

**WOMEN CHARACTERS IN SELECTED WOMEN FOLKTALES**

By

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## DECLARATION

I declare that "**WOMEN CHARACTERS IN SELECTED WOMEN'S FOLKTALES**" is my own work and that all the sources I have used have been cited and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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**LYDIA MAPHUTI MAPONYA**

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## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my children, Mamokoma Angelina Maponya, Phuti Ella Maponya, Mede Justina Maponya and the late Manoko Lina Maponya, for their moral support and unfailing faith in me.

## **SUMMARY**

The First Chapter comprises the introduction of the study. It deals with the problem statement, the purpose of the study, the methodology, literature review, the definition of the relevant concepts and the motivation for the research.

Chapter Two explores the theoretical framework. Some aspects of literary theory like gender play an important role in the development of the second chapter. This chapter is consequently very important to this study because literary texts are used to advocate a change of approach in the teaching and reading of literary works. Feminism has been used as a theory to provide in-depth explanation of power relationships between the sexes.

Chapter Three pays attention to the role of folklore in socialising boys and girls. Chores and activities assigned to each gender are emphasised by the family and other social institutions to underscore their differentiations.

Chapter Four examines the role of women within the marital institution as well as conditions such as being the bride, widow, mother, primary wife, secondary wife and wife of a king.

Chapter Five investigates the gender stereotypical portrayal of women characters by society. Themes such as ignorance, negligence, stupidity and honesty are discussed in-depth to show the negative portrayal of women.

Chapter Six focuses on the negative portrayal of women characters without borders. The discussion goes to an extreme of torture.

Chapter Seven focuses on the presentation and analysis of the research and discussion of the findings. The chapter also concludes the research study, summarises the most important themes and makes recommendations as pointers to future research.

## ABSTRACT

Women characters in selected Sepedi folktales, seeks to reveal that the Sepedi folktales are set in the patriarchal structures. They use ogres, giants and man-like creatures to achieve their pleasures and ends in the face of social and cultural confines. These creatures are used to create social distance for contemplating acts and ideas that otherwise might appear to be intolerably disturbing. They evoke a sense of shock, awe and fear among women.

These folktales are thus appropriate to some of the evils attributed to women in particular. Women are portrayed in the thesis as vulnerable and marginalised. Their characters vacillate from disobedience, stupidity, mischievousness, weak, untrustworthy and wizardry. According to this kind of thought, they are reduced by the society to be indecisive.

The researcher's point of view reveals that not all women are weak and submissive, as some are brave, intelligent, trustworthy, obedient and tactful. Most of the women play important roles in the society. The ogres and fearful creatures, even if they perform evil tactics, women in many cases seem to outmanoeuvre the brutality of the enemy. Finally, through the use of feminism, the study tackles the struggle of women in a folktale environment with a view to understand human lives.

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## **CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

The position of women in Africa is a life of endless struggle (Besha, 1988). There has been awareness building among the majority of people, men and women, but especially amongst women. The rhetoric has helped to make sure that no one in society operating at whatever level, can ignore the “women question”; even if many times the admission that there is a problem is grudgingly made.

Although they are the backbone of society, this research study is an attempt to highlight women’s portraiture in folktales which depict them negatively. The researcher will address issues with specific reference to oppression, negligence, barrenness, dishonesty, jealousy and laziness. Emphasis will be placed on cultural norms and long held traditions in selected Sepedi folktales which are difficult to change to include women’s voices.

The researcher will collect data by reviewing all documents that address women’s subordination in order to get the gist of the issues raised above. Women’s roles, position and social status differ, and as a result, their efforts should be celebrated. Men and women should work together to change social systems.

In this research, the argument that some women characters in Sepedi folktales who perform menial works are negligent, untrustworthy, mischievous and disobedient is quite true. But there are some women who work hard for the benefit of their families and society at large. The question of generalisation is unacceptable because women’s characters differ and this will enrich our understanding of the potentialities of feminist enquiry.

### **1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM**

South African women’s struggle against oppression dates back to the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. It included widespread opposition to land deprivation in 1913. During those days, according to Loades, Armstrong, Daly, Farley

and Harrison (1990), the priorities of women were largely different. Both the migrant labour system and the suffrage movements further exposed the divisions between the experiences and prioritisation of women of different race groups.

The history of folktale scholarship indicated a tradition of downplaying and ignoring the heroic details of female characters. The patriarchal sensibilities of the nineteenth century shaped scholarship in folktales. The same bias existed in studies of women's folktales. The portrayal of women reflected the way in which they were viewed and treated in society.

There is a strong tendency made by society to generalise women's characters into a single identity of mothers and child raisers, disregarding the fact that women have the ability to perform other roles in society which warrant recognition. Women's roles are diverse, and as a result, they are disadvantaged if society limits their roles to motherhood only. The researcher's role in this study is to explore the roles, positions, and status that women occupy in selected women's folktales and society at large. These roles are examined with a view to conclude how society uses a patriarchal gaze to project women through folktales.

### **1.3 LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **1.3.1 Portrayal of women**

Women are generally portrayed negatively. For instance, as, unreliable, disobedient, irresponsible, disloyal, disagreeable, adulterous, cunning, senseless, gullible, forgetful, evil, lazy and full of trickery.

As co-wives they are ogres, cruel and malicious. Kabira (2005) argues that the image of wives strengthens the argument that women need to be protected from themselves and from other women as well as men because their 'nature' is such that they engage in self-destructive activities. She concludes that "it is a general belief that a man should beat his wife at least once because he may be cursed by his ancestors if he died before doing so". To her, folktales are used to perpetuate a negative image of women.

### **1.3.2 Women and Authority**

The researcher has viewed *Gender Representation in Children's Literature 1900-1984* (Grauerholz, 1989). The argument in the above title is that the portrayal of men in central roles outnumbered female characters in these books throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The issues raised are that men are four times as likely to appear in central roles as women. Girl characters and human females fare much lower than that of men. This explains the reasons why men are more powerful than women in social and political spheres of life.

The researcher's findings are that discrepancies persisted. The structure for the exercise of authority places women at the bottom and men at the top, both in terms of how successful they are in imposing their will over subjects. The woman's power is confined to the home.

Women are not uniformly limited to the domestic scene. Some women are depicted outside of their homes, sometimes alone on their farms. Some differences would occur in the type of work they do and the status associated with these roles. The greater number of females represented in the titles and central roles may reflect a growing concern among authors and publishers for equal gender representation (Board, Fisher, Moran and Zawodny, 1975; Lystad, 1980; Macmillan, 1975; McCraw-Hill, 1974). Despite this increased awareness, however, an overall imbalance remained, particularly in the representation of adult women and female animals.

### **1.3.3 Barrenness in the family**

Continuing the focus on abuse, women are constantly shown in their reproductive roles. Men are not spared this pressure to have children either, although we do not see any man who measures his happiness solely on his ability to produce offspring. Mphahlele (1992) claims: "*Mosadi o a nyalwa fela ka nepo ya go ba le bana. Tshenyoyohle ya ka lapeng e amantšhwa le yena.*" Translated this means that "A man marries a wife with the purpose of giving birth to children. All the mistakes in the family are the responsibility of the woman." Rattray (1977) emphasises that "the theme of barrenness is very common in African literature." The prevalence of this subject would



point to a child oriented society and consequently an overriding, limited definition of successful womanhood.

Mphahlele agrees with Rattray that a childless marriage makes one isolated. The woman in "*Woka wo Asem na Anntse Tale A*" consults the palm tree and is prepared to do whatever the tree demands in return for a child (Maru, in Kabaji 2009). In Mphahlele (1992) the two groups of relatives of the bride and groom meet in order to resolve the problem of barrenness.

