which suggests the attainment of the ultimate truth. According to the speaker, this 'tshinoni' is truth and truth is everything. The persona aspires to truth, and if he attains it, he will have attained everything. The attainment of truth implies the attainment of Godliness.

4.02.10 HUMAN NATURE

Concerning human nature, Lenake says of Ntsane, that he poses a number of searching philosophical questions, on human nature and the worth of the individual 131). Poems on human nature may show the fallibility of man in his own situatedness. The poem, 'A thi vha di' (I do not know them) shows vanity of human nature. The poem goes as follows:

Miduthani ya nndu dzi si na thanga
Thumbuni ya shango
Ho edelwa khofhe fulu
Khofhe-khofhe mbwandwa
Khofhe dzi sina nyamurale

Ndo fhira ndi tshi sedza
He edelaho muhali a tho ngo hu vhona
Ho awedzwaho tshilombe a tho ngo hu vhona
Ho ladzwaho nambi a tho ngo u vhona
Hu kudzwaho tshihole a tho ngo hu vhona
Zwine nda vhona ndi zwiulu zwavho

Vho edelaho zwaloni izwi a thi vha di
Vheani namba nne ndi vha divhe
Ndi divhe u vha kanzwa

Tshaloni tsha muhali ndi huvhe muhuvho
Ndi mu sevhedze nga shotha la malofha
Vheani namba ndi divhe haya ha tsiwana
Ndi i rendele ngosha ya vhisiwana

131) J.M. Lenake : The Poetry of K.E. Ntsane. Unisa,
Pretoria, 1983. P. 43.

Vheani namba mutumbani wa tshalo tsha tshilombe
Ndi ðivhe he tsha awela
Ndi tshi kanzwe nga ya vhulombo khuwa
I tshi dzikuse ndoroni dza tsiko

Vheani namba tshidzani tsha nambi
Ndi ðivhe khathudzo yayo
Ndi vheye mukosi saha-saha
I funge nambi nduni ya tshanduko
I karuwe i simesese

Matshelo ndi nne na inwi
Vhatodi vha do ri wana phanda
Nduni dza Matongoni

Vha tshi ri tevhela vha sedze namba
Vha sa wana namba vha ðivhe
Uri ndi hone ro hangwiwa tshothe

Mikanzwo ye vha hwala
Vha hase i liwe nga vhusunzi
Thendo dze vha khuba
Vha vhudzule dzi unge na muya. 132)

'Under the houses without roofs
In the belly of the earth
People have fallen into a deep sound sleep
A very deep sound sleep
Sleep without feeling

132) Sigwavhulimu : Tsiko- Tshiphiri. P. 25.

I passed and took a look
I have never seen where a brave man has slept
I have never seen where an orphan has slept
I have never seen where a dancer has slept
I have never seen where a singer has slept
I have never seen where a cripple has slept
What I have noticed are ant-hills
Those sleeping underneath are unknown to me
Put a label that I know them
That I know how to praise them

At the grave of a brave that I sing praises
To crown him with a drop of blood
Put a label that I know the home of an orphan
That I praise it in its own way

Put a label at the grave of a dancer
That I know where it lies
That I sing the praises
To raise him from the dreams of creation
That he goes about the world.

Put a label at the grave of a singer
That I praise him
That he wakes up to involve himself
in singing again.
Tomorrow is you and me
Seekers will find us
In the huts of 'Matongoni'

When they follow us
They should follow a label
Should they not see a label
They should realize that we have been forgotten

All that they have carried
Should be thrown away
To be devoured by the ants
The praises that they have
Should be blown away and disappear with the wind'

The poem reveals the insignificance of human efforts. Every human being tries to do that which he thinks best, so as to attain an acclaim from people. Unfortunately, death knows no boundaries, and it reduces all our efforts to nothing.

The persona realizes that without a label, all human efforts are worthless. The image of 'a grave' suggests the worthless nature of all human efforts. In a subtle way, the persona suggests that all human efforts are a mere attempts at self-fulfilment. Self-fulfilment implies the attainment of the ultimate good.

The poem, 'Tshinoni' shows the worthlessness of human nature again.

Wo oma, wo fhola
Ho swika khunyeleloni
Khunyeleloni ya dakalo
Khunyelelo ya zwililo

Dakalo le wa tshila
Vhutungu he wa vhu pfa
Zwo tanganywa tshithu tshithihi
Nga u oma hau tshikahlani
Lutanda lwe wa omela khalwo
Lu na afhio maanda
A u kunda tsho omisaho iwe

Yawee, Musiki wa Tshinoni
Mphe maanda a u tanganya
Dakalo na vhutungu ipfina
Uri ndi dzule ndo rindila
Duvha la khunyelelo li tshi swika

'You have become dry, you have become cold
You have reached your destination
The destination of joy
The destination of sorrow

The joy you have experienced
The pain you have felt
Have all become one
Through your untimely death
The branch that sucked away your life
What strength does it possess
To defeat that which sucked away your life

Oh! the Creator of a bird
Give me the strength
Of infusing joy and painfulness in word
That I become prepared
For the day to come'

The poem reveals the pettiness of human efforts. Man struggles to reach a certain objective, only to discover that all his efforts have shrunk into a grave.

The bird is associated with transcendental qualities, yet in this context, the bird is associated with human weakness. God becomes the only being that can redeem mankind. This is evident in,

'Yawee, Musiki wa Tshinoni,
Mphe maanda a u tanganya
Dakalo na vhutungu ipfina

Man in the ultimate end, realizes the omniscient nature of God. Man can only attain the ultimate good on the Day of Judgement. The poem suggests that man is ever becoming and that he can hardly find fulfilment until he throws his worthlessness on God.

4.02.11 SATIRE

According to Martin Gray satire is literature which exhibits or examines vice and folly, and makes them appear ridiculous or contemptible. Satire differs from the comic in having a purpose; it is directed at a person or a type, and it is usually morally censorious. It uses laughter to attack its objects, rather than for mere evocation of mirth or pleasure. 133)

Reaske regards satire as the technique of holding human views, follies, stupidities, up for contempt, normally with an idea of reform in mind. 134)

Satire makes use of literary devices such as irony, sarcasm etc. so as to expose and deride human weaknesses and these human weaknesses are made to appear as hideous as possible.

133) Gray : A Dictionary of Literary Terms. P. 182.

134) C.R. Reaske : How to analyse poetry. P. 40.

On Ntsane's satire, Lenake says:

Unlike the European satire which includes types such as parody where the work or works of certain authors are criticised, Ntsane's satire is based on an attack on individuals and institutions, and not their work. 135)

Lenake goes on to distinguish satire according to Melamu's categories. The first one being the invective type, which uses anger to expose folly, and the didactic and condemnatory type, which tries to mould a being by a kind of moral lesson as well as the light-hearted satire which while pointing to some real fault, laughs it off.

Under the invective type, Lenake reflects on poems that deal with pride, selfishness and inequality while under the didactic and condemnatory type he deals with hypocrisy. He cites Ntsane's poem titled 'Majakane' as reflective of hypocrisy. In the poem, 'Majakane' Christians are portrayed as people of double standards.

In the light-hearted satire, cowardice, false love and other aspects are revealed.

In Venda poetry, Tshindane is a poet who makes use of satire. In the poem, 'Ri vhakriste' (We are Christians). Tshindane satirises those Christians who claim to be Christians when they are actually wordly.

135) Lenake, Op cit; P. 67.

Nga Swondaha gerekeni ri a pfundulula ra ya
Banngani na vhanzhi ra dzula nga dakalo
Vhaimbi vha sima ra bvumela rothe ro takala
Rothe ri vhakriste musu ro kuvhangana

Vhafunzi vha bvelela rothe ra takala ri vhatihi
Manwalo vha vula vha tandavhudza ro thetshelesa
Vha u tendelela vha tshi tendelela vho dalelwa
Ri vhakriste rothe manwalo itali ro dela one

Vha dzithabelo vha dzi thoma ra mbo farwa nga muya
Hu si kale ra pfala ri tshi vho amba nga ndimi
Mudifho wa vhukriste ri tshi khou munedza sa notshi
Ri si mangale dzithabelo itali ro kuvhanganela
dzone.

Mishumo zwino i mini vhakriste vhangana?
Zwiito zwashu zwi fana na zwa nnyi vhatendi
Murena Yesu a vhuya zwino a nga huma na rine?
Kana ri do sala ro lavhelesana o tuwa a ri sia?

Milayoni ho nwalwa zwine ra tevhela naa?
He ra fhira hu sala phungo-de sa vhakriste
Vha ri vhoneho vha tamani tshi re kha rine
Izwi a si mahandana naa u amba ha Muhuweleli?

Kereke ya bva hashu vhukriste vhu sala henefho naa?
Mudzimu washu u naka nga Swondaha ro pfundulula
Nga Musumbuluwo ra mbo vhuvelela kha zwashu zwa
misi
Mugivhela u tshi swika ra vuledza ra lindela
Swondaha.

Ri shone ri sa do lovha na vhana zwa nga miswaswo
Vha no sala vha sala vha tshi guda nga rine
Zwa musadzi wa Loto a vho ngo zwi pfa naa nga
manwalo?

Vha tshi imba vhe o xedza vhutshilo nga u
mona-mona

Nga ri thanye-ha ri vuse maanda hu tshe na
tshifhinga

Ri shanduke nga nda na nga ngomu zwa vhukuma
Vha ri vhonaho vha sumbe vho vhona zwa ngoho
Ndi hone ri tshi do tonga nga u pfi vhakriste 136)

'We all go to church on Sunday
And take our seats on the pews
Singers sing and we respond gratefully
All of us being Christians

When the pastor emerges we all show joy
and oneness
The Bible is then read and preaching takes place
People showing much keen interest
All of us are Christians and have come for
the preaching.

Prayers are started and we get seized by the
spirit
And start talking in tongues
A sign of enjoying Christianity
We should not wonder at prayers, we have
all come for them

136) Tshindane : Zwa Vhutshilo. P. 10.

How are your behavioural patterns my fellow
Christians

How do our behavioural patterns look like?
If Christ were to come would He go back with us?
Or are we going to look at each other when He
shall have left.

Do we follow that which has been written in the
Bible?

Do we reveal our Christian nature all the time?
What do people say when they look at us
Are we not engaged in affairs of vanity.

We should watch that we are not destroyed
with our children
And become a lesson to others
Like Lots's wife

Let us be watchful while there is little time
That we reform from within
And serve as an example to others
Then we will be able to take pride in
being called Christians.'

In this poem, Tshindane ridicules those Christians who reveal double standards. They pretend to be Christians on Sunday at church, and immediately after church return to secularism. The expression, 'Mudzimu washu u naka nga Swondaha ro pfundulula' implies that Christians attach little significance to their God. Compared to non-Christians, Christians fall short of expectations. The non-Christians who are usually regarded as heathens, attach much importance to their 'vhadzimu'. Their 'vhadzimu' gain respect at all time. Tshindane warns the Christians

against their hypocrisy. He proposes that hypocrisy can lead to the annihilation of both Christians and their children.

Tshindane's satire resembles that of Ntsane in his 'Majakane' where he satirises the 'Majakane' for professing to be non-drinkers when they are in fact heavy drinkers.

Tshindane also satirises pastors and other respectable men who are found to have been involved in ritual murder. The belief behind ritual murder is that human flesh, mixed with certain herbs may enhance one's social standing and that it would make one's business flourish.

Tshindane ridicules those respectable people who commit ritual murder and are allowed to go unpunished. The satire is evident in the poem, 'Nwaha wa 1982' (The Year 1982)

Ni mini vha hashu phungo i tshi nambatela
vhahuluhulu
I kundwa ngani u ḡa kha nḡe malabi fhedzi ndi
sa dini?
Vhaḷa vha re ngei ya sia vho takala shango ḷi
si shone
Hone zwo thomafhi zwa u sokou amba na zwa
vhahulu
Matsina u vhonwa a zwi tsha vhonwa ha ro
bala u ambwa?

Hone ro shona na mikombo thovhela nga vha
vhu pfe
Zwi songo fanela vho namudze na vhondengese
vha ngafho

Ha, vhafunzi vhangá vha ṭahela zwa u ita
zwi songo fanela
Vha mbo ita zwi sa itwi na nga Saṭhane e
heleni yawe
Zwino senenga vha ḁo ṭamba ḁa bva nga
mini-ha?

Ri a livhuha tenda vho vhuya vha tshi tshila
Minwedzi ya murunzini na u ḁala a ri tsha amba
Ri takala nga u vhona vhe hone henefha na riṇe
Ndi ngoho vho tou zwifhelelwa nga maswina avho
Aredzi, Mudzimu ngoho u a i ḁivha nangwe a sa
ambi.

Ṭhoni dzi songo vha dina vho vhofohololwa nga
mulayo
Arali vhe vhathu zwine vha ḁo amba ndi zwinzhi
Vhone kha vha takale vha ṭongise u vhuya fhedzi
Masheleni avho kha vha ḁe vha shume maṇwe
matshelo.
Tenda vha sa hangwe mbuyeleli i a ḁa ndi ngoho.

'Why is it that such a blemish (rumour for
ritual murder) goes for the honourable
Why didn't it come to an ordinary person
like myself
And leave the honourable alone
Who started pointing a finger at the
honourable?
A person needs to witness the incident but
should not expose it.

We are shame-faced, let them suffer the
consequences of their actions
It is not befitting for the honourable to
be pointed a finger at
Oh! my dear pastor, was there nothing better
that you could do?
That you do even that which Satan cannot
do in his hell
How are you going to wash off this blemish.

We are thankful that you have come back alive
We are happy to see you in our midst
Indeed, you didn't commit ritual murder-your
enemies meant to spoil your names
Anyway, God alone knows the truth

Don't be shame-faced, you have been released
by the law
But people will have a lot do say
Be joyful and be proud of your release
And enjoy your money
But remember, once beaten, twice shy'

Tshindane feels that the issue of ritual murder should
revolve around a layman and not the honourable persons. It
becomes more of a shock to him to realise that even pastors
are involved in such horrid deeds. 'Vhafunzi' (pastors)
are supposed to be an embodiment of truth and goodness.
In this context, 'vhafunzi' are an embodiment of evil.

Tshindane also mocks at the way justice is meted out.
Justice is meted out with a sense of bias. The ritual
murderers are let off when they should have faced the
gallows. The social standing of the murderers has a

pardoning effect. Justice is as a matter of fact, no longer seen to be done. The expression, 'Ndi ngoho vho tou zwifhelwa nga maswina avho' is satirical. Ordinarily, it means that the pastors were arrested by mistake, but in this context, the statement suggests that justice is not being done.

The expression, 'Mudzimu ngoho u a i divha' (God knows the truth) implies that God alone is a being capable of meting out truthful judgement since man's sense of justice is tarnished by prejudice.

4.02.12 CONCLUSION

The previous chapter has reflected on modern poetry, which is a kind of poetry that bears the marks of Western European influence. In Venda, modern poetry first appeared in the form of hymnal songs. These became the yardstick for modern poetry. Poems were to be written according to certain patterns and techniques. Modern Venda poetry may be divided into two, that is, the modern Venda poetry with the influence of the traditional spirit and modern Venda poetry devoid of traditional spirit.

In modern poetry written in the traditional spirit, the spirit of praise is easily discernible. This spirit is evident in the following poems.