#### **1.3.4 Women and secrets**

Peggy (1966) portrayed women as people who are incapable of keeping secrets and of being responsible for the spread of calamities in the world. In the tale entitled "It is good to be kind", a hunter rescues animals caught in a pit and the animals promise to show their gratitude. The mouse brings the hunter a bag of gold, which improves his economic standing considerably. The hunter knows that the mouse had stolen the gold from the king's treasury, and after persistent questioning from his wife about the source of their wealth, the hunter tells her about the gifts from the mouse. The wife, "a stupid woman, and a gossipmonger who likes to boast." Appiah, in Kabaji (2009) reveals the secret of their wealth to someone in the village.

In another tale by Appiah (1966), the cock and the hen agree not to disclose their discovery of gold dust to their master because "when he became rich he would be so happy that he would order the two fowl to be filled for a delicious meal in order to celebrate with his family the discovery of such a fortune" (Peggy, in Kabaji 2009). The hen unfortunately discloses the secret to her friends.

#### **1.3.5 Stepchildren and stepmothers**

Men and women are shown to be ultimately unhappy in the polygamous marriage. There are examples of women who fight in a polygamous home, or who harm each other's children. Makwala (2005) relates the story of Molahlegi who after her mother's death was taken care of by her father's two wives. She was ill-treated by the stepmothers. She did all the work in the house while her siblings played.

Research in African Literature by Sonia (1976) supports the view that an orphan always grows up in unloving hands of stepmothers. Maimouna was also an orphan in a polygamous household after her mother's death. The tale focuses on the stereotyped figure of the wicked stepmother who is bent on removing her stepdaughter from the family economy. Although the tale "Maimouna" challenges the view of stepchildren held in collective consciousness and upholds bonding and solidarity between half-sisters, it disempowers the mother as a woman victimiser of a girl. Saying sometimes inspire folktales, indeed, some of the tales in our collection, like these ones are founded on proverbs they either use as titles or morals to close them.

The issues raised in the tales are, among others, to reveal the proverbial phrase that closes the tale "a stepchild is not like one's own", a piece of popular wisdom attributed to Barma, and a mythical figure to whom a number of sayings in Walof society are credited (Gamble, 1980). The significance of this is encoded in the second tuft on Barma's sows' head. A version of this story is found in Lilong (1997) where the motherless child finds solace in the care of her half-sister who redresses the unfair treatment inflicted by her own mother on her sibling and the matter is reported to the father. The wicked stepmother is punished and banished from the village.

### **1.3.6 Women are characterised by silence**

In the village of Motshatshakholoma, according to Mashabela (2007), there was a girl called Legwalakatshepa, who refused to speak to any man who proposed love to her. The chief of that village assembled all his subjects and asserted: "the girl is not willing to talk to any man unless he makes her laugh". Men in that village tried to speak to her but she could not respond. The issues raised in the above tale are similar to the story of "*mokgekolo wa mehlolo*" in Makwala (2005). The old woman had only one daughter. Several men wished to marry her but she refused because she put a prize for herself so that the men are unable to succeed in marrying her. All the prizes were made in silence.

Sekatane (1992) supports this idea by arguing that "women protest against the arranged marriages with their cousins and those concluded by the parents". She reports that Sewela pretended to be ill to the extent of being confined to bed:

Sewela's refusal can be seen as a protest she is refusing because she has realised that women's views are never called for, whenever they are informed of an issue...

On the whole, the stories primarily feature female characters. Some protagonists act and alter the course of things or are agents in the transformation of the status quo, while others abide by the generally accepted norms.

### **1.3.7 Stupidity and dishonesty**

Madiba (1949) relates the story of a certain woman by the name of Masopoga who lived at Phokwane. She has worked for a white farmer called Radikolobe. One day Radikolobe instructed Masopoga to take food to his workers in the fields. On the way, Masopoga had a stupid idea of uncovering the basket of food. The food was smelling delicious. As a result, she told herself that: Radikolobe will not know her secrets (*O ile a tlabja ke ge a setše a bitšwa gomme a botšišwa ka dikuku le dikokisana tše o a di llogo*). (She was called to account for the cakes and biscuits she had eaten).

Another story which reveals that 'crime does not pay' is the tale "*Mokhudu le lehodu la maloko*". Makgamatha (1988) relates the story of an old woman discovered in a kraal stealing and eating dung daily while the animals were away. The old woman is trapped, caught and killed by the wild animals.

The issues raised in the above tales have a message and a warning against any dishonest practice. The approach to the stories examined herein considers the coding strategies used to deal with power and marginality.

### **1.3.8 Passivity and women**

The argument in this article is mounted by Lundell (2009) who challenges Thompson's (1964) tale-type index, the structuralist and dominant classification scheme used in the study of folk and fairy tales. The tales in Aarne and Thompson's work portray females as passive. Scholars like Lundell, Bottigheimer and Kolbenschlag (2009) criticise the image of the somnolent and passive beauty. They argue that "there is

urgent need for revision of these tales particularly when we read the following cross references in Stith Thomason's Multi Index of folk literature". Tatar's criticism of the system concludes that "The Thompson's Index (1964) offers a particularly vivid example of the way in which the most expert readers of a folktale rewrite it even as they do nothing more than summarise its events" (Ragan, 1998).

The issues raised in the article are that the Thompson Index places both male and female protagonists under male headings, ignores female activity and focuses on male activity at the expense of females. The researcher finds that the scholarship of the folktales led to the acceptance of the idea that a male-centred tale from a male teller and collected by a male incorporates "a shared male worldview and experience" Lundell (2009).

### **1.3.9 Women and ignorance**

An examination of folktale genres, and in particular, folktale reveals a system in which women are represented as people who are ignorant. Magapa (2000) relates the story of a farmer and his wife who went out to hoe their fields. They spent the whole day in their fields and came back after sunset. It was dark when they arrived home. The woman went first in the house followed by her husband. The wife said:

*Ntshwarele ngwana ke kgone go ala! Phiri e ile ya amogela  
ngwana. Ka lethabo gomme ya tšhaba ka yena.*

Hold this child for me so that I can arrange the bed. The wild  
animal took the child and ran away with him.

The man said: "O ra ngwana ofe"? Which child are you referring to? The woman was very sad when she realised that the child was nowhere to be found. The issues raised in the above tale are similar to the number of tales in Makgamatha (1991) taken from Thompson tale type wild animals (1-99) which have a tendency of viewing women negatively. He relates the story of Samosebelete, a dog that reports the misdeeds of a woman who disobeys her husband's instructions to feed his dog good food even in his absence.

The values enforce a way of seeing that is anchored on gender lines and in a manner that generally purports to create balance between the genders. However, the Sepedi folktale also has the potential to obstruct pathways to transformation, more specifically, the female gender.

### **1.3.10 Women are portrayed as witches**

Some societies do have a witchcraft discourse but a hidden one. They do have notions of evil, but they never express them, as indicated by Kgatla (2003) in crossing witchcraft barriers in South Africa. He further indicated that witchcraft seems to be among Bantu-speaking groups, including Pedi people of Southern Africa.

The key factor is the belief in witch-divination. Makwala (2005) relates the story of Ralehopše, who was disappointed by his mother in his first marriage. His mother went to the door of Ralehopše's house early in the morning and said:

*Nna ke letše ke sa lala. Mahlatša e be e le mahlatša, Mampho e be e le mampho, Mešišo e be e le mešišo, Sephinya e be e le sephinya.*

I did not sleep at night, I was vomiting, had diarrhoea, urinating and passing gas.

The next day, Ralehopše's mother came to greet the bride and her maids.

Ralehopše said:

*Nna ke letše ke robetše le ba, ka mosadi ke mosadi wa ka, wa ka o letše a ntlhabile ka letswele, Ka letswele, ka letswele.*

Ralehopše said:

I have slept with my brides. Woman is my wife. My wife has struck me with her fist.

Ralehopše's mother was angry and confused and asked again:

*Ke re wena Ralenyora. Ke re o letše bjang?*

I am saying to you Ralenyora, how did you sleep?

Ralehopše's mother responded:

*Ngwetši, ga se dingwetši, Ngwetši tšeo a di boele morago, A di boele morago, morago*

Ralehopše's mother replied:

These are not the real brides. They must go back home.

Those brides did not waste time after Ralehopše's mother had said those evil words. Ralehopše started to look for the second wife. He went as far as Morapalala, and his mother did the same thing. Those brides went back home. He went for the third wife at Ralela. His mother welcomed the bride and the bride maids.

During the night, the old lady *a tsoga* (woke up),

*A thoma ka mathaithai a le a gagwe.*

She woke up, she did all her shenanigans.

Ralehopše replied and said that he slept well. His mother went mad and died.

The system of oppression in patriarchal families, as in the class system, forces the oppressed to fight each other and makes it difficult for solidarity to exist. On the other hand, negative experiences and sufferings have truly formed the basis for female solidarity, and are uniting factors in certain situations in which married women perform together in groups. In these situations, however the issue is not contestation. But rather the context appropriate to performance of the dominant tradition and an attempt to transfer to the bride's knowledge concerning the female experience of marriage and living under the authority of a mother-in-law.

### **1.3.11 Female tricksters**

An ogre, according to Makgamatha (1991), is often called *Dima*, *Lekgema* or *Temakgolo* in Sepedi folktales, and is usually presented as a wicked monster that is ugly and fearful. He is huge in size and has a deep rough voice as it is reflected in various versions of Tselane's folktale.

Makgamatha (1991) relates the story of a young girl called Tselane who refused to move from the area with her parents. The ogre found her being alone and imitated her (Tselane's) mother's voice. He gains entrance to the locked hut by singing a song which Tselane recognises. The song was as follows:

*Tselane, tšea bogobe o je. Tselane, ngwanaka, o je.*

Tselane, take the food and eat. Tselane, my daughter, please eat.

The imitation of Tselane's mother's voice enabled the ogre to gain entrance to the locked hut and captured Tselane, thus creating the impression of successful trickery. However, this action only prepares the way for another attempt at tricking Tselane later in the narrative, where the trickster becomes the dupe.

While the ogres were away hunting other humans, their mother invited Tselane to have her head shaven. The intention was to slit her throat in the process, but Tselane was cunning. She suggested shaving the ogres' head first, and then proceeds to kill and cook her in the same pot. Tselane was supposed to be cooked in there herself.

In this tale the trickery of the ogre is never allowed to triumph over human beings. He is made to be outwitted and killed by human beings. The ogre's victims are usually young girls in Tselane to represent negative attributes in society as disobedience, unfaithfulness and innocent mischief in general.

The girls are always rescued from the ogre and given a new lease of life, as it were. The morality of the folktales, according to Makgamatha (1991), makes the offender to suffer severely. This is a patriarchal story which never allows girls to show characters of being brave and intelligent. They are always portrayed as being kind, caring and fearless.

### **1.3.12 Women reinforcing stereotypes of domesticity**

Women's roles seem relatively confined to the home, especially to sweep, take care of the family and guests, prepare food and wash clothes. This is reflected by Makwala (2005) in the story of Ralehopše, who was married to a girl from the village of

Tlhotlhokwe. The wedding was organised. The bride informed all her bride-maids and friends. Ralehopše informed his mother, who in turn, invited girls in the community to come and prepare everything:

*Ba tla ba setla, ba ba ba apeela dingwetši. Ba apea matsaka gore ba ipshine ka ona.*

Girls came to grind the mealies and to prepare delicious food.

*Baeng ba ile ba kgotsofala ka meetse a go kgewa sedibeng.*

The visitors were grateful for the water that was fetched from the river.

The findings are that these attributes of girls are many and varied, ranging from the truly absurd to bizarre. Although they are the carers of society, some of their actions indeed show that women are extremely cold-hearted, careless and untrustworthy. It would appear that the tales are an indoctrinating agent to make female recipients believe that she cannot measure up to the masculine virtues. This should be the root cause of lacking confidence in women especially in taking up certain public roles.

There is always a need for either the male or female underdog to challenge, confront and even attempt to subvert a system, be it natural or social that does not recognise him or her. It is here that the female figure, as the underdog in a patriarchal system, fits in. Once again, this becomes a site from which the mainly female performers subvert a popular belief for they see themselves as intellectuals that society has refused to recognise. Thus underlying the trickster tale is a sub-text that remains secretive.

#### **1.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The theories selected for this study are as follows: feminism, womanism and gynocriticism and psychoanalysis.



### 1.4.1 Feminist Theory

Feminism is the ideology of a modern social movement for the advancement of women, taking shape in the eighteenth century. The feminist theory is one of the major contemporary sociological theories which analyses the status of women and men in society with the purpose of using this knowledge to better women's lives, including how race, class, ethnicity and age intersect with gender. It is concerned with giving a voice to women and highlighting the various ways that women have contributed to society.

The theory focuses on relations of dominance and subordination and all possible structures, dynamics and dialectics, between male and female, men and women as gendered individuals in society. In this sense, the present study re-examines the category of 'male' and 'masculine' while acknowledging the primacy of male and female reproductive differences as key to gender. For instance, the cultural meaning attached to sexual identity, and the social and cultural processes underlying the creation of the categories 'men' and 'women' through the folktale discourse.

The feminist theory takes cognisance of feminist concerns which, according to Kabajl (2009), have recognised the deficit of information on women's place in culture, society and history. The philosophies of Kristeva, Cixous and Irigaray (1985) inform this study in the sense that they delight in illuminating internal contradictions in seemingly perfect and coherent systems of thought, which serve to attack ordinary notions of authorship, identity and selfhood. Simone de Beauvoir's "The Second Sex" (1972) questions why women are the second sex, or in postmodern terms, why the woman is referred to as the 'other'? Rather than view this condition as something to be transcended, they proclaim its advantages.

The condition of "otherness" enables them to stand back and criticise the norms, values and practices that the dominant culture (patriarchy) seeks to impose on everyone, including those that live on its periphery. This study takes cognisance of the position and information on women and men and puts it into a theoretical and conceptual framework, which interrogates the folktale texts under study as a site for contesting patriarchal social structures, relationships, identities and ideology.

Gullestad (1993) argues that the assumption that women everywhere are subordinate to men is not a useful guideline in investigations of gender. The axiom of global subordination assumes what should be examined and reduces the ability of the analyst to uncover the subtleties, complexities, contradictions and ambiguities of gender relations in different contexts. Gullestad asserts that “a genuine and thorough examination has to take into consideration the African socio-cultural context and the values that govern the sexes”. The researcher heeds caution given by Lockett (1990) and Guyatri (1987) to Western scholars that they should avoid impositions and refrain from speaking into the painfully stressed arena of the Third World woman’s experience. The researcher takes into consideration all possibilities of interpretation that recognise African female performers as active agents in the struggle for space in a patriarchal society.

#### **1.4.2 Womanism**

Womanism is a feminist term coined by Walker (2007) and is a reaction to the realisation that feminism does not encompass the perspective of black women. It is feminism that is ‘stronger in colour’. Womanism addresses the racist and classic aspect of white feminism and actively opposes separatist ideologies. It includes the words ‘man recognising that black men are an integral part of black women’s lives as their children, lovers and family members’. This perspective is often used as a means for analysing black women’s literature, as it marks the point where race, gender, class and sexuality intersect.

It is within this context that the works of theorists such as Acholonu (1995) are significant. Acholonu uses the term ‘motherism’ as a multi-dimensional Afrocentric theory to define what she sees as being “the essence of African womanhood”. She argues that African feminism is distinctly heterosexual and pro-natal and grants a pivotal place to the distinctly supportive roles of the African as opposed to the Western woman. Contrary to this perception, Lewis (2004) dismisses this view and what she sees as African feminism scholarship’s focus on the everyday, the ordinary and the seemingly insignificant. She questions the African feminist’s view of culture which is seen as encompassing all socially inflected exchanges and mediations and viewed as the site of localised struggles and transformations.