- (i) Vhumbedzi
- (ii) Ramaremisa
- (iii) Venda Tshilimo et cetera

In modern poetry without the traditional spirit, poets emulate and make use of western concepts of poetry, They shun and discard the spirit of tradition. Their poetry is characterized by a variety of themes. These could be:

- (i) Love
- (ii) Anxiety
- (iii) Anger
- (iv) Appreciation of natural beauty
- (v) Religion
- (vi) Human nature
- (vii) Frustration
- (viii) Satire et cetera

In all these poems, poets reveal their feeling according to the accepted norms of western poetry.

CHAPTER V

5.00 PROTEST POETRY

Venda poetry has witnessed a remarkable shift from the tendency to emulate the romantic-symbolist conventions of western poets. (where phenomena like flowers and other natural objects are described in adulatory terms) to a type of poetry that is suited to the poets' socio-political circumstances. Protest poetry may be regarded as a 'conscientizing' literature. It has come to be viewed as 'people's poetry', and it is a poetry which is anti-authoritarian and speaks against the oppression of the black man. This poetry cannot be confined to Venda only, but it characterizes most of the black poetry that has emerged in South Africa, today. The wave of protest literature by black writers started in the late 1960's and it began in the form of poetry.

The new black poetry, whose audience was at first predominantly white liberals, concentrated primarily on township life using stark imagery, blunt language, free forms, and its tones were those of nostalgia and betrayal, plaintive rather than aggressive. 137)

The emergence of the Black consciousness Movement in the mid 1970's instilled a spirit of militancy in black poetry in South Africa.

This type of poetry came to be regarded as Post-Sharpeville poetry, Township poetry, the New Black Poetry of the seventies, Participatory poetry and People's poetry as well as Soweto poetry. 138)

137) Encyclopaedia of World Literature. P. 290.

138) Michael Chapman : Soweto Poetry. P. 11.

Protest poetry puts emphasis on Blackness and it is easily distinguishable from the black South African poetry that preceded it. In this 'new' poetry, a Black man is viewed no longer as an inferior human being, but as one endowed with unlimited potentialities. This poetry has come to dominate the black intellectual climate. It is customarily associated with living in Soweto, although of late, it has become erroneous to restrict its influence to Soweto, since its spirit pervades Black Universities and homelands throughout the country.

5.01 Black Protest Poetry written in English

Black protest poetry has been written in English for the purpose of reaching a wider audience, although poets have begun to write in the African languages. Due to the sensitivity of the South African situation, and the very rigid screening machinery of the authority that controls Black education, most poets in African languages prefer to register their protest in a symbolic way. Most protest manuscripts have been rejected as risky by the authorities who associate the protest poet with the 'People's Struggle', for his poetry addresses itself to the ills of the Black People. Protest poetry is an art that speaks to people in terms of their feelings and ideas about the world. In other words, one may say that a protest poet is a being who finds himself immersed in an oppressive situation together with the oppressed. What he does is to awaken those in a sleeping stupor and to draw their attention to the pain and wickedness of oppression. Within his protest lies a vision of a new future. He is like a cock that crows at the break of a new dawn. He discovers for his people a new world within the old world.

Miriam Tlali in her In Search of Books says of authors who reflect on the lot of her people:-

My search for books by Mphahlele, Lewis Nkosi, La Guma, Brutus, Luthuli, Tabata, Mandela, Sobukwe and others was

fruitless because these were considered
an anathema by the authorities. I was frustrated.

--- they write because they are committed.

With them writing is a sacred mission, a dedication. 139)

They write without forsaking their grassroots, and they do so
with the meaningful awareness of what Frantz calls 'the Third
World perspective'

Meriam Tlali reveals that sense of dedication that characterizes
protest authors. She also shows how the authorities display their
high-handedness in trying to contain the 'People's Literature'. The
high-handedness of the authorities drives some authors to exile,
while others land in jail.

Unfortunately for the authorities, this does not succeed in
destroying the spirit of the authors.

Mphahlele regards the following authors, Richard Rive, Alex La
Guma, James Matthews, Alfred Hutchinson, Bessie Head as rebels
against a violent and oppressive regime.

He says :

Richard Rive, Alex La Guma, James Matthews,
Alfred Hutchison, Bessie Head, are among the
fiction writers who would fit into Redding's second
pattern, in which the black man is a rebel -
actual or potential.

Because he is dispossessed, is shown no justice.

139) Chapman : Soweto Poetry. (In Search of books : Meriam
Tladi) P. 44.

Among his own people are pressures arising from differences in shades of colour, (that is, among those who accept the appellation 'coloured') from fear of violence and the presence of it; poverty and crowded living quarters, and so on. Out there is white man's town or in here among the blacks during police patrols is another kind of violence. 140)

The Human Sciences Research Council Newsletter also views Alex La Guma, Dennis Brutus and others as protest writers who are strongly opposed to apartheid and various measures of control exercised by the state. The newsletter says that the English protest literature by black writers often finds expression in recitals and performances.

These include the so-called 'Soweto literatures' the Afrikaans literature of the Cape Flats written by Coloured writers, and overseas 'exile literature by expatriates such as Dennis Brutus, Alex La Guma and Mazizi Kunene. Most of these writers are strongly opposed to apartheid. 141)

Professor Bob Leshoai views protest literature in terms of the Black man's idea of regaining his real image which had been tarnished by the whites who hated and despised him. Leshoai again sees protest literature as a means of educating the

140) Ezekiel Mphahlele : The African Image. P. 234.

141) Human Sciences Research Council Newsletter. Literature in Contact, No 156, 1985. P. 15.

people about the problems of life. It serves as a means of awakening them to the ills that beset them. He proposes that this spirit of writing in protest against their lot emerged from younger writers, especially in Anglophone Africa, who took a new turn and rejected the type of writing that gave the image of Africa as a Utopia to Black man. Protest authors advocated a different approach to writing about Africa. This new approach was nothing other than the protest type of writing. On protest, Bob Leshoai borrows the words of Chinua Achebe when he says:

I believe it's impossible to write anything in Africa without some kind of commitment. Some kind of message, some kind of protest. Even those early novels that look like very gentle recreations of the past - what they were saying, in effect, was that we had a past. That was protest, because there were people who thought we didn't have a past. What we were doing was to say politely that we did - here it is. 142)

Leshoai maintains that most of the literature written by Blacks today is protest in nature. On those who write in African languages, he argues that most write for schools and therefore deal with non-controversial themes.

142) Bob Leshoai : Post - Independent Africa through the eyes of African Writers and poets. A paper read at: Africa Institute Conference 4 October 1985. P. 4.

Measured by the view here expressed, I would say that at present few authors in African languages write protest literature. In most cases, protest appears under the cloak of symbolism so as to evade censorship and rejection of the book or manuscript. Those who shun protest write on petty themes with the intention of securing the school market.

One would say again that their writing is geared for profit rather than writing with the intention of exposing and awakening the oppressed to the circumstances in which they find themselves.

Leshoai says of protest writers:-

Most of the poems by Black South Africans such as Mattera, Mothobi Mutloatse and many others express with anger against oppression. The following poem by Don Mattera entitled 'No time black man' is of this nature.

Stand Black man
Put that cap back
On your beaten head

Look him in the eye
Cold and blue
Like the devil's fire

Tell him enough
Three centuries is more
Than you take
Enough

Let him hear it
If he turns his face and
Sneers

Spit and tell him shit
It's all or nothing
He's got all
And you have nothing

Don't bargain with oppression
There's no time man
Just no more time
For the Black man
To fool around -- 143)

The poem reveals anger and militancy. The images of 'cold and blue eye' suggest the emptiness of warm interhuman relationship, while that of 'fire' implies destructive tendencies. The image of 'fire' again suggests zeal for a new life.

The following poem by Mafika Gwala, reveals a frantic explosion of anger and bitterness - which characterize protest poets.

I'm made to feel motherless, fatherless, shitless
Me with enough shit in my guts to blackshit
any officiated shit
Me wishing for a gun
When I know some pig will wish to collar me
for the 3 - Star knife I've bought at the shop
down the street 144)

143) Bob Leshoai : Op cit; P. 13.

144) Ursula A. : A Vision of Order. A study of South
Barnett African Literature in English (1914 -
1980) P. 65.

Some of Oswald Mtshali's poems show a total rejection of the new religion which is Christianity. He seems to have lost faith in a religion whose 'owners' have failed to make it appear acceptable to Blacks. It is a religion of double standards, where a person practises evil during the week and decides to be an angel on Sunday. It is again, the very same religion that has failed to give solace to the oppressed. This has made poets such as Mtshali to rise against it, for :-

---writers, think that their work can
and should have a message, that poetry
isn't simply the beauty of language, or of phrasing, but the
quality of the soul. 145)

The following is a poem by Mtshali in reaction against
Christianity.

My son!
there is no heaven
above the clouds
WHAT!
Yes, Heaven is in your heart

There is no hell burning
With sulphur and brimstone
WHAT!
Yes Hell is
the hate flickering
in your eyes 146)

-
- 145) Michael J.C. : Dem Say : Interview with Eight Nigerian
Barnett Writers. P. 7.
146) Chapman : Soweto Poetry. P. 71.

The poem suggests a sense of rejection in Christianity. The persona questions the validity of Christian teaching and he implies, although in a subtle way, that Christianity is surpassed by the traditional religion.

Ernest Emenyonu views protest in terms of colonialism and imperialism as they relate to the world of the black man 147)

From Emenyonu's viewpoint, Colonialism and imperialism have left Blacks with nothing of their own except anger and bitterness.

Mongane Wally Serote protests against the oppressive machinery because it has placed him in inextricable bondage. The poem 'Alexandra' exposes his bitterness.

--- Alexandra often I have cried
When I was thirsty my tongue tasted dust
Dust burning your nipples
I cry Alexandra when I am thirsty
Your breasts ooze the dirty waters
of your dongas
Waters diluted with the blood of my brothers
your children.
Who once chose dongas for death-beds
Do you love me Alexandra, or what are
you doing to me? 148)

147) Eldred Durosimi Jones : African Literature Today No. 5. P.1

148) Dr Beeton and S.G. : The Unisa anthology of English
Kossick poetry. P. 79.

'Alexandra what are you doing to me?'

In this poem, a lack of vitality is revealed. The image of 'hell' shows an antithesis of the ideal good. Through 'Alexandra' Serote establishes an association between the mother and the creative nature.

You are bloody cruel
Alexandra, hell

The line 'Alexandra what are you doing to me' suggests that Alexandra has killed his humanity. In fact, he addresses himself to oppression that has killed the essence of his existence.

Protest poetry, which Michael Chapman regards as 'Soweto poetry' is viewed with some trepidation by the South African authorities since they see it as an instrument of change. This is evident in the banning of the writings by Sepamla, Matthews, Mtshali and Madingoane's 'Africa my beginning' as well as the banning of writers associations like Medupe. Chapman sees this clamping down on such literary works as an acknowledgement of its dynamism as an instrument of change.

It is poetry which over the last ten years
has boldly taken a Eurocentric South African
Literary Establishment by the scruff of the
neck and dragged it into an arena robustly
and challengingly South African 149)

The following is a protest poem by Ingoapele Madingoane
1979 : 33) entitled : 'Africa my beginning'.

149) Chapman : Soweto Poetry. P. 23.

they came from the west
sailing to the east
with hatred and disease flowing
from their flesh
and a burden to harden our lives
they claimed to be friends
when they found us friendly
and when foreigner met foreigner
they fought for reign
exploiters of Africa
Africa my beginning
and Africa my ending.

they asked Mugabe
Unataka nini hapa
wewe mwenyewe
he said : binadamu zote
ni ndugu zake za africa
nimefika nirudishie
nchi zazimbwabwe
mimi ni mwenyewe
in
africa my beginning
and africa my ending

Azania here I come
from apartheid in tatters
in the land of sorrow
from that marathon bondage
the sharpeville massacre
the flames of soweto
I was born there
I will die there

in
africa my beginning
and africa my ending. 150)

Madingoane's poem 'Black trial' became part of the lives of hundreds of people. Unfortunately the poem did not live long, for the authorities banned it.

black child
nature's blunder
here I am
lost again
dumped here by hte creatures of hell
and left to rot
though worms don't even want me
for they have grown proud
and don't want to hear a thing
about my rotten state.

had I known the fruits of being
black as I am
I would have chosen to be human
so as to avoid the chains of this
black trail. 151)

Protest poetry has also made its way into Venda poetry as much as it has pervaded Black South African poetry in English.

The Black Consciousness Movement of the late sixties and the early seventies has had an effect on the tone of Venda poetry. The spirit of Black Consciousness found realization in the protest poetry of R F Ratshitanga. This movement was spread

150) Ingoapele Madingoane : Africa my beginning. P. 33.

151) Ibid; P. 1.

by black student organisations such as SASO (South African Students Organization) in black institutions such as the University of the North. They tried their utmost to make the Black community aware of its identity. Poets such as R F Ratshitanga were jolted into a Black awareness and they started to articulate and speak in new voices. Protest poetry speaks against the harsh conditions in which the black man lives.

'The white men is no longer seen as an all-powerful disembodied force, but as contemptible and pathetic.' 152)

5.02 Protest in Venda Poetry

In Venda as elsewhere a group of writers or artists like Medupe, Malopoets, Phanda - Ma - africa, Khauleza, Bayajula was formed. It came to be known as Guyo. It was composed of poets such as Nthambeleni Phalanndwa, Gundo Lidovho, Irene Mutsila and others. Their poetry was published in Staffrider, in both English and Venda and it revealed the plight of the Vh Venda. The group did not survive long, for it was soon suppressed by the Venda authorities. Nthambeleni Phalanndwa and Tshilidzi Ramovha had gone to the extent of going to Secondary Schools and Training Colleges to give poetry recitations. The recitations produced a certain sense of awareness in pupils and students. Pupils started to realize that poetry was a revelation of their lot. Again, the Venda authorities reduced poetry readers to silence. The following is a poem by Gundo Lidovho as it appears in Staffrider.

152) Barnett : A Vision of Order. A Study of Black South African Literature in English (1924-1980) P. 65.

Musadzi sokou dembelela
Gumbe la tsiko yau li do dzika
Ndi misi zwipuli zwau zwi tshi do ita
tsinga-ndedede nwedzini. 153)

'Woman have courage
Your suffering will come to an end
Your children will play joyfully in the moonlight'

Beside some protest poems that appeared in 'Staffrider' one may refer to protest that emerged in the form of choral and hymnal songs, for Ncgongwane regards hymns as creative work like any other. The hymns and choruses appeared in both Venda and English.

Let us take a look at the following chorus:

We shall overcome
We shall overcome
Oh! deep in my heart
I do believe
We shall overcome some day.

The chorus is a reaction to oppression. The 'line, 'Oh' deep in my heart' shows a deep-seated commitment to liberation on the part of the oppressed. But the expression 'some day' reveals a sense of uncertainty for the day of liberation.

If one were to take a look at the chorus, 'Give a thought to Africa', one would realize that an appeal is made to God, so that He be part of the liberation efforts. The chorus goes as follows:

153) Staffrider Nov/Dec 1979. P. 22.

Give a thought to Africa
Beneath the burning sun
Many people have passed away
Over land and sea
There are voices crying now
For the living God

The chorus suggests human suffering and war. Human weaknesses, compounded by vice, become responsible for war and the loss of human lives. The crying voices imply suffering and disenchantment, and God is seen as the only Being who can redeem the situation.

Some hymns, although extolling the majestic nature of God, do address themselves to the oppression and the suffering of all those who are oppressed.