Both Steady (1987) and Badejo (1999) advance a type of African feminist ideology founded upon the principles of traditional African values that view gender roles as complementary, parallel, asymmetrical and autonomously linked in the continuity of human life. Badejo argues that African feminism recognises the inherent multiple roles of women and men in reproduction, production and the distribution of wealth, power and responsibility for sustaining human life. This feminist perspective is underscored by traditional mythical beliefs and religious practices found in African oral literacy traditions and festivals that place women at the centre of the social order as custodians of the earth, fire and water, and uphold men as the guardians of women's custodial rights.

Badejo's position is that African feminism embraces femininity, beauty, power, serenity, inner harmony and a complex matrix of power and is always poised and centred in womanness, demonstrating that power and femininity could be seen as complementary to African masculinity. African feminism is therefore active and essential to the social, political, cultural and evolutionary aspects of human order. It is therefore imperative to adduce evidence from the corpus of folktales under study in order to validate or dismiss this complementary theory. The argument here is that there is a need for gender studies in Africa to embrace a new identity. This is valid within the broad spectrum of the quest for relevance. The fact that both the African man and woman are complex entities whose consciousness goes beyond the obvious binaries is no doubt true while still paying attention to ambiguities within the African world view.

Finally, the researcher views womanism as being unique because it does not necessarily imply any political position or value system other than the honouring of black women's strength and experience, and that it recognises that women are survivors in a world that is oppressive on multiple platforms. It seeks to celebrate the ways in which women initiate these oppressions in their individual lives.

Womanism is relevant to this study because it recognises that men are an integral part of black women's lives. It serves as a tool for understanding the black woman's relationship to men as different from the white woman's. It also marks the place where race, class, gender and sexuality intersect.

### **1.4.3 Gyno-criticism Theory**

Gyno-criticism is a word coined by Showalter (1985) to describe a critique of sexism in Canonical texts that gave way to the recovery and study of women's writing. Showalter (1977) coined the word and was suggested in Griffin (1993) that one way of writing the history of gyno-criticism is to write the history of feminist criticism by situating it in women's time. She has further suggested that literature be deconstructed to dismiss canonicity.

Gyno-critics identify four models of difference: biological, linguistic, psychoanalytical and cultural. The emphasis on each model may depend on feminine priorities within cultures (Tagoe, 1997). French feminist criticism may, for instance, emphasise *écriture féminine*, the inscription of the female body and female difference in language and text. But the African feminist critic, while acknowledging biology as a sphere of difference, recognises the possible limitations and stereotyping that it can generate in an African context.

Leslie (1987), Tagoe (1997) and Tamusuza (2002) rightly observe that French and American critics may assert women's difference within a framework of sexual politics, while African feminists would argue that power relations between men and women should be considered in the context of the limitations of an African world.

Although characters change, the structuralists agree that the structure of the folktales remains stable. These structuralist studies extend our understanding of folktales in their postulation that folktales, like language, consist of both 'langue' and 'parole'. Strauss (1970), for instance, sees tension or the structural binary opposition as present in tales from all cultures. The researcher reviews by examining the binary relationships in gender roles and identifying themes and their implications. By so doing, this study adds a critical element to the explanation of the position of both men and women, and the interaction of both genders in African communities through

rectifying the common perception that views women as objects who are acted upon, and shows them as active agents involved in bargaining with patriarchy and contesting it.

#### **1.4.4 The theory of Psychoanalysis**

Psychoanalytic theory, according to Makgamatha (2000), refers to the definition of personality organisation and the dynamics of personality development that underlies and guide psychoanalytic and psychodynamics, psychotherapy called psychoanalysis, a clinical method for treating psychopathology.

According to Hammond-Tooke (1988), psychoanalytical reading reveals patterns which correspond to certain recurrent, and deeply seated fears in the collective subconscious. The researcher is not going to use this theory in the analysis but prefers the feminist theory.

Sigmund Freud was the first person to pair literature and psychoanalysis. In doing so, he concentrated on the unconscious aspects of the human psyche, and demonstrated that most actions are motivated by psychic forces over which there is very limited control. Related to this study, psychoanalytic theory can be used to help clarify the meaning of the writing as well as the actions of the characters within the text. Its limitations are that it lacks consideration of culture and influence on personality.

The researcher chooses to advance with the theory of feminism in this research because it is concerned with giving a voice to women and highlights various ways in which women contribute to society, although their efforts are being marginalised by the same society.

### **1.5 OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS**

#### **1.5.1 Folktale**

Folktales are fictional stories about animals or human beings. Most of these stories are not set in any particular time or place and they begin and end in a certain way.

### **1.5.2 Character**

Character means qualities that influence a person in what he/she is thinking, feeling and acting in important matters of life, especially in relation to the principles of right and wrong or the special ways in which any person feels, thinks and acts, and when considered as good or bad make up his/her character.

### **1.5.3 Woman**

Is a female human being the term woman is usually reserved for an adult with the term girl being the usual term for a female child or adolescent?

### **1.5.4 Narrator**

Is a person who tells a story in literature, the voice that an author takes on to tell a story. This voice can have a personality quite different from the authors.

## **1.6 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

### **1.6.1 Aim of the study**

The aim of the study is to examine how women are portrayed in Sepedi folktales.

### **1.6.2 Objectives**

To achieve the aim above, the following objectives are pursued:

- To identify women characters from folktales;
- To classify women characters according to their roles, behaviour and social status; and
- To analyse how these women characters are portrayed in the texts.

## **1.7 METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this section is to explain fully the nature of the research methodology to be followed in this study. This will be done by outlining the research methods chosen for this study, data collection techniques used and the manner in which data

will be analysed in this study. This section will also motivate and explain the reasons for selecting the research methodology and design, including data collection methods and analysis techniques of the study.

### **1.7.1 Research Design and Methodology**

There are a variety of research methods available to the social scientist. Each of these methods has strengths and weaknesses, and certain concepts, according to Mabelebele (2005), are more appropriately studied by some methods than by others. Social research serves many purposes. Babbie (2001) mentions the three most common and useful: exploration, description and explanation. Terreblanche and Durrheim (1999) and Bogdan and Biklen (1982) support Babbie by explaining that there are three different ways in which types of research have been distinguished; i) exploratory, ii) descriptive and iii) explanatory research. The research study under investigation will employ qualitative research design rather than quantitative design.

- The research design employed in the study is qualitative.
- Qualitative research involves finding out what people think, how they feel and what they say. It seeks to discover and explore a process or to describe experiences.
- Qualitative research enables the researcher to approach the problem holistically.
- Again, it is subjective because it involves feelings and impressions. It also allows the researcher to define his or her role clearly.

### **1.7.2 Qualitative Research Methodology**

Barbour (2007) asserts “in recent years, qualitative research has enjoyed a period of unprecedented growth and diversification as it has become an established and respected research approach across a variety of disciplines and contexts”. Qualitative research methodology refers to the research philosophy methods and techniques that are grounded within a paradigm that negates positivism (Terreblanche and Durrheim, 1999; Bogdan and Biklen, 1982). Qualitative research methodology uses words and sentences (Bless and Higson-Smith, 1995) to qualify and record information about the world, and as a result, language is the tool by which social reality is recorded in a

qualitative way. Every research project therefore, requires a research design that is carefully tailored to the exact needs of the problem under investigation.

In this study only qualitative research methods will be used in the study. The reason for choosing a qualitative research design is mainly because this is meant to be an exploratory research study, findings of which cannot be generalised to be conclusive to the whole population (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982). According to Babbie (2001) an exploratory research is conducted to explore a topic, or start to familiarise the researcher within the topic. The approach typically occurs when the researcher examines a new interest or when the subject of study itself is relatively new.