Sa zwiḷa U tshi sema ḍumbu
Wa laya lwanzhe lwo sinyuwa
Zwivhumbwa zwoṭhe zwo u pfa
Na zwino ladza shango loṭhe
Hu fhele dzinndwa na phambano
Ri fhe mulalo wavhuḍi

Yesu wa vhuthu na vhuhwavho
Iḍa ha riṇe vhatshinyali
U vhonele u kha riṇe
U ḍivhonadze na khavho
Vha xelaho vha tshi u nyadza
Na vhone u vha tshidze-vho

U tshedza tshashu tsha vhutshilo
Pandela swiswi na tshinyalo
U anze vha u ḍivhaho

Uri khotsi na vhalanda vhothe
Vha luvhe iwe Muṅe wavho
Mulalo wau nga u de 154)

'Like the moment when you rebuked the storm
And commanded the sea to calm
All creation acknowledged your authority
Make it possible that peace reigns
That wars and conflicts come to an end
Give us peace

Jesus, full of mercy and humanity
Come to us the deprived
That you be seen in our midst
That you be seen by those
Who got lost
That You have saved them as well.

You are a light to our lives
Dispel darkness and destruction
That kings and followers
Should pay tribute to you
Let your peace reign'.

In the hymn, God is seen as a light that is juxtaposed to darkness, that causes human misery. 'Darkness' may be symbolic of the 'rulers of this world' whose rule is smudged with many weaknesses. The weaknesses find fulfilment in conflicts and wars.

154) P.E. Schwellnus : Nyimbo dza Vhatendi. P. 6.

The persona appeals to God, that He descends to the 'deprived'. The word 'deprived' could be suggestive of the oppressed. The speaker views God as a solution to human problems. He believes that God's intervention can alleviate the plight of those suffering under the yoke of oppression.

In the following hymn, 'swiswi' (darkness) stands for the forces of evil. As one goes through the hymn, one easily discerns an outcry against the destructive nature of darkness.

Swiswi livhi lo ntangaho
Mashango othe, na la Venda-vho
Li lozwa vhathu, na vha hashu, wee!
Vho lovha, vha sa lamulelwa, hee.

Ri si fhumele, ro zwi pfa
Ri khou zwi vhona uri vha a fa
Mukosi zwino kha u tavhiwe
Vha lovhaho kha vha phalalwe 155)

'Darkness has enclosed me
All the countries, including Venda
Are being destroyed by darkness
They perish, without one having come
to their rescue.

We should not keep quiet when we have heard it
We notice that people are dying
Let an outcry be made
So that the dying could be saved'.

155) Schwellnus : Nyimbo dza Vhatendi. P. 35.

From the Biblical point of view, 'darkness' represents the devil who destroys the lives of many people. 'Darkness' may also stand for the evil rulers who are found not in Venda alone, but in other countries as well. One may say that 'darkness' suggests repression in all those countries that deny people their human freedom. The image of death reveals the effect of repressive measures by an evil system. 'Mukosi zwino kha u ṭavhiwe' (Let an outcry be made against darkness) suggests intolerance on the part of the oppressed and implies challenging the repressive system.

The hymn, 'Vhuḷa vhusiku tsimuni' shows how much Jesus suffered in the hands of the rulers of this temporal existence. The oppressed may allude the suffering of Christ, as revealed by the hymn, to the suffering of their leaders in the hands of the rulers of our country.

Vhuḷa vhusiku tsimuni
Biko ḷi tshi nga malofha
Wo tenda vha tshi u vhofha
U fela vha lovhaho
Zwino kha vhathu ndi nnyi-ha
A ḍo u livhuhaho?

Vha tshi u isa tsengoni
Vhothe vha tshi u hwelela
U si na he wa ḍilwela
U fela vha lovhaho
Zwino kha vhathu ndi nnyi-ha
A ḍo u livhuhaho?

Vha tshi sengisa muvhuya
Vha u rwa vha tshi thathedza
Hothe he vha U sencedza
U fela vha lovhaho
Zwino kha vhathu ndi nnyi-ha
A ḍo u livhuhaho.

Vha tshi U goḁa vuhosi
Khare ya mipfa ṭhohoni
Wo p felwa mare maṭoni
U fela vha lovhaho
Zwino kha vhathu ndi nnyi-ha
A ḁo u livhuhaho?

Zwe vha u ita nḁilani
Wo ṇoka nge vha U hwesa
Thanda ya u lemelesa
U fela vha lovhaho
Zwino kha vhathu ndi nnyi-ha
A ḁo U livhuhaho?

Na zwiḁa vha tshi rumbula
Milenzhe yau na zwaṇḁa
Vha u ombela kha thanda
U fela vha lovhaho
Zwino kha vhathu ndi nnyi-ha
A ḁo U livhuhaho?

Ndi nnyi a no ḁo zwi bula
Zwa musu U tshi shengela
Wo ṭwiswa wo nembelela
U fela vha lovhaho
Zwino kha vhathu ndi nnyi-ha
A ḁo U livhuhaho? (Schwellnus, 1976 : 61)

'That night in the field
Sweat going like blood
You were agreeable when they arrested You
Laying down your life for those who are dying
Who will offer You thanks
Among mankind

They took You to court
Where they charged You
And You hardly defended yourself
Laying down your life for those who are dying
Who will offer You thanks
Among mankind

They persecuted the innocent One
Hitting You from all sides
Everywhere You endured the torture
Laying down your life for those who are dying
Who will offer You thanks
Among mankind

They scorned Your kingship
They spat in your eyes
Laying down your life for those who are dying
Who will offer You thanks
Among mankind

Even that time when they pierced
Through Your legs and hands
Nailing You onto the cross
Laying down your life for those who are dying
Who will offer You thanks
Among mankind

Who will tell
The suffering You were made to endure
Laying down your life for those who are dying
Who will offer You thanks
Among mankind'.

The oppressed would see as a link between the suffering of Christ and that of their leaders at the hands of the rulers of our country. Christ was persecuted and prosecuted for truth, and everywhere, he was made to endure torture for the truth he was proclaiming. The leadership of the oppressed is also made to suffer for truth as much as Christ did. Truth in this context, is a clarion-call for the liberation of the oppressed. The oppressed would like to see themselves as being free from the oppressive machinery of darkness.

In the hymn, the persona says that the leadership is tortured and prosecuted for the offence he has never committed. It shows that the rulers of 'darkness' will never tolerate any call for justice to reign.

It is known that Christ died at the hands of the rulers of this temporal world for having proclaimed the truth. One may discern a link between the death of Christ and the death of political detainees in the hands of our rulers. The oppressed regard the death of a political detainee as a sacrifice for them just as Christ had laid down his life for sinners. The death of a political leader (detainee) is taken in high esteem since he is regarded as an offering for the oppressed masses.

One may say that the hymns, being a work of art, do not address themselves to the spiritual world only, but the temporal as well. To the oppressed some hymns may be regarded as an embodiment and a reflection of their lot. Again, they may be seen to be performing a dual function, that of soothing their painfulness and a protest against the oppressive machinery of the rulers of an evil system.

Besides protest in some hymnal songs, one takes note of protest in the following poem by Nthambeleni Phalanndwa.

How do you feel
When your inside neighs and roars
and there is no permanganate
of potash to dissolve and drink
when life has to end
before it begins
and the accusing finger
keep shivering at a distance
tell me
how do you feel 156)

The line, 'when your inside neighs and roars' implies discontentment while the repetition of 'how do you feel' is suggestive of a sense of commitment to oppression. Ntuli regards protest poetry as committed poetry. He says that by committed poetry, one understands the works which are written with the aim of conveying strong convictions about some issue or situation.

When the poet exposes the evils of irregularities he notes around him, he wants to arouse in his readers a state of disquietude which will lead to some kind of reform. 157)

On committed art, Ntuli quotes Otomose who says that there is no art for art's sake. He says that there has to be commitment in any piece of art. Even when one writes for entertainment, to Otomose, that is commitment.

156) Staffrider Nov/Dec 1979. P. 22.

157) Ntuli : The Poetry of B.W. Vilakazi. P. 134.

On the other hand, Ntuli refers to Nnolim who says that committed literature has a way of dying a natural death, especially when the issues fought for are no longer current. This is a plausible view.

I would say that committed literature would die a natural death if its themes do not transcend pettiness. For committed literature to withstand the test of time, and to maintain its relevance, it should be imbued with a timeless quality.

In Venda, committed poetry is the poetry that handles on the lot of the Vhavana. Verschoor says that in protest poetry, the poet arouses 'feeling of distaste, indignation, scorn, contempt and even hatred for some state of affairs, some aspect of society in which he finds himself. 158) Sigwavhulimu, although not a protest poet, has one poem that exposes exploitation of man by man. The poem is entitled : 'Tshibalo'

Vhuraru havho vha tevhelana
Zwifhatuwo fhasi zwo lavhelesa
Vha tshi nga vha khou vhala
Ndaedza dzi re kha mavu
Vhone vhane vha a divha
Musii wadzo a ri di
Mbilu dzavho dzi na thwala
Murulelwa a vha mu di
Ndi muhwalo wa khanyo
Vha nga thadulwa nga nnyi

158) E.N.E. Verschoor : The Voice of Protest in English Poetry
P. 2.

Lungano lwe vha pfa kale
Lwa mapfene e a tika luwa
Khundu a dingina
A hu na hune vha nga lu dzhenisa
Kha n̄wambelo uyu.

Zwiambaro ndi malakanthana
Milenzhe ndi mahodzhane
Khedzi dza mbuvha dze vha pakata
Vhudi ndi vhufhio vhune dza nga sumba
Huufha na dzone dzo tambula
Dzo redza vhaṅe

Lwendo lwavho lwo lapfa
Thikhithi dze vha fara
Dzi vha sumba vhukovhela
Migodini mihulu ya musuku
Hone West Rand

Matshelo li tshaho
Daba li a rivhuwa
N̄wana u mamela lurumbu
Mulindini vha a fhelela
Ndi tshibalo tsha makanetana
Ndi matenda-dzonwa
Ndi kholomo dza mvulani

Vhakale vho amba
Muhoha muhulu a u na nama
Ndi pfarela u lila
Ndi thonga ya musudzungwane

Mbiluni dzavho ho nzwinzwimala
Makole matswu a tshauka

Tshirulu tshi si na kha^o
I kha^o ndi mutshinyalo
Wa sa fulela u a naiwa 159)

'They follow each other - the three of them
With faces looking down
As if reading
The message written on the ground
They themselves as readers know
The writer of the message is not known

Their hearts have a burden
They don't know where to shed it
It is the burden of existence
Who will help them?

The fable they heard long ago
Of the baboons that held a precipice
Until the waist went thin
Nobody can put this fable
In this context

Their clothing is in tatters
The feet are chapped
The bags that carry their provision
Show no sign of goodness
For they too have suffered
Like their owners

The journey they have taken
And the tickets they are holding
Lead them westward
In the gold-mines
West-Rand

159) Sigwavhulimu : Mirunzi ya Vhuvha. P. 14.

Tomorrow when the sun rises
All go in haste
In the gold-mine
This is 'tshibalo'
A work without remuneration

Elderly people have said:
'A thing of worth
May not be judged by its size'

Deep in their hearts
Bitterness is welling up
This bitterness will fall like rain
And those who caused it
will suffer the consequences of their actions'.

Sigwavhulimu in his 'Tshibalo' reacts against those employers who exploit their employees. The expressions : 'Khedzi dza mbuvha dze vha pakata. Vhuḁi ndi vhuḁio vhune dza nga sumba' suggest life devoid of meaning. 'The bags that carry provision' are made to reveal human suffering. They become an embodiment of all men who suffer the consequences of exploitation. The dirt and the loss of their original state implies the loss of humanity in mankind. The image of clothes being in tatters (zwiambaro ndi malakanthana) reveals the harshness of exploitative measures.

In 'Tshiḁuhu ndi vhuvhi' T R Ratshiḁanga registers protest against the evil rule. T R Ratshiḁanga, unlike his brother R F Ratshiḁanga is not a protest poet. In his book, 'Vhungoho na Vivho', the poem 'Tshiḁuhu ndi vhuvhi' has become the only poem that reflects on protest. T R Ratshiḁanga views the oppression as resulting from the pursuit of truth by the oppressed.

Vhungoho ndi tombo la tsiavhafu
Ndi hone luare lu tsheaho magumbe a muthu
Naho vhaambi vhaho phedzo vha tshi vha vhafu
Vhungoho vhu vhukhethwa, a vhu loshi vhuvhi ha vhathu

Murena wanga u amba e kha nne
O tungufhalela zwine vhathu vha ita
Ni itelani ngeno ni vho rengululwaho nga ene?
Tshaka dza vhuvemu na vhufhura

Iwe muvhusi wa tshituhu u itelani
Na iwe munnamudi wa luambo na tshibonda
Nna zwothe izwi zwi u vhuedzani?
Litsha vhathu vha khotsi, nge ene mune a vha londa

Kha vhothe phanda hawe ni vhatihi
A hu na mupfumi kana muhulu
Vhuhulu ndi nama dzanu, ngeno mimuya i mithihi
Mavemu na matsilu vho-inwi vhahulu

Shango lo sikelwa vhathu vhothe
Zwothe zwi femaho ndi zwa mbofholowo
Iwe muthanyi u tamelani u la u wothe?
Iwe wa ngelelo ntswu sa dongololo

Shango a si lanu, ndi la khotsi
Ni dishatelani matope ngeno no sikwa no kuna?
Yawee, Matsilu aya a tambulelaho vuhosi
Hone kha vho-inwi a do yaho tadulu a hu na. 160)

160) T.R. Ratshitanga : Vhungoho na Vivho. P. 15.

'Truth is like a rock
A razor that cuts tendrils of human nature
Although those pursuing truth meet an early death
Truth is holy and will never bow to evil

God speaks through me
Being touched by what human nature does
Why do you do that when you have been saved by Him
You are a society of murderers and deceivers

You, the ruler, why do you rule with tyranny?
What is it that you gain from that?
Leave God's people alone, for He cares for them

You are all equal before Him
There is no rich and poor before Him
Your greatness lies in flesh, not the spirit
For the spirit is similar

The land has been created for all
Everything that breathes should be free
The clever one tries to hoard and eat alone
You with a dark mind like a millipede

The land is not yours - it belongs to God
Why do you immerse yourselves in mud
When you were created clean?
Oh! You are fools that are ever suffering
Away, none of you will enter heaven'

T R Ratshītānga reacts against man-made barriers. To him, these barriers are responsible for conflicts and wars. He tells people to address themselves to truth. Truth is an embodiment of Godliness and goodliness. Again, truth is God himself. Ratshītānga believes that man-made barriers and conflicts may dissolve if men were to approach God in supplication.

The line, 'Murena u amba e kha n̄e' implies that the persona views himself as the mouthpiece of God. He actually becomes an extension of God who is displeased by human frailties.

The persona sees an unjust rule which breeds out tyranny. 'Litsha vhathu vha khotsi'. (Leave God's people alone) shows dissatisfaction about the rule of tyranny. The line suggests that God intervenes on the side of the oppressed. The speaker draws our attention to the aspect of equality. To him, everybody is equal before God.

Kha vhothe phanda hawe ni vhathini
A hu na mupfumi kana muhulu

These expressions imply that God does not approve of man-made barriers. Again, it shows that God does not take delight in the exploitation of man by man as well as the repression of human freedom.

The line, 'Shango lo sikelwa vhathu' (The land has been created for all) buttresses the idea that God loves all human beings equally. 'Zwothe zwi femaho ndi zwa mbofholowo' is an affirmation of human freedom as opposed to bondage in which he finds himself all the time. In the last stanza, the speaker reiterates the fact that the land belongs to God. This may suggest that no human being has the right to deny another his occupation and his tilling of the land.