Exploratory studies are most typically done for three reasons:

- i) to satisfy the researcher's curiosity and desire for better understanding
- ii) to test the feasibility of understanding a more extensive study; and
- iii) to develop the methods to be employed in any subsequent study.

Common to exploratory study is that it seeks to unravel how people construct the world around them, what they are doing or what is happening to them in terms that are meaningful and that offer rich insight. Interactions and documents are seen as ways of constituting social processes and artefacts collaboratively. All of these approaches represent ways of meaning, which can be reconstructed and analysed with different qualitative methods that allow the researcher to develop models, typologies and theories as ways of describing and explaining social issues.

It is the researcher's view that the qualitative research design can account for the internal validity of the study because it takes context and cases seriously for understanding an issue under study. A major part of qualitative research is based on text and writing from official documents, images, journals, music or similar traces of experiences or interactions, and finally the presentation of the findings and of the research as a whole. Therefore, issues of transforming complex social situations into texts, and issues of transcribing and writing in general are major concerns of qualitative research. The critical question that should be posed is how will this study determine sampling, type, procedure, size and techniques?



### **1.7.3 Data Collection Methods**

In collecting data, various qualitative methods are used namely; focus group discussion, document review (study), field observation and personal interviews. For this study, the researcher made use of the document review to investigate the subject of the inquiry since the study is mainly desk-top and does not need any human interaction. This data collection method was used to understand how women were portrayed in Sepedi folktales in terms of the desired objectives, and how they thought it could best be improved to promote participatory democracy and the development of women in society at large.

Document study (review), according to Mabelebele (2005), relates to the analysis of documents, including any written material that contains information relevant to the study. This data collection method again assisted the researcher to ground her understanding of the role of women in both indigenous and modern settings.

There are various documents in this field that assisted the researcher in shedding light on the inherent philosophies about women in folktales. The researcher has explored some African oral and written narratives to assess the extent to which women have been excluded and dominated over time by society. As Bailey (1994) suggests, a distinction was made between primary and secondary documents. Primary documents are eye-witness accounts written by people who experienced particular lives, events or behaviours, while secondary documents are accounts given by people who were not present but who received the information necessary to compile the documents by interviewing eye-witnesses or by reading primary documents (Bailey, 1994).

It should be indicated that for the purpose of this study, primary documents included the official documents of the previous researchers in this area of folklore, and were part of the people practising the exclusion of women and their domination as a model of exercising authority in society for the purpose of maintaining social stability and order. The documents included journals for folklore studies, previous dissertations about women in folktales, books and any other relevant materials on the subject of women.

Other secondary documents, including the works of researchers of non-African descent, who according to Mabelebele (2005), “parachuted” into African communities to study African indigenous knowledge systems were studied. The intention was to gain a better understanding of women from as many sources as possible in order to improve the volume of data collected for this study. Other commentaries on the subject were considered for review. This data collection method was chosen to benefit from the following advantages as stipulated by Bailey (1994).

- One of the basic advantages of document studies is that they allow the researcher to enter on subjects to which the researcher does not have physical access, and this cannot be studied by any other method. The most obvious group of people who are completely inaccessible for social research by any means except by documents because they are long dead.
- Document study also complements the weaknesses of other data collection methods. Although documents vary tremendously in quality, many, such as newspaper columns, are written by skilled social commentators and may be much more valuable than, for example, poorly articulated responses in the focus group discussions.

It is against this background that this data collection method was chosen for this study. The method will assist the researcher in formulating and concretising ideas about the subject of inquiry (Bless and Higson-Smith 1995) and developing a sense of understanding on the trends in relation to the subject of inquiry.

#### **1.7.4 Sampling**

Sampling is explained by Bless and Higson Smith (1995) as the scientific foundation of everyday practice. It is a technical accounting device to rationalise the collection of information; and to choose in an appropriate way of restricting a set of objects, persons, events and so forth from which the actual information will be drawn.

Terreblanche and Durrheim (2002), on the other hand, explain sampling as the observation of people, settings, events, behaviours and/or social processes. Exactly what will be sampled in a particular study is influenced by the unit of analysis.

For the purpose of this, study a non-probability sampling technique called purposive or judgemental sampling will be used. This sampling technique is based on the judgement of a researcher regarding the characteristics of a representative sample. The selection of the sample depends on the knowledge of the population (Terreblanche and Durrheim 2002).

In judgemental sampling (also called purposive sampling), the principle employed to select a sample is to use or expect judges to select cases with a specific case in mind. No sampling frames exist for these populations, and it is wasteful to sample from the whole population in order to identify the occasional case that satisfies the sampling criteria.

Bless and Higson-Smith (1995) support the above mentioned view by saying that a sample is chosen on the basis of what the researcher considers to be typical units. The strategy is to collect units that are judged to be the most common in the population under investigation. The principle employed in judgemental sampling is to use or expect judges to select cases with a specific purpose in mind.

It should also be noted that this sampling technique is particularly suitable for exploratory studies such as the present research study as it does not allow for the generalisation of the findings. This analysis informed the determination of the sample categories and respondents of this study. Data was collected from this category of study.

### **1.7.5 Instruments**

The instrument selected for study is document review, which makes it a desktop study. Terreblanche and Durrheim (2002) explain document review as typically focusing on trying to reconstruct the author's motives and intentions by seeking to understand what the author meant when he or she wrote the document. They go further by explaining that document review is simply a point of intersection for social meanings or discourses and is more distant from what 'really happened' or what somebody 'really felt'.

The researcher will review the selected women folktales that address the aims and objectives of the study. The researcher will concentrate on taking notes which are relevant to her research purposes. The researcher will remain focused in selecting the data from the documents.

#### **1.7.6 Analysis of data**

According to Terreblanche and Durrheim (2002), data analysis involves reading through collected data repeatedly and engaging in activities of breaking the data down by thematising and categorising as well as building it up again by means of a story or novel in order to elaborate and interpret it. The data for this study was collected mainly from the document study. A data analysis strategy had to be developed from the women folktales that were outlined in Chapter 1. Folktales in Sepedi, as in other African cultures, are not given titles in the sense that a writer gives a title to the story in a book. Tales are referred to by their subject matter or by their principal characters and their actions. Skinner (1969) states as follows: "The story titles were usually just a list of the main characters". The broad themes, which derive from the folktales collected, are as follows: issues of power, domination and abuse of women, greed and jealousy, selfishness, stupidity and dishonesty, exclusion of women from decision making processes, ignorance and carelessness, trickery of the Ogre and the passivity and barrenness of women.

It should further be indicated that since the research design and methodology selected for this study is qualitative, a qualitative analysis method had to be used. According to Bailey (1994), this is "a method of examining social research data without converting them to a numerical format, and therefore this remains a useful approach to data analysis and is even enjoying a resurgence of interest among social scientists".

A thematic content analysis of the folktales will be followed by categorising these folktales in the aforementioned themes. The major thrust of this data analysis method is the link between theory and analysis.

THEMES	FOLKTALES
1. Issues of power, domination and abuse of women.	Love brewed in an African pot.
2. Greed, jealousy and selfishness.	<i>Phakamatšana and Nonyana ya Morwa Motswiri.</i> <i>Ntsobe.</i> <i>Kitimi le Seemole.</i>
3. Stupidity and dishonesty.	<i>Mosadi le Moledi wa go makatša.</i> <i>Moselapše.</i> <i>Phakamatšana and Nonyana ya Morwa Motswiri.</i> <i>Mokgadi le Dikgelekgethu.</i> <i>O jele ngwana a re ke mmutla.</i>
4. Exclusion of women from the decision making processes.	In the village of Gawaan only men are entitled to make decisions. Men discussing the fate of a widow.
5. Ignorance, negligence and carelessness.	<i>Mokhudu le bana ba tau.</i> <i>Mmutla le bana ba tau.</i> <i>Katse le legotlo.</i> <i>Ngwana mmopša ka diatla.</i> <i>Mokgadi.</i>
6. Passiveness, laziness and weakness of women.	<i>Yusof-Zolayxa.</i>
7. Trickery of the Ogre/women.	How three women tricked their husband.
8. Barrenness of women.	<i>Tselane le Temakgolo.</i> Woka wo Asem na Anntse Tale A.

Transcription of the data collected will be made by the researcher.

- Data collected will be arranged into themes such as negligence, untrustworthiness, laziness, oppression, mischief and disobedience. At this time, the researcher must look for the themes from the folktales that are related to one another.
- Data which fits together will be categorised.
- Data will be given codes for future reference.
- As the researcher is dealing with qualitative research, qualitative methods of data analysis need to be employed. For example, the researcher will use Narrative Analysis as quoted in Reisman (1993).

Narrative analysis involves the study of literature, diaries and folklore. The method is distinctive, more individual and overlaps with other approaches.

The researcher, while using Narrative Analysis, will review the stories and compare ideas without being judgemental because Narrative Analysis emphasises:

- Context – situation;
- Core plot in the story; and
- Basic actions.

#### **1.7.7 Reliability, validity and objectivity of the study**

- a) Care will be taken to ensure that information collected from one folktale is cross-checked with other allomorphic tales.
- b) The folktales that are selected should address the aim and objectives of this study.

### **1.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

This study will not have ethical considerations because it is a desktop study which does not allow for any human intervention. Other ethical issues like integrity and issues of intellectual property are not addressed because gender provides an in-depth explanation of power relationships between the sexes.

### **1.8.1 Integrity**

Traditionally, the areas of ethical concerns in social science research deal with matters such as privacy, confidentiality, and institutional or professional control. Of specific concern in this study is the issue of integrity based on two principles. Du Plooy (2013) addresses the two principles as:

- to use a research design (methods and techniques) suited to the objectives and nature of the research problem or research issue and
- to not knowingly imply greater confidence or significance than the data warrant.

These principles, according to Du Plooy relating to the exact procedure used to collect data, including preceding explanations and instructions, which may have influenced a subject, must be reported, and that the data collected are scored accurately and consistently. The second principle specifically means that steps must be taken to ensure the reliability and validity of the measurements used, prior to and during their administration in an actual study, and afterwards, when coding and interpreting the data.

In other words, ethical issues are not limited to the treatment of people as participants or respondents in a study. For example, having conducted a quantitative and/ or qualitative content analysis, whether or not ethical prerequisites have been met will depend on whether the sample drawn is biased and/or whether the categories applied in the content analysis are mutually exclusive and exhaustive.

The researcher's view about integrity in the compilation of the research is that the methods and techniques should be in harmony with the objectives and nature of the research problem or research issues. There must be agreement so that what has been mentioned as the problem in the community, people can participate in bringing the solution towards the problem.

It is the change of attitudes in people's minds that is needed at the end of the research. The researcher supports what Du Plooy has pointed that conducting research with the research objectives of exploring knowledge development involves more than enabling people to change their minds, but to be purposively directed at solving practical

problems and in doing so, improving the quality of their lives. It is important therefore that the researcher be familiar with the lifestyles, activities, opinions, income and living areas of the people she/he is researching.

### **1.8.2 Use of intellectual property**

This study is particularly about the marginalisation of women, and therefore, the community must participate in bringing change in their communities. This study is aiming at changing the lives of the people in order to accept one another and respect one another's opinions. The sharing of knowledge requires these two aspects. Redressing inequalities of the past, especially with regard to women, children, the youth, and people with disabilities is key to development. The knowledge generated belongs to the communities that have been researched.

## **1.9 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The researcher's contribution is that women differ in their positions, status, behaviour and character. She hopes to add value and benefit the field of folklore studies in that this research will be a learning curve and a resource for people who will research further on the characteristics of women in folktales.

This study will make a contribution to the field of folklore studies in respect of a number of issues.

### **a) Theory**

Cultural feminism, among other feminist theories, begins with the assumption that men and women are fundamentally different. Babcock (1987) emphasises the point of difference by indicating that sexual inequality and male perspectives are key to cultural feminism. Babcock has further argued that traditionally, knowledge, truth and reality have been constructed as if men's experiences are normative, as if being human meant being male.

Feminist approaches in the field of folklore have been concerned with establishing gender as a fundamental category in the analysis of cultural experiences and creative artistic expressions. Feminist folklorists took their cue from early practitioners of



feminist theory who attempted to reveal ways in which female experience was ignored, denied and devalued in the production of knowledge.

Traditionally, looking at the social structure, there is a strong belief in the patriarchal descent principle. This is portrayed everywhere in the social system that to be male is to have authority over girls and females, hence the importance of sons and authority of men in the family and in society. Women are marginalised and ignored as if they are not people. They are taken as the other being, and their voices are not heard. They do not participate in the formation of cultural decisions because they are weak and lack wisdom.

This kind of attitude has roots that are not easily taken out because according to tradition, one will be destroying historical truths if one tries to dismantle the system. Thus, the researcher sees dialogue, discussions and participation as the only solution towards building a society which respects everyone and values all human beings. Several collections focused on finding new women's genres and creating theory that reflected women's concerns that existed in the public sphere. Women scholars rigorously applied the theory, and ethnographies were done that reflected feminist issues and applied feminist theories in the in-depth study of women's lives. The more recently published *Feminist Messages* (1993) and *Feminist Theory and the study of Folklore* (1993) were important because of their presentations of feminist theories appropriate for folklore. This will create balance in folklore about women's concerns.

## **b) Knowledge generation**

Paulo Freire, the famous Brazilian teacher, philosopher and critical thinker, argued that:

Apart from inquiry, apart from the praxis, individuals cannot be truly human; knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world and with each other (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 1971).

Freire believed that what makes us truly human is the way we constantly create and recreate meaning about our world. He believed that knowledge is created through people struggling debating, observing, analysing and arguing with each other about

how to make the world a better place in which to live. When one group creates meaning about another group, the former wields power over the latter, for example, early anthropologists.

Mokgoatšana in Makgamatha (2000) supports what Freire (1971) has said. He points out that men are portrayed not only as thinkers, but also as vanguard of development, information and societal advancement. This exclusive privilege is maintained in story forms which constitute what we term 'news' and 'history'.

These stories that men have created are about various myths that formed identities which men protected until today. These stories again formed what we call history, but unfortunately they excluded the stories of ordinary people. For example, women in particular were excluded and ignored in the formation of history.

It is oral history, according to Mokgoatšana, which will accord an opportunity to study history from below because women are not accorded a platform to air their views. They engage in what James Scott terms a hidden transcript. A hidden transcript represents the voice of the marginalised. These marginalised groupings use hidden transcripts to challenge the transcripts of the dominant groups. Because they are not allowed to come into the open, they indulge in gossip, songs, storytelling and other forms of the *nonwane* tradition.

The researcher agrees with Freire and Mokgoatšana by emphasising that history contains views of the privileged and excludes multiple viewpoints of the marginalised people.

Participation in knowledge generation is the key principle of self-determination. It enables people to take collective action in order to bring about long term solutions to problem solving. Participation of women in knowledge generation is vital in bringing in social change in various parties of the communities. Hence, together we can be equal players. The sharing of views, dialogue and respect of one's view will increase maximum participation that will open doors for working together as teams.

Debates also will help men and women to reach out important decisions that will change communities. Theologians spent a great deal of time in Africa studying African people. The focus of their research was in large part determined by their own interests and values as researchers rather than the interests and concerns of the people studied. They were more interested in topics of African sexuality and intertribal wars in African philosophical systems or technological innovations. These researchers painted a picture of Africans as primitive and unable to govern themselves, a position that was used to justify several hundred years of colonial oppression and exploitation.