The image of 'matope' (mud) reveals the weakness and the sinful nature of mankind.

The persona believes that those who oppress others will not enter the kingdom of God.

In 'Ntivhiseni khulo' Ntshivhuyu speaks of a crippled bird.
(Tshinoni tsho holefhalaho) One realizes that the symbol of
a 'crippled bird' stands for those human beings whose lives
have been made meaningless by those in authority.

A thi funi u u sedza
Heyi mbumbo tshinywa
Mukanzwo wa mbumbo tshila
Yo no holefhadzwaho
Nga muthu-tsilu
Wa vhuṭali tsilufhala

O u tekulaho iwe tshinoni
A kundwa u u fhirisa
Musi thotha yo dzhena
Uri iwe tshinoni
U si na mulandu nae
Nga mbilu yau tshena
U shaya thovhedzo

U vho kundwa u ḍigeda
Nga ṭhahalelelo ya kudenzhe
Kwe kwa pfi tumu!
Uri u tshi ralo u tumba
Nṭha ha thavhulo dzau
U kundwe ndinganelo

Vhuṭungu vhune wa pfa
Iwe tshinoni tsho holefhadzwaho
Ndi mupfa vhupfiwani hanga
Yone thogolelo mbiluni yanga
Hone uyu o u khaulaho
U pfa vhupfiwa vhuenedeni hawe naa? 161)

161) Ntshivhuyu : Ntivhiseni khulo. P. 34.

'I do not want to take a look at you
The marred creation
Which has been crippled
By man's selfishness

He who has struck you (the bird)
And failed to kill you
When you have hardly wronged him
Your patience could be the one
To blame

You lack a sense of comfort
Because of your crippled leg
Which has been cut
So that when you sit
On the branch of a tree
You may not be able to make it

The pain which you experience now
You, the cripple bird
Is a thorn in my feelings
Which pricks my heart
How does your enemy feel
When he has cut your leg off?

In this poem, the persona identifies himself with the crippled bird and the crippled bird in this context implies those who have been deprived of their humanity. The speaker believes that the deprivation of other people's sense of humanity comes from selfishness and foolhardiness. The 'deprivation' brings discomfort to the bird which stands for the oppressed. The deformity reveals what man can do to another so as to make life more unbearable. It also shows that man cannot be left on his own without inflicting harm and destruction on the loveliness of creation.

The speaker equates man's behavioural pattern with a thorn that keeps on pricking human nature. It is interesting to note that the deformity of the bird affects the speaker as well. To him, there is an affinity of feeling between the bird and himself. Actually, he sees himself as an extension of the bird. The thorn that pricks the heart of the bird is the very one that pricks his own. The line, 'U pfa vhapfiwa vhuenedi hawe naa?' reveals the inhumanity of the oppressor.

In a poem, 'Lunyonyu' Netshivhuyu comes out against those who sell others as Judas has done with Christ.

Ndo luŋwa nga iwe
Wa matshara-tshara
Na vhudenzhe vhulapfu
U tshi ntanzela malofha
Na o vhilaho
A si na vhutshilo

Wo zwimbisa nwananga
U tshi edza zwe wa ita nne
Musi wo vusa nwini-nwini
Ya u toda u tanzela
Vhutulu hau mivhilini yashu
U ri shengedza nga dali

Ri fukiswa nguvho
Ri sa funi
Ra phopha biko
Kha iwe hu makwandani
U tshi la uno
Wa tukisa nga ula

U vhone-ha khulo yau
I sa ḁo u isa khomboni
Hune phapha dzau dza ṭangana
Na wone mutumbu
Nḁi ralo nḁe mutuka
Nḁo u sinyutshela 162)

'I have been bitten by you (mosquito)
spitting blood into mine
Blood carrying disease
Blood devoid of life

You have tormented my child
As you have done to me
When you are busy with your music
That you spit
Your venom in our bloodstream
So as to torment us with Malaria

We are made to take and put on blankets
Against our will
We sweat
When you sing joyfully

Watch out, that your singing does not
lead you into trouble
Where your wings will be squashed
with your body
I say so
Being angry'.

162) Nḁetshivhuyḁ : Lupfumo lwa Muvendḁa. P. 40.

The mosquito is notorious for its bite and the Malaria disease it causes. But in this context, the mosquito suggests one who sells others. Such a person may be regarded as a spy. He is a person who feigns friendship while seeking information for the authorities. The persona seems to have taken note of such a person. According to the persona, such a person can only spit blood that will cause Malaria. 'Malaria' in this context may imply dentention and the torture that goes with it. The image of a blanket (we are made to put on a blanket against our will) may mean holding one's mouth when the spy arrives. In the last stanza, the persona issues a very stern warning against the mosquito; and the warning is that the mosquito will be crushed beyond recognition. The same applies to the spy.

In 'Phulu dzembeni' (The cattle on span), Ntshivhuyu (1984:36) reveals illtreatment and the suffering on the part of the oppressed.

Dzi kungunyala na danda
Dzi tshi kundwa u amba
Vhufungu vhune dza pfa
Musi lo phirimedzwa

Dzi randwa-randwa mitana
Sa dzi shayaho malofha
Ngeno o tou pha. 163)

'They pull the plough painfully
Without a word of complaint
The pain they feel when they pull the plough
is unbearable

163) Ntshivhuyu: Op cit; P. 36.

They are whipped
with whips
As if they have no feeling
When they actually have'.

The cattle pulling the plough represent the suffering of those that are under the yoke of oppression. The oppression is intense, yet the oppressed are made to accept the situation without complaining.

The speaker feels that the oppressed should be addressed as human beings with feelings. In other words, he wishes that the 'deprived' should feel that they are human and should enjoy a measure of individual freedom.

Tshindane Mashuwa reveals protest only in two poems found in his book entitled, Mutambo wa muhumbulo. This could have been due to the influence of the Black Consciousness Movement since he wrote them while he was still studying at the University of the North. Except for these two poems, Tshindane has not written other poems of protest. Since his return to the Venda homeland, his writings, reveal a great deal of pettiness and a startling degeneracy. This may be attributed to the effect of localization.

In his latest publication, Zwa Vhutshilo Tshindane's poetry becomes nothing other than mud-slinging. The poem 'A vha shoni ngani' (Are you not ashamed?) is suggestive of a personal conflict with a colleague in a work situation.

Munna muhulu a no nga vhone vho ralo afho
Wa vhuimo vhungafho vhu no nga havho henefho
Na dzina la u naka khole sa lavho sa zwenezwo
A vha shoni ngani vha tshi tou ralo vha sa aweli

A vha shoni ngani vha tshi amba vha songo tholwa
Ngoho vha tshi i divha vha pfani vha tshi ralo sa nowa
Vha tshi zwifha ngauralo hu masiari tshivhangalala
Vhusiku vha sa vhonwi tshoni dzo thivea zwi ngani?

Mbilu yavho a i vhavhi vha tshi dinzwifhelela
Nne mutshetshe vha nnyamba hani vhukati ha
madendele.

Mme anga vha zwi pfa vha a takala naa nga zwiito izwo
Avha shoni ngani vhe mungafho khotsi anga? 164)

'A big man like yourself
With a position like yours
With a name that appears beautiful
Are you not ashamed when you talk about me?

Are you not ashamed when you talk without an
invitation to do so?

Why do you behave like a snake?

When you tell lies at daytime

How is it at night when you are hardly seen

Do you get satisfaction out of lies?

Why do you tarnish my image before the greyheaded?

Do you think my mother will be satisfied with your
lies?

Are you not ashamed?

164) Tshindane : Zwa Vhutshilo. P. 6.

The poem is a mere talk that is devoid of imagery. The poem is too narrowly restricted to time and place. This type of poetry cannot stand the test of time. The other poems, 'Musi ro no tshaisa' (When we have knocked off) Ri vhakriste (Being Christians) and other poems expose a certain regression in Tshindane's poetry especially when this is seen against his first poetic flowering in his 'Mutambo wa Muhumbulo' which abounds with imagination and feeling.

Tshindane's recent poetry lacks a liberating vision, and fails to communicate as effectively as it formerly did. In his recent work the poet is both the speaker and the addressee. Such writings bear testimony to Professor Bob Leshoai when he says:-

Those who write in the African
languages mostly produce works for
use in the schools and therefore
deal with non-controversial themes 165)

Many Venda writers writes for the sake of instant cash returns. Their motivation is seated in money rather than in any compulsion to address Vhavenda to the ills that beset them.

With poets of low repute having fallen by the wayside, Vendaland is left with few voices that rise against oppression. The voices are the like of R F Ratshitanga. The poetry of this poet may be regarded as the sacred mission and a dedication. His poetry protests against the terrible conditions in which Vhavenda find themselves.

165) Bob Leshoai : Post Independent Africa Through the Eye of African Writers and Poets. P. 13.

R S Makhavhu regards N A Milubi as a protest poet.
He says :-

Milubi like any protest poet views the oppression of his people in a very serious light. Hence the bitter tone in his poetry. His poetry is a living example of what a bonafide Venda poet can achieve in writing good poetry in his mother tongue. 166)

James Ngugi says that a writer is someone without choice, who needs to reflect on aspects of intense economic, political, cultural and ideological struggles in a society. He maintains that there is no middle ground for a writer.

What he can choose is one or other side of the battlefield --- What he or she cannot do is to remain neutral. Every writer is a writer in politics. The only question is what and whose politics? 167)

Ngugi goes on to say that a writer is concerned with what Chinua Achebe regards as the 'burning issues of the day' and these take place within the economic, political, class and race context. 168)

In 'Tsengela Tsiwana' Ratshitanga reveals protest against the inhuman treatment of Vhavenḁa. As one goes through his poetry

166) R.S. Makhavhu : The Poetry of N.A. Milubi. P. 20

167) Ngugi wa Thiogo: Writers in Politics. P. 6.

168) Ibid; P. 6.

one becomes aware of the tone of bitterness that pervades his poetry.

The poem 'Ngei Phumalanga nda ima nda sedza' (At Phumalanga I stood and took a look) is one of the poems wherein Ratshitanga protest against the plight of the Vhavenda.

The poems goes as follows:

Ngei Phumalanga kha la Matondoni
Hune ha tamba nga manzhele a Mutshunduḍi
Nda ima nda sedza Venda li khomboni
Maanda alo o no fhedza mutengo wavhuḍi
Vhanna nga duvha vha tshi shumela tshitānu
Vhasadzi nngogo vha kudzwa la nga ndi tano

Ngei Phumalanga fhasi ha thavha ya Thathe
He lunako na ya Vondo dza tanganyisa
Venda lashu dza fhatā nga muthathe
Nda ima nda sedza Venda mutshini u tshi
vho vhaisa
Mavoda alo u tshi khou shengekanya
Mikosi yavho lushada lwavho lwa milekanywa 169)

'There at Phumalanga in Matondoni
Which bathes itself in the crystal-clear
water of Mutshunduḍi
I stood and saw Vendaland in trouble

Its strength having lost its value
Men working for 50c a day
25c were thrown to women
As if it were a dream

169) R.F. Ratshitanga : Tshengela Tsiwana. P. 6.

There at Phumalanga under Thathe mountain
Where beauty with Vondo they merged
Our dear Vendaleland they built in oneness
I stood and looked while the machine was
inflicting harm on Venda people
The princes were being crushed
Their yelling, their noises swallowed by
the machine'

Ratshitanga regards the presence of a saw mill at Phumalanga as having had a disrupting effect on the lives of the Vhavenda. The saw mill goes with exploitative measures which have become the order of the day. Men and women are paid 50c and 25c respectively. This is a pathetic state of affairs. 'Mavoḁa' are princes who are also crushed by the machine. The image of the machine (saw mill) suggests the arrival of the whites with their oppressive measures. 'Mavoḁa' implies the good traditional life which is crushed by the arrival of the Western machine of oppression.

Ratshitanga's bitterness against oppression is realized in the following poem.

Mbilu yanga yo pfulwa nga misevhe
A tshi kha ḁi vha thethe sa lurere
I sa athu u tea u hwala thevhe
Ya ḁavha mukosi wa u phalalwa
Ha kundwa muaravhi wa u ḁhaḁula
Vhusiku vhuḁungu ha vhuisa mvula 170)

170) R.F. Ratshitanga : Op cit; P. 26.

'My heart has been struck by arrows
 At its budding stage
 When it is not yet fit for burden
 It has cried for help
 Nobody has come to its rescue
 When night falls, it experiences the downpour
 of pains.

Ratshitanga is touched by the oppression that knows no boundaries. The images of 'mbilu' and 'Misevhe' imply a sense of bitterness and despair in those who are denied human freedom. Ratshitanga is touched by the bitterness that pervades the lives of the Vhavenḁa.

In the poem 'Kuḁele kwa vhaeni' Ratshitanga shows a negative attitude towards the coming of foreigners in Venḁaland. Foreigners are in this instance, white people. To him, foreigners were responsible for bitterness and frustration of the Vhavenḁa.

Gomane dza vuhali mahaya dza takuwa
 Muno mashango a matongoni dza livha
 Magungwa maḁini a tshi tou seluwa
 A tshi swika nga vhuḁali a mbo vhuvha

Vhalangammbi dzithwala misanda vha isa
 Dziphanga na zwivhoni zwa vha vhuvhai
 Mabvahaḁwani havho a si vhe a no ofhisa
 Zwivhoni, ḁombe dzo tovhela ya nga ndi thai

Thavhani ya Tshaḁowa madyambila a a fhalala
 Zwihali zwa u ranga ḁanḁoni zwo poswa
 Mulilo wa xaxara zwoḁhe zwo fhelela

U tshi t^hothela, t^wwani ra losha nga
bonndo 171)

'Fierce, groups left their homes afar
All their eyes were cast on this land
While their ship kept sailing
They kept a low profile when they arrived
Their leader took presents to the chiefs
knives, mirrors and all glittering objects
Their words were friendly and harmless
Our cattle then disappeared in disbelief

At Tshaⁿowa Black mambas are no longer
to be seen
Weapons were thrown
And fire devastated everything
After which we sought for peace.

Ratshi^tanga makes use of a euphemism 'vhaeni' (visitors) instead of foreigners. The euphemism 'vhaeni' suggests a person who is good and imbued with kindness. Unfortunately, the visitors referred to here, are oppressors who have come to oppress the Vhavaⁿda. The images of the knife and mirrors reveal their deceptive manipulations. 'Ka^tudza ndimo's suggests the seizure of land by foreigners while 'Mbeu dzo awela nga u kundwa vhuyo' implies subjugation. The disappearance of 'Black mambas' suggests the decay of the authority of the Vhavaⁿda. Ratshi^tanga protests against the seizure of land by foreigners and the harm inflicted on the owners of that land. The oppressions on the part of foreigners of the Vhavaⁿda raises anger and bitterness in Ratshi^tanga. These compound protests in his poetry.

171) R.F. Ratshi^tanga : Op cit; P. 19.

In a poem 'Ndo ḁa fhanḁ shangoni na nyita phuli' (I came in this world and you made me a slave). R F Ratshitiḁanga reacts against the harm inflicted on man by man.

Ndo ḁa fhanḁ shangoni na nnyita phuli
Nda gagaḁela zwoḁthe sa dzuyutsuyu
Nda lavhalesa mihwalo ya mphira khuli
Nda sa unḁe sa guvhukuvhu
Nda khuba marama sa nngu muvoni
Nda kona-ha u vhona mboni
Ndo ḁa wa nnyita mbiḁi ya mihwalo
Nda wela fhasi nga fuvhalo
Ndi tshi itela lwau lukuna
Vhuleme ha goba mbilu yanga sa phuna
Iwe wa ri ndi tsilu ḁa vhukuma
Nda vha muhali wa u konḁelela
Nga vhuthu hanga ha u khathutshela 172)

'I came into this world and you made me
a slave
I carried everything like a fool
I looked at the burden, and the
burden dislocated my hips
And I did not behave like a waterfall
I went quiet like a slaughtered sheep
I came and you made me
a donkey for your burden
I fell down out of fatigue and injury
Doing all these for your own good
The burden struck my heart

172) R.F. Ratshitiḁanga : Op cit; P. 25.

And you took me for a fool
And your mouth heaped scorn
And I became a warrior of long-suffering
Because of my inward sense of humanity and
forgiveness'.

Ratshitanga speaks out against the exploitative measures of the oppressor. The similes 'sa guvhukuvhu' (like a waterfall) and 'sa nngu (like a sheep) reveal patience on the part of the oppressed. The image, 'mbidi ya mihwalo' shows the suffering which people are forced to endure. The speaker realizes the good that he does for his master. He is also aware of ingratitude which his master shows. He attributes his suffering to his patience. What he actually implies is that the oppressed should have long ago revolted against oppression.

Ratshitanga seems to have lost confidence in leaders that have been appointed by whites. His hope for a good future government seems to lie in the youth. In the following poem, he calls on the youth to stand up and take the reigns of government.

The poem goes as follows:

Ndi nnyi ane a do ri fha mvelaphanda
Ya vhukuma i si ya u tamba
Ine rothe ro wana, nayo phanda dza kanda
Ine ya sa vhe hone nga u amba
Nga vhungoho ya landula
Ra kombetshedza maipfi, zwanda ya tanula

Ndi nnyi uyo ane a do kona
Ane vhudele hawe ha do wana
Nzanyo, ya vhuṭolo ho piringana

A piringulula vhokombikombi he movhi a sona
Mvelaphanda vhukuma Venda la vhona
Ya tanzwa vanda lalo le nga tshimbevha la dona?

Ndi nnyi ane Venda lashu a do shululela
Nga mvelaphanda ye la tulutshela
Ine ngayo la do vhone shela
Ndila, lwendo phanda lwa endelela
Tsini na mulalo la sendela
Ngwano masiani othe sa madi ya elela?

Ndi nnyi ane a da na mvelaphanda vhukuma
I si yone nga u wana muholo
Vhuleme kha Venda ha kundwa u huma
La tshenuluwa nga u kundwa zwidolo
Thumbu dza vhothe nga ndala dza luma
Ya muthihi yo totedzwa ya kundwa na vhushelo.

Ndi nnyi-ha tshithavhelo kha nothe
Ane a tenda u ya movoni
Malofha awe a nwiwa nga rothe
Dzina lawe la sa ye tshaloni
Mbiluni dzashu ra dzula ro hwala
Mbeu kha Venda la dzula nga u zwala?

Ndi nnyi wa mato e a pfuma tshedza
Na thalukanyo i songo tibwaho nga khuli
Ine zwi sa athu u da ya fhedza
Ya vhala na manwalo e a khuba vhupuli
Ane a do hwalela ulu lushaka
Mvelaphanda i si na mashika?

Mvelaphanda yo pfumaho vhukuma
Ine vhanna malamba o teaho nungo dzavho vha wana
Pfunzo vha kanzwa vhana

Vhutsila shangoni ha huma
Ndi nnyi ane a do guga maanda
Kha shango lashu ya anda? 173)

'Who will give us progress
The real one, not trivial one
Which makes us move forward
Which is not there through speaking
Not the enforced one

Who will be able
To untangle the present network
That Venda may witness progress
The one that will clean the tarnished home

Who will pour progress
into Venda
Progress that will give light
So that people may walk on the pathway
without getting lost
To lead people to the fountains of water

Who will come with real progress
Not the one that comes through salary
Which does not challenge the burden facing Venda
And Venda to be chapped as if ointment is
nowhere to be found
The stomach of many to ache of hunger
While that of one person is filled to
overflowing

173) R.F. Ratshitanga : Op cit; P. 22.

Who will turn himself into an offering
Who will show willingness to go to the abattoir
That we all drink his blood
And his name, never to die
Our hearts to keep his name
That his name may sow seeds in the
whole of Venda

Who is he who has eyes rich of light
With a mind which is not covered with mist
Which is able to discern things
Even the letters that harbour slavery
Who will bring to this nation
Progress that is not tarnished

Progress that is rich indeed
Which rewards each man by his worth
And children to be offered real education
To ward off egotism
Who will bring us such a progress'.

Ratshitanga appears disenchanted with the prevailing leadership. This is the kind of leadership that works for self-interest. It is the leadership that represents the interests of the whites and not those of the Vhavenda. Actually, the leadership is not that of the people and for the people. It stands for different interests. The speaker seems to realize that the progress offered is not genuine, it is characterized by much playfulness.

The speaker longs for the type of progress that will make people experience forward advancement. The metaphor, 'ṅayo phanda dza kanda' is indicative of this. The line suggests genuine progress and a sense of satisfaction.

The metaphor, 'Ya tanzwa Vanda lalo le nga tshimbevha la dona? exposes the weakness of the leadership. This weakness is revealed in all unproductive efforts made by the leadership.

The persona longs for one who will infuse into the whole of Vanda the type of progress that will turn into light, and to show the way to all walking in darkness. The simile, 'sa madi ya elela' (to flow like water) implies the fullness of life that can be brought by the desired progress.

The speaker seems to be aware of the fact that many people assume positions of leadership out of love for money. Such leadership hardly brings progress to the country. Every effort that the leadership may make is never done with the idea of improving the lot of the people. Leadership in such instances is pulled by the desire for self-aggrandizement. This is revealed by the metaphor, 'ya muthihi ya totedzwa ya kundwa na vhushelo'. The line shows how a few individuals hoard money while the masses go empty-handed. The persona wants an end to such a system. He believes that an end may come only through proper leadership.

The label of protest poetry cannot be confined to Black writing in English only. It is also realized in the following Black languages:

- i) Xitsonga
- ii) Sesotho
- iii) N Sotho
- iv) Setswana

An in-depth evaluation of protest poetry of each of the above languages will not be made, but a reference will be given to languages one or two poems. Such reference will be for the purpose of showing that protest poetry has ultimately found its way into the African languages.

5.03 Protest Poetry in Xitsonga

In Xitsonga, the poem 'Xirilo xa N'wana wa Afrika'. 'The cry of the child of Africa' by J M Magaisa and 'Xirilo xa Vantima' 'The cry of the Blacks' by M M Marhanele reveal protest in Xitsonga poetry. Both poems expose a feeling of discontent among Vatsonga.

The investigator would like to take each poem and analyze it separately so as to reflect on the protest inherent in them. The first poem to be analyzed will be 'Xirilo xa N'wana wa Afrika' by J M Magaisa

XIRILO XA N'WANA WA AFRIKA

Vutivi byi ndzi chele rivengo,
Rivengo leri pfindlusaka ntengo wa timbilu,
Onge ndzi nga sombholota xikhomankarhi,
Ndzi vumbuludza tihora ta malembe,
Ndzi vuyisela dyambu exithukwini xa rona,
Ndzi omisa ni malwandle lama vangeke vatluti,
Kumbe ndzi pfuxa Chaka, Muhlava ... tihosi,
Ndzi hingakanya Afrika na Yuropa hi nghoko,
Onge ndzi nga vuyetela hinkwaswo swirhengele,
Ndzi vumba Afrika lontshwa wa ntima,
Ndzi rhidela makhumbi ya yena hi xirhidelo xa nsimbi,
Ndzi phomela matshaku yakwe hi phomo ya ntima.
Ina
onge ndzi nga sombholota voko leri fambisaka nkarhi
Ndzi vanga Edeni lonene wo pfumala xikhutu,
Ndzi pfukula tihosi va-Chaka, Nghunghunyana ...Muzila. 174)

174) J.M. Magaisa : Mihloti. P. 16.

'Knowledge has made me hateful
It mars the purity of the heart
As though I can twist the clock
And turn over the hours of the years
Turning the sun to its beginning
And dry the oceans that caused the advent of the whites

Or wake Chaka, Muhlava ... real kings
And block Africa and Europe with a log
As though I can put together pieces of a broken pot
And build a new Black Africa
Smoothing her walls with smoothing stone
And dye its bottom with a Black dye
As though I can twist the arm that moves the time
And create a good Eden without a blemish
And exhume the kings Chaka, Nghunghunyana ... Muzila'

In this poem, the speaker blames his knowledge for having created hatred against other people. He feels that if it were not for knowledge, he would not have come to the point of hating the whites. The expression, 'pfindlusaka ntengo wa mbilu' exposes the welling bitterness in the speaker. The dimension of time is also brought to the fore. The words 'sombholota xikhomankarhi' implies the return of events to their original state. The speaker longs for those old good days before the coming of the whites.

The symbol of the sun, 'dyambu' suggests both life and death. At a far enough remove, the sun is the source of life whereas too close a proximity leads to destruction.

The speaker realizes his helplessness and finds escape in day dreaming. He wishes that he could have dried the ocean so that the whites might not have reached his land. He notes the emptiness of such a wish and resorts to the wish to raise

the heroes such as Chaka, Muhlava and others. He feels that such personalities would be brave enough to challenge the whites.

The image of 'nqhoko' is there to show the divide between Blacks and Whites.

The line, 'Onge ndzi nga vuyetela hinkwaswo swirhengele' suggests the destructive nature of the Whites on Blacks. His idea of putting together the broken pieces presupposes the regaining of the land from the whites. 'Ndzi vumba Afrika lontshwa wa ntima' and 'rhidela makhumbi ya yena' implies the attainment of freedom and independence. The independence that the speaker talks about needs to culminate in Black rule. '...phomo ya ntima' (Black dye) is suggestive of this.

The time factor is very important in the speaker. 'Onge ndzi nga sombolota voko leri fambisaka nkarhi' (As though I can twist the arm that moves the time).

Time in this context, is not time for reliving the past, but the dimension of time is viewed here in terms of futurity and human freedom. He longs for the future that holds freedom and independence for him. A future in which he is able to create a new Eden. Unfortunately, for him to attain such a state, he needs warriors such as Chaka, Nghunghunyana ... Muzila and others. Such personalities are very hard to come by.

In a poem, 'Xirilo xa Vantima' by M M Marhanele discontentment of Blacks under Whites rule is once again expressed.

XIRILO XA VANTIMA

Hina Vantima hi ni xirilo xin'we,
Xirilo xo pfumala swa le mandleni,
Mana wa hina AFRIKA u dyuharile,
U dyuharile hi ku hlayisa vana vambe
Exikarhi ka vana va yena;
Ku singilela vana lava swi n'wi hete matimba.

AFRIKA u rivarile leswaku loko u fuwa holwa
tsema ndleve,
Vana va xita-xi-famba a va tsemitwanga tindleve
Ti kurile ti lo tshee!
Ku hava ni xivati

Kambe sweswi va n'wi hundzokerile,
Hikuva va kurile, u va hlayisile swi ringene;
Va sungule no tlharihele vana va xiviri,
Va dya hlovo va siya vongwe;
Vana-xidzi vo salela honoka bya mbyana hi ku navela
Va sungula ku bikula xirilo;
Xirilo xo tshama xi ri xirilo, tiko ri fambile
ni swa vona;
AFRIKA u dlawe hi vafambi: vana, salani ni xirilo. 175)

'We Blacks have a common cry
The cry of lack of means of livelihood
Our mother Afrika is old
She has grown old by bringing up foreign children
Among her own children
Fending for her children has exhausted her

175) M.M. Marhanele : 'Xirilo xa Vantima' in a book entitled
'Madaladala' edited by C.P.N. Nkondo
and Marivate C.T.D.

Afrika you have forgotten that when you keep a
wild dog you need to cut its ears.
Foreigners didn't have their ears cut
They are very big
There is not even a mark on them.

As of now, they have turned against her (Afrika)
They have now grown up, you have fended for them
is enough
They are oppressing the real children of Afrika
They eat fresh food and leave old grains of the
previous year
The real children of Afrika have nothing but to
dilate one eye like a dog (wishing for fresh food)
They start wailing
The cry continues, the country has been taken
Afrika has been destroyed by foreigners, children
will remain with the cry'.

There is much similarity between this poem and the previous one. Both reflect the plight of the Blackman. The speaker makes use of two contrastive images. The first, the children of Afrika in contrast with the image of the foreigner. The image of children of Afrika is strengthened by the symbol of a wild dog 'hlolwa'. The symbol of 'hlolwa' suggests a sense of belonging in contrast with foreigners who have come to usurp the government of the country.

Afrika is portrayed as mother earth who fends for her children. Unfortunately, mother earth does not treat her children equally and fairly. She offers fresh food, 'hlovo' to some and old grains of the previous year 'vongwe' to others. In actual fact, mother earth does this because she herself has been conquered. Such a state of affairs disheartens the speaker.

'Van -Xidzi' (the real children of Afrika' implies Blacks, while 'vana vamba' connotes Whites. The image 'ku honoka bya mbyana hi ku navela' suggests greed and an unequal distribution of wealth. This kind of life embitters the children of Afrika (Blacks) as it does the speaker.

'Hlomani' is another protest poem by Mashele. In the poem Mashele calls people and wishes to urge them to challenge the oppressive machinery.

HLOMANI

Pfukani se ri xile.
Miyelani ku ba swingoro;
A hi khayimeni timpfuvu,
Ti tlhelela nambyeni.
Masimu ya se hi ku tala,
A bya ha rheleli.
Lavana byanyi, hi vavela rimenyo
Se ho biyeleriwa,
Ongeti ho va swifuwo.
Hi nga komberisa ku yini,
Kasi i swa hina?
Hlomani matlhari.
Hi nge khonzi emitini
Ya hina swa yila. 176)

'Wake up for it is now daytime
Stop snoring
Let us drive the hippopotami
Back to the river

176) B.H.M. Mashele : A hi hlomeni. P. 20.

The fields have been evaded
We are no longer comfortable
Look for grass, and burn the red ants
Now we are being fenced in
As though we are animals
How can we beg

When the property is ours
Take up arms
We cannot be tenants in our own homes
It is a taboo'.

It seems the speaker noticed the plight of the people, languishing in oppression. The people appear to have reached the stage of accepting things as they are. The persona feels that this state of affairs cannot remain unchallenged. He feels 'timpfuvu' 'hippopotami' need to be driven back to the river. The 'hippopotami' are animals whose habitat is the river. Their presence on the land becomes a contradiction to expectations. The 'hippopotami' in this context is a symbol of whites who gained possession of the land that is not theirs. Their presence makes the inhabitants of the land feel uncomfortable.

In the seventh line, there is an image of 'byanyi' 'grass' and that of 'nimenyo' 'red ants'. The ants are suggestive of whites and the image of 'grass' stands for all the means of challenging the repressive system. 'Se ho biyeleriwa' 'Now we are being fenced in' implies the negation of one's freedom. 'Hlomani matlhari' 'Take up arms' is a statement of self-assertion and the recapturing of lost humanity.

5.04 Protest in Sesotho Poetry

Maphalla is a poet in Sesotho whose poetry exhibits protest. Maphalla's poetry explores the loss of freedom and the disregard for humanity.