In other words, Africans were excluded from a research process through which they and other people around the world came to understand them and their world better. They were excluded from the process of generating knowledge. Only when people are involved in the work of producing knowledge about themselves and their own world can they be free to define themselves. Participation in knowledge generation is the key principle of self-determination.

### **c) Methods**

Methodologies and theories of contemporary feminist research in folklore and anthropology have much to offer a transdisciplinary dialogue of women's studies. New innovations in feminist ethnographic technique (Davis-Floyd, 1992) allow women to speak the body, and to discuss and explore how their physical experience shape the way they form meaning. Examples of qualitative research in women's health and sexuality show feminist scholars beginning to develop approaches that connect the study of bodily experience with ways of knowing the importance of men, sons and the absolute authority of the father in the family.

On the other hand, some feminist scholars have criticised perhaps rightly, essentialist feminist theories for their overgeneralisation and lack of attention to historical and social context and detail. Showalter (1977) argues: "whether the case is argued that women are inherently weaker than men, or that they are inherently morally superior, the same overgeneralisations are used to justify cultural practice or its reform".

The researcher's point of view is that new methods of transdisciplinary have to be established so that dialogue can be created to allow women to share their experiences as far as their lives are concerned. Women's participation in cultural feminism will improve the study of folklore. There will be no generalisations because what has been discussed by both men and women will form the basis of understanding both sexes.

#### **d) Debates**

The new talk at the present moment, according to De la Rey (1993), is about the acknowledgement of the difference of experience contributed to significant theoretical shift not only in feminism, but also in the social science in general within feminist theory it led to a rejection of the essentialism of gender, the idea that women and men are different (not necessarily biological), but share experiences of patriarchy and that has consequences for political organisation research and theory.

The acknowledgment of the diversity of experience among women connected with another aspect of the debate which emerged at the 1991 conference. This the debate on representation was simplistically phrased as "Can white women represent black?" In this issue, various authors explored the debate in relation to research, teaching and the women's movement.

Debating representation, according to De la Rey, opened up spaces for feminist standpoint theory, which argues for knowledge situated production in social positioning and location.

At its most simplistic and superficial level, the issue was translated into one or two sentences at the beginning of a research paper that typically read as a white middle-class women. But frequently that is where the consciousness ended.

Men and women are simultaneously classed, raced and gendered. All women are aware that they differ altogether with men biologically but still acknowledge the differences among women themselves. Rural women and urban women do not experience life the same. White women are not united with black women. Elderly women do not experience life the same as young women. There are gaps in between

women and therefore they are not united. Because of the diversity of differences, the debate about the feminist standpoint is being questioned while there are various disagreements that feminism's objectivity will not be achieved. The result will be categories of isolations among women.

## **1.10 CONCLUSION**

An introductory part in chapter 1 gives the background of the research. It provides the reasons why the research was undertaken. It focuses on the study issues, the data to be collected and how these data will be managed and analysed. A review of the literature is vital to a researcher as it provides sources for generating or picking up definitions of key concepts that need to be operationalised in the study. Finally, chapter 1 begins the journey of the research process until the end of the study by laying out the very important aspects of the research.

## **CHAPTER 2: THE CRITIQUE OF FEMINISM**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter will focus on feminism, feminist theories and approaches, and its various forms as they exist alongside one another. Other feminist theories such as black feminism, South African feminism, race and racism, feminism in an African context wave of feminism, feminists' alternative voices, methods and structures will be addressed in order to present gendered experience. This chapter will finally include the critique of feminism which will be discussed later.

### **2.2 FEMINISM**

Feminism can be defined in diverse ways. For example, Loades (1990) defines it as a movement that seeks to change women for the better. Reuther (1993), on the other hand, defines feminism as women's consciousness and women's conscience. Schuster (1974) sees it as an ideology of a modern social movement for the advancement of women. The researcher's point of view on the definition of feminism is the belief that women are full human beings capable of participation and leadership in the full range of human, intellectual, political, social, sexual, spiritual and economic activities.

Masuku (1997) also wrote a thesis about the images of women in folktales. Although it was not in Sepedi, the thesis sheds light about women in Zulu culture. The thesis focused only on the negative portrayal of women who are characterised by fear, weaknesses, laziness, evil thoughts and unbecoming behaviour. The researcher's point of view differs extensively from Masuku's. The researcher has room to view women in Sepedi culture in a positive light because not all women are weak and submissive. Some women are indeed brave, strong and intelligent. They are leaders in various spheres of our communities. The contribution of this research in the existing body of knowledge will provide motivation to other women to participate actively in the full range of human activities because they are also capable of taking leadership positions in society, whether it can be in intellectual field, economic or political spheres of life.

## **2.3 FEMINIST THEORY**

While feminist theories and approaches have been extremely valuable to the development of folklore as a discipline, they have only recently begun to be recognised in terms of their importance (Mills, 1993; Stoeltjie, 1988b). Contemporary folklorists have begun to ask what can be learned from women's experience - whether that experience includes being a homemaker, rodeo cowgirl or well-known rap artist (Keys, 1993; Lanser, 1993; Levin, 1993; Stoeltjie, 1988a). Feminist folklorists have looked at women's experience and their expression of this experience in all its various forms to examine the reality of women's lives in various cultures and contexts. By focusing on women's experience, these feminist scholars have explored areas and genres previously ignored or overlooked by male fieldworkers and folklorists. In addition, they have developed new theoretical perspectives and methods that extend the scope and application of folklore studies.

## **2.4 OTHER FEMINIST THEORIES**

There are various feminisms that exist alongside one another to explain societal differences between men and women, such as cultural, political, liberal, Marxist, socialist, radical, multiracial and postmodern feminisms.

### **2.4.1 Cultural feminism**

The birth of the second-wave feminist movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s, according to Motta, Fominaya, Eschle and Cox (2011), saw the flowering of theoretical positions linked to specific political strategies. In this account, cultural feminism indicates that there are fundamental differences between men and women, and that these differences should be celebrated.

There is an attempt to recover lost or marginalised women's works and traditions in order to create a culture that nurtures and supports women's experiences. Relating this aspect to this study is that culturally, women have much work to do in the families and in the community besides nurturing. However, these duties are not taken seriously by society.

The implication of this, according to men, is that women are being marginalised. Mpungose in Makgamatha (2000) makes this observation: every subordinate group creates, out of its ordeal, a hidden and transcript that represents a critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant.

A hidden transcript, according to Mokgoatšana in Makgamatha (2000), represents the voice of the marginalised. These marginalised groupings use hidden transcripts to challenge the transcripts of the dominant groups. Although they are not allowed to come into the open, they indulge in gossip, songs, storytelling, and other forms of the *nonwane* tradition.

#### **2.4.2 Political feminism**

Political feminism will not help women as such if the community continues to elect men in positions of authority. The feminist point of view is that both men and women should participate in positions of power. Women should not remain at home. Society needs their ideas to add value to patriarchal structures.

#### **2.4.3 Liberal feminism**

Liberal feminism since the nineteenth century has sought to free contemporaneous society from residual pre-modern, patriarchal throwbacks in law and culture, investing in legal, educational and medial strategies as a form of feminist civilising process as well as lobbying the state for formal equality within the public sphere.

Socialisation is the origin of gender differences in the liberal feminism. The goal of feminism is gender justice. Wollstonecraft (1759 - 1797), Stuart Mill (1806 - 1873) and Taylor Mill (1807 - 1858) are the key people associated with liberal feminism while Betty Friedan wrote the *Feminine Mystique* in 1963.