He shakes his fellowmen from a lulling sleep and draws their attention to the authenticity of human freedom. Unfortunately, the oppression situation creates a contingent situation for the freedom of a Blackman. It is this contingent situation that makes the speaker in Maphalla's poem cry out for his rights to freedom.

Kgapha tsa ka

Jwale ke lla sa mmokotsana,
Ke llela Basotho le bosotho;
Ke llela setjhaba le botjhaba;
Ha ho ya thehang tsebe,
Empa ruri kgapha tsa ka
Di ke ke tsa wela fatshe.

Jwale ke lla sa mmokotsana,
Ke llela bangodi le bongodi;
Ke llela dingolwa le mongolo;
Ha ho ya thehang tsebe,
Empa ruri kgapha tsa ka
Di ke ke tsa wela fatshe.

Jwale ke lla se pelotlhomohi,
Ke llela mathata le bothata;
Ke llela kgethollo le leeme;
Ke phobolwa molomo kgafetsa
Empa ruri kgapha tsa ka
Di ke ke tsa wela fatshe.

A ke le boneng kgapha tsa ka diphororo,
Kgapha tsa ka di ka tlala lewatile.
Di ka tlala melapo le melatswana
Boko sa ka ke se sitang pelo ya ka;
Ha ho ya thehang tsebe,
Empa ruri kgapha tsa ka
Di ke ke tsa wela fatshe.

Jwale ke lla boko sa dinehella,
Ke llela kgotso le kgutso ditjhabeng,
Ke llela pula le nala lefatsheng
Ke llela kutlwano pakeng tsa baena,
Ke llela kgauho le thekolohelano;
Ha ho ya thehang tsebe,
Empa ruri kgapha tsa ka
Di ke ke tsa wela fatshe. 177)

I am asking for freedom

'I am not asking for the world,
To govern together with the rulers;
I am asking for freedom,
I too should be like you.

I am not asking for chieftainship,
To collect special taxes;
I am asking for freedom,
So that I too can be happy.

177) K.P.D. Maphalla : Kgapha tsa ka. P. 1.

I am not disputing gorgets,
Or claiming any ornaments;
I am asking for freedom,
I have been struggling for too long.

I am not asking through violence,
I don't possess might;
I am asking with my hat off,
Though I haven't tightened my tail between my legs

I don't claim any gold,
All I ask for is recognition;
On this earth of my Father,
That is devoid of any holiness.

I am asking for my freedom,
To get out of this bondage,
To float about like a butterfly,
To swim like fish in dams.

I am asking for my freedom,
Freedom of speech and actions;
Let bias be swept aside,
Let dishonesty too be blown aside.

I am asking for freedom,
Freedom of body, heart and soul;
I am asking for freedom of expression,
To speak the truth whilst the sun shines.

I am asking for freedom,
With which I was born;
I am asking for peace on this side,
On this earth of our Father.

I am not asking for any changes,
Pertaining to my blood or birth;
I am asking for freedom,
On this earth of the Almighty.

I don't ask for forgiveness,
For being what I am;
I am only asking for my freedom,
To decorate myself with it.

The source of dissatisfaction in Maphalla's poem is 'kgethollo' which is the discrimination of races (apartheid). It is 'kgethollo' which has destroyed his freedom and hence the cry.

Ke llela Basotho le bosotho
Ke llela setjhaba le botjhaba
Ke llela bangodi le bongodi

'I cry for Basotho and their being
I cry for the nation and the nationhood
I cry for writers and their writing'

The expression 'Ke llela kgethollo le leeme' is in fact a condemnation of apartheid. It is a call for the return of his freedom. Despite his efforts, the speaker is forced to keep quiet, 'Ke phobolwa molomo kgafetsa'.

One should take note of the repetition of :

Empa ruri kgaphe tsa ka
Di ke ke tsa wela fatshe.

'But my tears
Will not roll down unnoticed'.

The tears in this context serve as an assurance for the attainment of the objective, which is freedom.

In the fourth stanza, the tears are equated with water 'diphororo' the sea, 'lewatile' rivers and rivulets 'melapo le melatswana'. The imagery used here is hyperbolic in nature. This is meant to heightening the feeling. Despite the intensity of feeling on the part of the speaker, 'Ha ho ya thehang tsebe' those in authority seem not to care about his suffering.

In the last stanza the speaker says that he makes a last stand in his cry for freedom. 'Jwale ke lla boko sa dinehella' From this point he enumerates the objects of his cry, which are:

- kgutso ditjhabeng
- pula le nala lefatsheng
- kutlwano pakeng tsa baena
- kgauho le thekolohelano.

The speaker cries for peace and tranquillity among mankind and he ends on a note of hope. He believes that his tears are not shed in vain. They will achieve their objective, which is human freedom.

In 'Nnete ke efe lefatsheng' Maphalla regards lack of truth as the source of strife and conflict among people.

Nnete ke efe lefatsheng

Ebe nnete ke ya mang,
Ha ho sa utlwanwe ka hohle?
Ka mona ke diqabang.
Ke mane ke tsona difaqane.

Wena o re o bohlae,
Nna ke re o sethoto;
Wena o re ke bohale,
Nna ke re ke imametse.

Nna ke rata Sewediwetla
Hobane a le kgabane ho nna;
Wena o re o a mo kwekwetla,
Hobane ha se motho ke radikate.

Jwale o ntshupa dipha,
Hobane ke sa kgeme le wena;
Kajeno o ntefisa ditjepa,
Ka molato wa bana beno.

Le pela tulo sa moahlodi,
Re ntse re utlwa manyampetla,
Teng bopaki ke mahohodi,
Ha ho motho ya inyatsang.

Nnete ke efe lefatsheng,
Ha maikutlo a le sekete?
Jwale ya nepileng ke mang,
Ha bohle re ikotla difuba? 178)

Is there any truth on earth ?

'In whom is truth to be found ?
When there is no understanding
On the one side is conflict
On the other sanguine strife.

178) Maphalla : Kgapha tsa ka. P. 4.

You say you are wise
I say you are a fool
You say I am quick to anger
I say I am calm

I like Sewediwetsa
Because he is wonderful to me
You say you are avoiding him
Because he is inhuman and destructive

How you point out my mistakes
Because I don't agree with you
Today you make me pay in oxen
Because of your brothers' faults

Even before the judge's bench
We hear unsavoury things
For proof is refuse
No one shows remorse'.

Is there any truth on earth
When opinions run into thousands?
Now, who is right
When we all claim the truth?

Maphalla regards oppression as a sign of lack of truth. Oppression brings conflict and in the process the one blames the other. The speaker enquires in this instance as to who is holding onto truth. 'Ebe nnete ke ya mang?' 'On whose side does truth belong? Is it on the side of the oppressor or the oppressed? The oppressor regards himself as wise, 'Wena o re o bohlale'. He realizes in the end that he is not as wise as he thinks but that he is a fool.

The speaker speaks with pride and does not belittle his standing. 'Ha ho motho ya inyatsang'. The oppressor always find fault with the oppressed since the latter resists the imposition of unacceptable and abhorrent laws.

The speaker ends his stanza with the question of finding out who between the oppressed and the oppressor is on the side of truth. To the speaker's amazement, both claim to be on the side of truth.

Jwale ya nepileng ke mang
Ha bohle re ikotla difuba?

'Now who is right
When we all claim the truth?

Protest in N. Sotho poetry

In N. Sotho, Puleng and Mamogobo have poems that express protest. These are:

'Bohwa bja ka' 'Hle, mphe le nna' 'Gae ke gae'
'Gareadulelaruri' by Puleng and 'Afrika, nagasello
and Boa Afrika by Mamogobo.

I will not delve into the analysis of all the poems. I shall select a few poems so as to treat the tone of protest.

In 'Bohwa bja ka' 'My inheritance' or 'My rights' Puleng reacts against the abrogation of human rights.

BOHWA BJA KA

Ke hidinya sellu,
Ke kgethega dikudumela,

Ke tsa bohloko bja pelomegokgo.

Šo, motseta wa Bodikela;
Rumo o swere la ntšhotšhonono,
Mellwane o letile ke sehlwaseeme.

Ba perutše melongwana,
Ke menomašweu polaya a sega,
A bona mantlo ke mabaibai.

Ke bjalo ka lefotwana,
Ke ahlame ke letetše dijo,
Mmane le tatane ba a kobakoba.
Ke lebetšwe, ke a itsheka,
Ke beilwe ka mafuri,
Ke llela bohwa bja ka.

Nna ke mobu,
Ke humile,
Ke humile le kgopolo.

Ge ke ahlama,
Go thunya malakabe,
Ke kgarolosa naga.

Sello sa ka sa bojalefa
Ke kwetše kgole;
Naga di a rekareka di a šišinyega.

O nkwe o nkwišiše,
Ga ke thaile dithai,
Tšekhwi ke dinyepo.

Thopa tšá ntshe wa di bola,
Gageno ke thabeng;
Ke thopa tšá bohwa bja mohu wo. 179)

'I am crying
I am sweating
It is the pain of human existence

Here is a messenger from the west
Holding an enormous spear
Like a statue guarding the boundaries

Opening the mouth with joy
With white teeth that destroy despite the smile
Their houses being beautiful

I am just like a nestling
Opening my mouth waiting for food
My mother and father moving from pillar to post

I am forgotten
I am placed in the backyard
I cry for my rights

I am the soil
I am rich
Rich even in the mind

When I open the mouth
It emits sparks of fire
I make the country tremble

179) N.S. Puleng : Seipone sa Madimabe. P. 6.

The cry of inheritance
Has been heard afar
Countries are timid and shaky

Listen and understand me
I am not playing riddles
This is truth

If you can reveal these secrets
Your place of abode is at the mountain
For this is the secret of this country.

In the poem, the persona speaks for his rights. In the first stanza, the image of 'crying' is coupled with that of 'sweating'. These images connote oppression and human suffering.

In the second stanza, the white man is regarded as a messenger from the west who holds a spear. The image of the 'spear' 'rumo' suggests destruction and death.

In the third stanza, the speaker brings the contrast of beautiful houses belonging to whites as opposed to the dilapidated houses of Blacks. 'Ke beilwe ka mafuri' 'I am placed in the backyard' strengthens this contrast.

'Nna ke mobu' 'I am the soil' in the six stanza implies a sense of belonging to one's place of abode. 'Ge ke ahlama, go thunya malakabe' shows the readiness of the speaker to fight for his rights. The persona is aware of the fact that his fight for his rights may land him in 'thabeng' 'the mountain' which in this context, suggests jail. The persona accepts imprisonment since it has become 'thopa tsa bohwa bja mobu wo' 'the secret of this country' for dealing with people fighting for their rights.

In 'Afrika, nagasello' Mamogobo sees Afrika as a place of lamentation, as a land that has been captured and feels the need for it to be repossessed by its rightful owners.

AFRIKA, NAGASELLO

Afrik'a molokotsa nagagadi lepe sa badimo,
Se wa atleng tša Rabadimo maakalale kukamaditshaba,
Se wa ka hlakore se remarema meetsemagolo maphasalale
Madiba a kgaoga a kgapetsa naga di le gole;
Mošokga wa wa Mediterere fula la apeša Eropa,
Magale'a rema Atlantiki photho la photomela Amerika,
Intiya gwa gweremana seoka gwa na pul'a marothodi a
magolo
Gar'a madibamatala gwa rakalala mpho'a badimo Afrika.

Afrika nagamašotošoto, o le ramalwetsi bohloko o
kwa kae?
Naman'e bohloko go baba kae, o lla sa mogolodi
nongyamahlomola?
O gatilwe ke maswena dira matlakagothopa,
Mabala o tšerwe o tsenetswe ke phehli o fatolotswa mala,
O pherekantšwe kgopolo bana bangšako ba bolawa ke tlala,
Afrika boa, kgola meriti bana ba dule ka boiketlo. 180)

'Africa, happy land, you are sick, where do you feel
the pain?
Where are your wounds, you cry like a kingfisher, a
bird of bad songs?
You are trampled upon by the enemies, armies that
came to steal

180) Phorohlo Mamogobo : Leduleputswa. P. 28.

Your plains are captured, they have been penetrated
by a worm, your intestines are ruptured.
Your thoughts are distorted, the children, owners
of the land are hungry.
Africa come back, spread your shades so that
your children can live in peace'

Africa, a happy land, has become 'ramalwetsi' 'a sick being'.
She has wounds, and she is trampled upon by enemies. The
enemies do not only trample upon her, they are also thieves
'matlakagothopa' that steal from her.

The image of 'phehli' 'a worm' and that of ruptured intestines
shows the decay of human existence. Africa is no longer alive.
It has ceased to exist. 'O pherekantswe kgopolo bana bengsako
ba bolawa ke tlala' exposes the extent of destruction that has
been done to Africa. According to the speaker, foreigners,
who in this context, are Whites, have brought sickness to
Africa, have inflicted wounds on her and destroyed her beyond
repair. The speaker longs for the repossession of Africa by
the true owners. The image of 'merithi' 'shades' suggests
peace and tranquility that will reign after Africa has been
repossessed by its own children.

The need for repossessing Africa is expressed once again in
Mamogobo's 'Afrika Boa'.

AFRIKA BOA!!

Boa Afrika fase la borre twehlanyaditshaba,
Mohlaboronolo thari ya bana ba mosadi yo moso,
Mpho badimo bengmagola madulagodimo maakaakaleng
Boa wena naga boroko makhura a bana ba mosadi yo moso
Boela go beng, beng ba tseba tshenyi ba phala maswena
matlakagothopa.

Afrika nagagadi o kunutu la pelo ya ka,
Thabaditšala tša gago di nkgoletša nagamarelerele
Di nkhuđuwa pelo le maswafo di ntlhokišša boroko,
Ke lala ke ekwa noka tša'go maelamohubo
Di nkomanya di potlokana di eya lewatile boukamelwa
Di ntlhodiya ka madi a borre di re ke re "Afrika Boa!!"

Afrika boa! amušša bana tswele la phega ya gago
Bafepi batlakagosela ba montšša bana monwana.
Bana ba lla mokokotlong ba kubjakubja ka sejabana
Ba re re a hlosoga bafepi ba goletšša,
Bana ba gatšša pelo tsa befepi di thatafetse
Di le megabaru ka lefa la bana ba Afrika.

Rabadimo wee, wena Rabadimo kukamadiššhaba
Wena Raseboni sebonabona dikhutlwana
Wena Ramatlaothle kgopararalegohle
Wena Rasetsebi setsebadiphihlotšohle
Maakalale tlhagiššamehla, Rasedira ka tšša gagwe
maeletššinošši, Utlwelela. 181)

AFRICA COME BACK!!

Come back Africa the land of our fathers which
causes nations to fight,
The fertile land, the slingbag for the children
of the black mother,
Gift of the God's owners of the veld, high
dwellers of lofty places
Come back you the peaceful land, the cream of the
children of the black mother

181) Mamogobo : Leduleputswa. P. 23.

Africa come back! suckle the children with your
breast
Nurse maids who came to ask for food have allowed
the children to suck the thumb
Children cry on the back they are nudged with an
elbow
They try to slip off the back of nursemaids and they
are hitched up again
Nursemaids with downcast hearts force the children
to befriend them.
Their hearts being greedy for the heritage of
children of Africa.

Hey Father of gods, you Father of gods supervisor
of nations
You the Seer who see the corners (hidden places)
You the Almighty the omnipresent
You the knower who knows all that is hidden
The Most high creator of the day, One who does
everything He pleases
Listen attentively and reflect.

In the poem, Mamogobo regards Africa as a land of his fathers
'Afrika fase la borre' and he makes a call for repossession.

The images of 'mohlabamonolo' 'fertile land' and 'thari'
'slingbag' are there to show the rich resources Africa has.
As of late, the resources have fallen into wrong hands. The
richness of Africa is expressed by the symbol 'makhura'
which implies life in abundance. It is this type of life which
the inhabitants of Africa long for. 'Boela go beng' is sugges-
tive of this. The fullness of life is embodied in the green
mountains 'Thabaditala'. In the third line of the second stanza,
the speaker says that the greenness of the mountains causes him
heart pangs. This is so because the 'greenness' stands for
meaningful life which is not part and parcel of him.

The third stanza opens with a call 'Afrika boa!' 'come back Africa'. In this line, Africa is begged to come back and breastfeed its children. The symbol of the breast stands for both hope and meaningful life.

In the second line, we are told of 'Bafepi' 'nursemaids' who offer nothing to children except to let them suck the thumb. The image of thumbsucking 'montsha bana monwana' may imply the idea of human suffering.

The speaker would like to see this state of affairs, come to an end. He would like to see despair being replaced by a sense of hope. The persona seems to recognize the fact that on his own he may not be able to recapture the meaningful existence which finds realization in 'Boa Afrika' without the help of the Almighty. This may be the reason why in the last stanza, the speaker appeals to God to intervene on his behalf. The expression, 'Rabadimo wee' reveals a soul crying in helplessness and supplication. The repetition of the pronoun, 'Wena' in 'Wena Raseboni' 'Wena Ramatlaohle' 'Wena Rasetsebi' shows hope in the speaker that God will intervene on his behalf.

5.06 Protest in Setswana Poetry

Protest poetry is also found in Setswana poetry. The poem 'Lentswe la Moledi' 'The Voice of a complainant' by L D Raditladi reveals discontentment in Blacks.

LENTSWE LA MOLEDI

Monomotlha ke tla lela se-Nabja,
E reng ba lela ba rwale mabôgô
Ke tla bua ke dumaduma selelong,
Ke se nêwê matlhô a le mahibidu.
Moledi ga a na apê mantswê a monate.

Ga a na apê matêtsêlêkô, moledi,
Puô ya 'gwê jaaka metse ga e êlele,
Ga e phôthôsêle senoka 'a maraga.
E a re fa gongwê a goa a tlafale,
Batho o bone ba sisimoga mmele.

Jaanong ke tla leba bonnete matlhong,
E se re ke bua mongwe a ntenêgêla,
Ke diriwa ke botlhokobogolo
Moledi ga ke bolo go akabala.
Go dirwa fêla ke ntse ke lebile,
Go twe nna ke sefofu, ke fougêtse.
Ke lesea, ga ke na go ngunanguna.
Monomotlha ga se malôba a bile
Seboba mpeng se neng se mpampêêdiwa.
E se re o se batola wa bolawa.

Moledi, motlhoiwa, ke tlhoetswe lefe?
A ke tlhoilwê gobo ke le mothwana,
Ka mothwana a sena lepe lesegô,
Fa ke le phôlôgôlô ke lekaba?
Lefatshe lêno la moledi leina.
Ditshaba tsa tla mono go ntirêla,
Tsa mpaya seatla mo matlhong lesilo,
Lesilo la nnete ka bokalala,
Nna botlhale ka se ka ka bo bôna.
Ke tlhalefa ga twe ga kea lekana.

Kgosi ya me nna tôta ga e mphemêle,
E femela ba e reng ba gata go tie.
Le gareng ga rona ga re itumêle,
Fa re lwa re ngarolana mekwatla,
Re etsa phôlôgôlô tsele tsa naga.

Di reng di tshela mmôgô di khutlane.
Makolwane re folosana majeng,
E re re ya tlase re ye re tlhomilê
E re re wa, re kgoboge mangôlê.

Batho ke bao ba lekile ka thata,
Ba lebile kwano Borwa ba sianye!
Ke metshenyana melela ditlêrê,
Mesenya kgakgatshe ya batho bangwe.
Mme ntle ntle di ntse di bolola fêla,
Basenyabatho ba sa bolo go ya!
Ntle di tsosiwa ké baitseloleme,
Babesi ka mosi magala a le teng
Ba dira ba itsa mahura go nyaoga,
Go go jesa botala o sa lemoga.

Tsê nang ka Batho ba bantsho lo botse,
Lo re, ba phela jang batshubamolelô,
Ntse tse ditale mabodisanama,
Masenya njo tsa batho ba di beile?
Lo tla utlwa ba lo bolêlêla dilelô,
Ba re, ba ne ba dumulwa lenaila,
Dithêbê ba di latlha ba sa ikitse,
Melato e le mafaratlhatlha metseng.
Merafe e se dipelo dingwe fêla,
Go twe, mosenyi ké yo, ga se yo, ké yola! 182)

THE VOICE OF A COMPLAINANT

'This time I will cry like the Nabja
Who cry with their arms raised
During my cry I will mumble

182) L.D. Raditladi : Sefalana sa Menate. P. 16.

And none should look at me with red eyes
A complainant never has sweet words
His talk is like a river that doesn't flow
Or as powerful as a forrent
He sometimes screams discordantly
When he has witnessed people in discomfort

Now I will face the truth
Let none be angry with me as I talk
For I am in great pain
I the complainant have for long been silent
I have watched things done in my presence
While I was taken to be blind
Like a child, no complaint was expected of me
These days are unlike golden days
When blood was ticker than water
When for hitting 'seboba' one would get killed

I the complainant and the detested, why am I hated?
Am I hated because of being a miniature?
A miniature with no luck at all
This country is for complaints
Nations came here to work for me
With a hand they covered my eyes, as if a fool
And as a real fool I remained passive
No wisdom was found in me
I have been told I am not yet of age for wisdom.

Those are the people trying their best
They are racing heading southward
They are like noisy cracked stamping rods.
Spoilers of other people's harmonious stamping
Why are wars still being declared
While bad elements are no more

Wars are caused by a great orator
Those who grill with smoke instead of fire
Thus preventing fat from melting
To feed you with underdone food.

Go to the Blacks and enquire
Ask them how the firemakers live
You green flies, spoilers of meat
Spoilers of people's food
You will hear people's horror
That they were, sternly warned
And threw away their shield unawares
Cases being innumerable in the villages
Communities without being united
Pointing fingers at each other.

In the first stanza, the image 'sisimoga mmele' 'goose flesh' implies a reaction of the body to a foreign stimuli. In this context the stimuli suggests Whites whose coming brings discomfort among people.

The persona feels that he can no longer tolerate injustice. The lines, 'Monomotlha ga se malôba a bile. Seboba mpeng se neng se mpampêêdiwa. E se re o se batola wa bolawa' are suggestive of this. The lines also show Blacks as tolerant people.

The image, 'Tsa mpaya seatla mo matlhong lesilo' in the third stanza implies foolhardiness on the part of Blacks who could not respond to a situation of provocation.

In the sixth stanza, Whites are regarded as 'Ke metshenyanya melela ditlêrê. Mesenya kgakgatshe ya batho bangwe' which connotes a stamping rod with a crack that destroys the rhythmic pattern. This suggests again, the destructive nature of the authority of the Whites over Blacks.

In the seventh stanza, the speaker refers to Whites as 'batshubamolelê' 'fire makers'. Fire in this instance, has destructive power. The speaker makes use of the image of 'Ntsi tse ditala' 'green flies' that spoil the meat. 'Green flies' in this instance implies Whites with their way of living and the meat may suggest Blacks who were found living in tranquility. The coming of the 'green flies' has had a disruptive effect on the Blacks' way of life. The speaker feels that the time has come for him to pour forth his sense of discontent.

5.07 POST-COLONIAL PROTEST POETRY

Post-colonial protest poetry is the kind of poetry that is characteristic of independent African States. It is poetry that protests no longer against the white oppression but against the oppression perpetrated by Blacks. It is the kind of poetry that rises and challenges corrupting tendencies that developed after independence. It challenges such aspects of corruption as nepotism, bribery civil war, exploitation of a Black by a Black murder, injustice, et cetera. In this kind of poetry, one finds notable West African poets such as Wole Soyinka, J P Clark and Lenrie Peters.

It will be fitting for one to speak about the post-colonial protest literature. This will include poetry, prose and drama. Christopher Okigbo's drama, 'The trial of Dedani Kimathi' landed him in trouble because it was a portrayal of the state of affairs in his own country.

The idea of independence kindled many expectations in Africans. People expected good positions and a favourable standard of living after independence. They actually expected to be born 'with a silver spoon in their mouth'. Unfortunately, this was not the case. After independence corruption set in, poverty

descended upon people, the military staged coups d'etat. Detention of those airing their opposition to government became the order of the day. Black people having taken note of this, feel into what Es'kia Mphahlele regards as, 'despair and disillusion'. 183)

Octavia Paz in his 'Alternating Current' believes that people would fight a certain order in order to reach a certain objective, unfortunately, when the objective is reached then they realize that it is not the ideal they want. They engage themselves in a new fight in order to reach the new objective. This becomes a self-perpetuating fight against the existing order - 'an alternating current' Octavia Paz says:

When man is confronted by a state of affairs that is unjust he rebels. The rebellion begins as a naysaying and gradually becomes a consciousness: it becomes a critique of the existing order and a determination to bring about a new just, rational, universal order. Criticism is followed by action : waging revolution demands the invention of a technique and an ethic. 184)

This idea illustrates the reaction of protest poets in Africa after independence. These poets become authentic voices of Blacks oppressed by Blacks. It becomes a reaction to the oppression that has moved from White hands to Black hands. Protest poetry in this case becomes a poetry of despair and disillusion at the failure of independence to bring about the realization of popular expectations.

183) Mphahlele : The African Image. P. 260.

184) Octavia Paz: Alternating Current. P. 186.

Es'kia Mphahlele says:

Independence, opposition politics, coups d'etat, military government, one-party government, acres of poverty sprinkled with a few castles of wealth and a few blinking neon lights that say 'Elite Club'. The shrinking boundaries of defensive nationalism, the dream that the Pan-African center will hold; the insolence of power, the 'benevolence' of power, the abdication of power, power vegetating. Whether or not neo-colonialism frustrates possible solutions, our continent is the black man's burden this time around. 185)

In South Africa one can hardly speak of post-colonial protest poetry since Blacks regard the country as being under a colonial siege. Again, their protest poetry would not qualify to be called post-colonial since it is still a Black versus White type of protest. Perhaps one may make reference to the so-called 'independent homelands' of South Africa where the authority of Blacks over Blacks is being experienced. Corruptive tendencies and other features of discontent characteristic of independent African states are being realized in the 'so-called independent homelands'. Despair and disillusion reign in the people residing in these homelands. Unfortunately, such people cannot air their discontent since there is a more pronounced clamping down in the name of security. Anyway, even if these people were to raise the voice of dissatisfaction against the homeland rule in the form of protest poetry, their protest would not be regarded as post-colonial since the 'independent homelands' are still regarded as part and parcel of South Africa which is essentially part of the colonial regime.

185) Mphahlele : Op cit; P. 260.

Es'kia Mphahlele feels that poets such as Wole Soyinka have exposed Africa no longer as a hope for the oppressed South Africans but as a creature of despair.

--- the writer from East and West African states is coming closer to the terrible understanding that it is not his South African comrade who is the creature of compassion. Already he has begun to shrink from the bewildered stare of the South African, knowing that he, the supposedly free mind who once symbolized a loop-hole for the dead-end of the South African dilemma has himself become the creature of despair. 186)

Soyinka, Lenrie Peters, Clark and others feel that Africa can no longer boast of being a cradle of freedom for the oppressed, but that oppression has taken another dimension. The arrest of Soyinka during the civil war is indicative of the oppression which we are discussing. A poem by Soyinka from the book by Senanu reveals despair and fear.

Night

Your hand is heavy. Night upon my brow
I bear no heart mercuric like the clouds, to dare
Exacerbation from your subtle plough

Woman as a calm, on the sea's crescent
I saw your jealous eye quench the sea
Fluorescence, dance on the pulse incessant

186) Mphahlele : Op cit; P. 264.

Of the waves. And I stood, drained
submitting like the sands, blood and brine
Coursing to the roots. Night, you rained.

Serrated shadows through dank leaves
Till, bathed in warm suffusion of your dappled cells
Sensations pained me, faceless, silent as night
thieves
Hide me now, when night children haunt the earth
I must hear none. These misted calls will yet
Undo me: naked, unbidden, at Night's muted birth 187)

Soyinka's poem describes nightfall with all that goes with it. Nightfall is viewed in terms of horrid images that accompany it. The speaker experiences a sense of fear of these horrid images of the night. He needs protection, he needs rest, unfortunately, the night cannot satisfy his needs. Nightfall in this instance has nothing to offer but restlessness and fear. Nightfall and all that goes with it may suggest despair in the hearts of people. The image of 'Fluorescence' in the sixth line refers to light which may imply hope immediately after independence. The 'light' has as a matter of fact given way to darkness.

The image of 'brine' in the eighth line, stands for 'salty water of the sea'. This image may stand for existence void of meaning. The expression, 'night children haunt the earth' and 'muted birth' 'silent approach' may stand for the marauders who work under cover of the night. This suggests leaders that lack vision, who are self-centred and care less about the lot of the people. This plunges people into the well of despair and suffering.

187) K.E. Senanu : A selection of African Poetry. P. 119.

John P Clark's poem titled 'Dirge' is steeped in pessimism, sadness and hopelessness.

Show me a house where nobody has died
Death is what you cannot undo
Yet a son is killed and a daughter is given
Out of one seed springs the tree
A tree as a mad act is cut down
Must the forest fall with it.

Earth will turn a desert
A place of stones and bones
Tears do not water a land
Fear too is a child of the heart
Fear piles up stones, piles up bones
Fear builds a place of ruin
Oh! let us light the funeral pile
But let us light the funeral pile
But let us charcoal the mad cutters of teak
But let us not cut down the clan. 188)

The poet opens his poem with the image of a tree. A tree in this context stands for full life. The tree does not live long for it is felled.

The cutting of the tree implies the end of meaningful life. The image of 'earth' and 'desert' are set in contrast to each other. The image of 'earth' stands as a sustainer of life. The 'desert' should be seen in relation to the images of 'stones' and 'bones'. Both connote the dryness of human existence. In the last line the poet says:

188) J.P. Clark : A decade of tongues. P. 75.

But let us not cut down the clan.

To him the felling of the trees implies the destruction of the clan. This shows the obliteration of the people from the surface of the earth. The felling of the trees may also mean the felling of the ambitions of the people after independence. The 'desert', 'stones' and 'bones' may stand for the horror of the wars brought by greed and civil wars. The poem ends on a note of despair.

A sense of disillusion is also found in the poem by Lenrie Peters.

Paralysed ambitions
half intentions
Self promises choke
the mind's exhaust
resist aperients
feed back acceptance : docility

He sleeping now
Once led the shouting
swung the banner
stamped the routing
then repose on St Helena
Arsenically drowning.

Power changes hands
indifferently makes
no demands of virtue
largely speculation
of pounds, hormones
and the stars.

Successful a crobats
dwindling into sun spots
sway metronome pinnacles
this way and that
the music is without rhythm
melody gummed in lust. 189)

The poet opens his poem by the line :

Paralysed ambitions

The line reveals a lack of fulfilment of certain expectations. The cheers of people for independence has culminated not in a triumphant song but anger, sadness, hopelessness and bewilderment. All the efforts of the struggle as reflected by the second stanza end like a lump of fat on fire.

In the third stanza, the poet shows how power has fallen from White hands to those of Blacks. To Blacks, the attainment of power by Blacks implies the opening of doors onto greener pastures. Unfortunately, the greener pasture is grazed by the few while the masses stand by watching.

The lines :

'the music is without rhythm' and
'melody gummed in lust'

shows the emptiness of the concept of 'independence' to people since they do not derive any benefit from it. The poet sees independence as a means for the few to enrich themselves and engage in acts of lust.

189) Senanu : A selection of African Poetry. P. 58.

It is in this state of affairs that a voice of a Black rises against a Black. It becomes a voice of protest against corruption, bribery, injustice, civil war, et cetera.

In South Africa, the voice of protest is still that of a Black against a White. The time may come when protest poetry becomes post-colonial in nature where a Black will be protesting no longer against the oppression of a White but against that of a fellow Black.

5.08 CONCLUSION

This chapter has shown protest poetry to be a type of poetry that addresses itself to the ills of the Black people. Protest poetry was ignited by the emergence of the Black Consciousness Movement in the mid 70's. This movement instilled a spirit of militancy in black poetry in South Africa. In protest poetry, a Black man is viewed no longer as an inferior human being, but as one endowed with unlimited potentialities.

In Venḁa, protest poetry emerged through poets such as Nthambeleni Phalandwa, Irene Mutsila and others, who published their work through 'Staff-rider'. Their poetry revealed the plight of Vhavenḁa.

Ratshiḁanga, in his 'Tsengela Tsiwana', reveals protest against the inhuman treatment of Vhavenḁa. As one goes through his poetry, one becomes aware of the tone of bitterness that goes through his poetry. He protests against the prevailing leadership in Venḁaland, the status quo and all the forms of oppression that make the lives of the Vhavenḁa unbearable.

One could say that Ratshiḁanga has become the only voice in Venḁa that rise against the oppressor. The poet is deeply affected by the indifference of the oppressors to the oppressed. He declares that every individual has the right to live where he chooses without man-made restriction. Ratshiḁanga also maintains that no man has the right to take another man's freedom and to replace it with oppression and servitude.

The chapter reveals that the theme of protest is not confined to Venḁa poetry only but that it is found in poetry written in other African languages such as Xitsonga, Sesotho, N. Sotho and Setswana. Post-colonial protest poetry is characteristic of independent African States and it expresses despair and disillusion with the Blackman in authority.

6.00 GENERAL CONCLUSION

In the study of the development of Venda poetry from the traditional to the present forms, one readily takes note of a shift from the spirit of tradition, through the influence of the western spirit to protest poetry. Protest poetry has come to be regarded as the poetry of the people which dominates the writing of Blacks both in English and in African languages.

In traditional poetry, a dichotomy is drawn between children's rhymes, songs, lullabies and praise poetry. Lullabies as in any other form of poetry, are able to evoke feeling. When sung, they easily put children to sleep. This could be due to their gentle and soothing feeling in one's ear.

Lullabies are usually sung by mothers, grandmothers and nurses as they induce children to sleep. They may be sung by children who have attained a certain level of maturity where the singing is meant to self-entertainment. 'Lili' *ńwana ńwananga* is an example of a lullaby that can be sung by elderly people for inducing sleep or it may be sung by children for entertainment.

Lili ńwana ńwananga
Lili ńwana ńwananga vhasa mulilo
Lili vhasa mulilo
Lili vhasa mulilo khotsi vha a vhuya
Lili khotsi vha a vhuya
Lili khotsi vha a vhuya
Lili khotsi vha a vhuya vha vhuya na nnyi
Lili vha vhuya na nnyi
Lili vha vhuya na nnyi
Lili vha vhuya na nnyi vha vhuya na Donga
Lili vha vhuya na Donga
Lili vha vhuya na Donga
Lili vha vhuya na Donga, Donga u *toḁani*

Lili Donga u ṭoḍani
Lili Donga u ṭoḍani, u ṭoḍa vhasikana.

'My grandchild
My grandchild kindle fire
Kindle fire for your father will be coming
The father is coming, but with whom is he coming?
He is coming with Donga
He is coming with Donga, but what does Donga want?
Donga wants small girls.

Lullabies are characterized by refrain and parallelism. A refrain is a line or several lines repeated at regular intervals.

for example Lili khotsi vha a vhuya
Khotsi vha a vhuya
Vha vhuya na Donga
Vha vhuya na Donga, Donga u ṭoḍani
Donga u ṭoḍani.

Parallelism is a correspondence, in sense or construction, of successive clauses or passages where, in each pair of lines, the first halves are identical in wording and the second are basically alike in meaning.

for example Lili ṅwana ṅwananga
Lili ṅwana ṅwananga vhasa mulilo
Lili vhasa mulilo khotsi vha a vhuya
Lili khotsi vha a vhuya
Lili khotsi vha a vhuya vha vhuya na nnyi

Children's rhymes and lullabies are characterized by a playful eye rhyming scheme. Such a rhyming scheme comes through the repetition of certain words. This could be due to the fact that most of the children's rhymes and lullabies are characterized by the repetition of lines and words.

for example Funguvhu tanzwa mulomo (a)
 Tanzwa mulomo (a)
 Ri kone ri tshi la rothe (b)
 Ri tshi la rothe (b)

Praise poetry also forms part of the oral traditional poetry. Praise poetry is a means of extolling human efforts, and it attaches value to specific events, places, symbolic objects, et cetera. Praise poetry is regarded in Zulu as 'izibongo' in Sotho as 'Dithoko' while in Venda, it is known as 'zwickhodo'.

Praise poetry could be used in praising the chief.

for example Ndi nge Phiriphiri Tshivhase
 Muri wa u vhavha
 Ndi a vhavha sa phiriphiri
 A thi liwi ndi muri wa makhuwa
 Tshivhasa-miqi-ya-vhawe
 Wanga wa sala wo tshena
 Marikili-marikili

Praise poetry may treat of totems:

for example Singo
 Mundalamo
 Mbedzi
 Kwinḡa
 Mulaudzi
 Munzhelele

It may deal with a praise name as well

for example Mbobvu
Mavhumbe
Tshinavhe
Matidze
Dombwe

Praise poetry is centred on the following

- (i) Initiates
- (ii) Animals
 - (a) wild animals
 - (b) domestic animals
- (iii) Natural phenomena
- (iv) Divining bones.

Praise poetry has a social function, for it enables people to come together as a social unit. It has a religious significance, for it is used during the 'thevhula' ceremonies. Its aesthetic significance lies in instilling in the audience, a sense of appreciation.

The chapter on praise poetry is followed by one which deals with modern poetry. Modern poetry is that kind of poetry that bears the marks of Western European influence. Modern poetry may be divided into two categories. The first being, modern poetry with the influence of the traditional spirit. The following is an example of a modern poem with the traditional spirit.

Kha vha ntshetele nanga Vho-Nyamuofhe
Ndi yo lidza tshikona Thononda
Ngauri arali zwi zwone zwauri mativha o xa
Ramaremisa u yo dzhena Luañame
Pa-Haa! Pa-Haa! Pa! Haa-Haa
Ndi lufhalafhala lu lila Tshivhungululu
Lu vhidza Vhambedzi dzithavhani

'Prepare a flute for me Vho-Nyamoufhe
That I go and play tshikona at Thononda
For if it be true that the chief has died
Ramaremisa is going to be enthroned at Luaname
Pa-haa! Pa-haa! Pa-Haa! Haa!
It is a horn blowing from Tshivhungululu
It entreats Vhambedzi from the mountain'

The second mode of modern poetry is that which is distinct from poetry with traditional spirit. In this type of poetry, poets emulate and make use of the western conception of poetry. They shun and discard the spirit of tradition.

Yehova! Iwe Yehova
Ri sikele vhuthu vhu sa tshili
Vhuthu vhu sa fi

Ri sikele maṭo a sa vhoni
Maṭo a sa kombodzali
Maṭo a sa pofuli

Ri sikele nḁevhe dzi sa pfi
Nḁevhe dzi sa dzingi

Ri sikulule Yehova
Ri si tshile
Ri tshile ri muhumbulo

'Lord! Oh Lord
If you can create for us an unending humanity
Humanity that never ceases

If you could create eyes that see not
Eyes that wink not
Eyes that are never blind

If you could recreate us
That we live not
But live in thoughtfulness'

A chapter on modern poetry is followed by one that deals with protest poetry. Venda poetry has shown a remarkable shift from the tendency to emulate the romantic-symbolist convention of western poets to a type of poetry that is suited to the poets's socio-political circumstances. Protest poetry appears both in English and in African languages such as Venda. The protest poets who write in English are:

Mafika Gwala
Denis Brutus
Oswald Mtshali
Mongane Serote
Ingoapele Madingoane et cetera.

The emergence of the Black Consciousness Movement in the mid 1970's instilled a spirit of militancy in black poetry in South Africa.

In Venda, Ratshitanga and others are the poets whose poetry protests against the oppression of the Vhavana. To them, poetry is a means of awakening the people to the ills that destroy their humanity and dignity.

Although the poetry reflects anger and bitterness against oppression, it kindles a sense of hope in the hearts of the oppressed.

7.00 FUTURE TREND

At present, Venda poets are experiencing in their poetry, a fusion of the traditional and the modern spirit. To some poets, good poetry writing implies the emulation of western standards. There are some poets who have emulated the western standards and succeeded in discarding the traditional spirit to a certain extent. The other poets who have emulated the western spirit of poetry, in trying to reach it, have only discovered that they have fallen back on the traditional well.

Most of the so-called 'modern poems' in Venda are still praise poems in nature. In trying to fall into a fold of modern western poetry, many Venda poets have ended up making reflections on pettiness. On the other hand, one should take note of those Venda poets who have made a fusion of the modern and the traditional spirit in their poetry and those who have emulated western poetry to such an extent that they attain a measure of success.

In modern Venda poetry, the tendency is to write poetry that addresses itself to the ills of the society. This type of poetry is known as 'protest poetry'. There are those who regard protest poetry as mere propaganda. This view is tantamount to the view of students of the western world who used to regard African Oral literatures as no literature at all. They were later shaken into an awareness when they discovered the artistic richness it has. The same holds for protest poetry. I would say that each protest poem should be treated on its own merit. Any work of art may reveal certain weaknesses but that does not nullify its artistic value. I would say again, that protest poetry will be able to stand its ground if its themes can stand the test of time. This suggests that it should be characterized by a certain timeless quality. The

removal of its object of attack should not render it valueless. The quality of timelessness may be attained only if the protest poetry in question is transcendental in nature.

Most Venḍa poets are writing a type of poetry that addresses itself to the ills of the Vhavenḍa. Unfortunately, some of the poets shun protest poetry for fear of vindictive actions on the part of the government. Those who shun writing poetry that is itself socially relevant are doing so in the cause for protecting their monthly salaries. There are, as a matter of fact, those who have plucking up courage, and made a subtle entry into protest poetry. One can predict that future Venḍa poetry will wake up from its lulling stupor, to follow the example of Ratshiṅga and others. Venḍa poets will feel the urge to write poetry relevant to the ills and aspirations of the people and will move away from the prevailing tendency of hammering on redundant and non-controversial themes; for literature results from the conscious acts of men in society. At the level of the individual artist, the very act of writing implies a social relationships : one is writing about somebody for somebody.

At the collective level, literature, as a product of man's intellectual and imaginative activity embodies, in words and images, the tensions, conflicts and contradictions at the heart of a community's being.

It is a reflection on the aesthetic and imaginative plane, of a community wrestling with its total environment to produce the basic means of life, food, clothing, shelter, and in the process creating and recreating itself in history.

Protest poets, are artists who are concerned with the creation of a timeless monument. Their artistic activities are part of man's self-realization as a result of his wrestling with nature.

It follows then, that because of its social character, protest poetry as a creative process and also as an end, is conditioned by historical and social forces and pressures. It cannot elect to stand above or transcend economics, politics, class and race.

Seen in this light, the product of a protest poet's pen both reflects reality and also attempts to persuade us to take a certain attitude towards that reality. The persuasion can be a direct appeal on behalf of a protest poet's open doctrine or it can be an indirect appeal through influencing the imagination, feelings and actions of the recipient in a certain way toward certain goals and a set of values, consciously or unconsciously held by him.

8.00 SUMMARY

CHAPTER I reflects on the aim of this research, methods of research and the literary background. In the literary background, mention is made of how Western thinking used to regard African literature as no literature at all. Blacks were regarded, for example, by Burton, as savages, whose custom was that of going naked. No piece of art could be expected from such people. The chapter also shows how a renewal of interest developed in African oral tradition and how the sense of re-awakening removed the feeling of regarding African tradition as no literature at all. Westerners started to view African oral tradition on its own terms.

CHAPTER II deals with children's rhymes, songs and lullabies. Lullabies are sung by mothers, nurses or grandmothers when they induce children to sleep. Some songs and rhymes are sung for entertainment while others have a didactic overtone. Lullabies, songs and rhymes have good poetic qualities like rhythm, parallelism, Linking, et cetera, and should as a matter of fact, be regarded as poetry in their own right.

CHAPTER III is concerned with 'Praise poetry'. Praise poetry attaches value to specific personalities, events, places, ceremonial and symbolic objects. It extols human achievements and it is a means of giving value to the society as a whole.

CHAPTER IV shows how modern poets in Venda have tried to write their poetry according to western poetic norms and standards. To a certain extent, their attempt to emulate and imitate western poetry has been realized. Unfortunately the traditional spirit pervaded and held its sway in most of the modern Venda poetry. In some poems, the spirit emerges the full light of day, thus exposing their traditional quality.

The chapter reveals a noticeable shift from the traditional concepts to 'new' western ones like 'love' which is regarded by modern Venda poets as an unfolding and life enhancing experience.

The other concept is that of religion, where most of the poems are characterized by a ring of living voice, a soul in agony, expostulating with the Creator and pouring itself out in supplication. This is followed by a sense of hope and the possible redemption of human nature through God's grace.

The poem on nature reveals a sense of correspondence between the beautiful forms of nature and the poet's sense of inner calm, while those on 'Social' interaction and the painfulness of existence reveal the pointlessness and the poignancy of man's destruction of his own kind.

CHAPTER V is on protest poetry. Protest poetry is a type of poetry that is suited to the poets' socio-political circumstances. It may be regarded as a 'conscientizing' literature. It has come to be regarded as 'people's poetry' and it expresses on the oppression of the Black man. This type of poetry came to be regarded as Post-Sharpeville poetry, Township poetry, New Black poetry of the seventies, Participatory poetry and People's poetry as well as Soweto poetry. It is customarily associated with living in Soweto, although of late, it has become erroneous to restrict its influence to Soweto, since its spirit pervades Black Universities and homelands throughout the country.

In this chapter, mention is made of those Black poets who write in English. For example, Dennis Brutus, Alex La Guma, Mongane Serote, Sipho Sepamla, Ingoapele Madingoane.

In Venda, protest poetry is found in the poems of, Nthambeleni Phalanndwa, Gundo Lidovho and Irene Mutsila whose poems appeared in Staffrider. The total embodiment of Venda protest poetry is

realized in the poets such as R F Ratshitanga, whose voice have become the only voices in Venda that rises against oppression. These poets are deeply affected by the indifference of the oppressors to the oppressed.

This chapter deals with protest poetry in other African languages such as Xitsonga, Sesotho, N. Sotho and Setswana. It also deal with post-colonial protest poetry which is a kind of poetry that protests no longer against the oppression of a White but against that of a fellow Black.

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