Liberal feminists are being criticised; some flaws that seem to come from this way of thinking are amongst the following:



- The claim that women can become like men if they set their minds to it.
- The claim that most women want to become like men.
- The claim that all women should want to become like men, to aspire to masculine values.

Women do not aspire to be like men in liberal feminism, but these subtexts create awareness to society that women wish to be rescued from being tokens of male culture, which limits the role that they play in history (Showalter, 1977). The danger of such attitudes is that it perpetuates a victimised view of women. As a result, Showalter makes a plea to move on from this position and to create sufficient space for them to participate in folklore curriculum.

#### **2.4.4 Marxist feminism**

Marxist analysis focuses on women's economic realities, their historical origins and the dialectical interplay among competing social forces that bring them into being (TerreBlanche and Durrheim, 2002). They are described as holding the view that gender oppression will be overcome with the end of capitalism and class society.

Key areas emphasised by Marxist feminists are that class accounts for women's status and function in society's monogamous marriage. It is about private property while the family is regarded as a microcosm of society's large class relations.

#### **2.4.5 Socialist feminism**

Socialist feminists advocate alliances between women's movements and working class struggles with the goal of overcoming both patriarchy and capitalism. According to feminist theorists, class and gender intersect (Tong, 2009; Bryson, 2003). Both patriarchy and capitalism must be analysed. Socialist feminists focus on neglected, disempowered or voiceless populations or issues. Its standpoint is thus directed towards challenging vested power interests, and becomes a moral and political endeavour.

#### **2.4.6 Radical feminism**

The radical feminists are defined in terms of emphasis on patriarchy as the foundational system of power from which all other injuries spring and often depicted as pursuing separatist organising strategies that celebrate and defend women's differences from men under the headings of political lesbianism and global sisterhood. Radical feminists are, according to Motta, Fominaya, Eschle and Cox (2011), advocating for women but are disconnected from their daily lives. Males' power and privilege are viewed as the basis for social relations with the goal of establishing male supremacy, focusing on establishing women-centred beliefs and systems which are key to radical feminists.

#### **2.4.7 Multiracial feminism**

Multiracial feminism focuses on the intersection of race, class and gender. The importance of human agency is emphasised. Multiracial feminists struggle to find answers to the following question: "how does the experience of domination shape the experience of people of colour?"

Multiracial feminists make visible tensions among feminists and suggest that it is only by taking these seriously that women can collectively think through the possibilities and parameters of alliances.

#### **2.4.8 Post-modern feminism**

Post-modernism is a broad term for many different approaches that set themselves up in opposition to the coherence and rationality of the modern world (Jameson, in TerreBlanche and Durrheim, 2002). It is also the cultural setting within which post-modernism has been able to flourish.

Post-modernism's collusion with late capitalism is Jameson's view that it contributed to the appearance that culture has reached the end of history, since it is no longer theological but recycling itself. The kind of critique of post-modernism developed by Jameson persists in the form of sometimes the entirely justified rejection of 'relativist' or 'constructionist's post-modern social science approaches. Such ideological attacks on post-modernism focuses not only on the charges of ethical and political

irresponsibility raised by Jameson, but also on the supposed division between theory and practice in the social sciences.

It has been said that the post-modern era started in 1972, the year when the first giant skyscraper was imploded in New York. Postmodernity represents a breaking up of the heroic project of modernity, the rational individual, scientific progress, and liberal democracy.

#### **2.4.9 Black feminism**

Black feminism is perceived by Motta, Fominaya, Eschle and Cox (2011) to be deeply intertwined with both capitalism and patriarchy within a complex matrix of domination. The term “Black Feminism” makes many African American women uncomfortable (Dyson, 1993) because it challenges black women to confront their own views on sexism and women’s oppression. This is as a result that the majority of African American women encounter their own experiences repacked in racist school curricula and media. Even if they may support the very ideas on which feminism rests, large numbers of African American women reject the term “feminism” because of what they perceive as its association with whiteness. The term “Black feminism” is, according to prominent feminist critics such as Fraser (2009), Eisentein (2009) and McRobbie (2009), disrupting a longstanding and largely unquestioned reliance on black racial solidarity as a deep taproot in black philosophies, especially Black Nationalist and cultural pluralist frameworks.

Using family rhetoric that views black family, community, race and a nation as a series of nested boxes (Molara, 1987), each box is gaining meaning to the other and certain rules apply to all levels of this “family” organisation. For example, black women will support black men, no matter what an unwritten family rule. Black women are always reprimanded to remain silent in the face of abuse. They see themselves as inferior to men although broad political change has provided a base from which to affirm their rights in the Constitution of South Africa and elsewhere.

The present Agenda of 2016, as indicated by De la Rey (1993), indicates that post-structuralism is a dominant theoretical framework. The new talk is about multiple identities, multiple truths, relativism, subjectivities, voices and so on. Some feminist critiques argue that it opens up new spaces for thought and action, while others see it as a shift towards depoliticisation and others just say, it is all very confusing. While there are various disagreements according to Lorde in De la Rey (1993) among post-structuralism theories, there seems to be consensus on the rejection of:

- The certainties offered by grand theories such as Marxism, which attempts to cover the totality of social experience.
- A sharp distinction between the world of objects and the work of intellect, emotion and politics as a basis for knowledge.
- The idea of an absolute truth in favour of multiple truths.
- A view of humanity as rational, unitary and fixed.
- A separation between the individual and social, the psychological and the political, the external and the internal.

Spheres of experience which were traditionally seen as split and distinct are instead seen as continuous, changing and mutually constitutive. The very premises of western modernist thinking were challenged. There are various feminisms that exist alongside one another, sometimes in harmony, while at other times they are in strife. The researcher chooses to advance with Liberal, Political, Multiracial and Socialist feminisms. Women are social beings, living in a political and multiracial society. Their struggle is largely to access the pie of the patriarchal structure and have equal opportunities.

A woman is a labourer and a mother; she fulfils her role during pregnancy as a vessel to carry a future member of the socialist collective. She has a social duty to look after her health, at such times her body is not just her own. On the other hand, this duty entails a reciprocal social obligation to care for her welfare. The only functions the woman must perform for herself are those of caring and nursing, and to facilitate these functions and as a result the socialist feminism is much relevant to this study.

As a political being, a woman must participate fully in all the structures without limitations. She can be elected in any position to serve in the public sphere independently regardless of whether or not she is married or a single person. The woman question of belonging to the kitchen is no longer an issue. She must not be excluded from the public life.

As a liberal human being, she must fight for her rights in the economic sphere of life. The challenge is that she must be able to liberate herself through education. No other person will do this for her. The Marxist, post-modern and cultural feminisms are not relevant to this study because of their support to women's subordination.

## **2.5 WAVES OF FEMINISM**

As feminist theory has been applied over time to the study of various academic disciplines, it has developed in waves that reflect the political and social climate of its use. The three waves of feminist theory within literary criticism are as follows, as outlined in the *New Feminist criticism* by Showalter (1977): the first, second and third waves of feminisms.

### **2.5.1 The first wave feminism**

The first wave came into existence in the 1830s. It was dominated by white, middle class women and their interests. White women's dominance was reinforced by the population control rhetoric promoted by first wave feminists such as Margaret Sanger. According to Showalter (1977), the first wave concentrated on exposing the misogyny of literacy practice. It emphasised the relationship between the social treatment of women and their literacy treatment.

The main issue during the period were abolition of slavery and women's rights. In 1848, women's rights convention was held in Seneca Falls NY in 1920. The 19<sup>th</sup> amendment guaranteed women the right to vote. After the suffrage movement, the first wave feminism began to slow down; and as a result, they could not take up Luxembourgh's call for radical transformation until the 1950s and 1960s.

Towards the end of the first wave, as Marxism spread in parts of Europe, feminist Marxists called for more dramatic social transformation which they had ignored. The first wave feminists were inspired by earlier feminist writers, including English novelist Virginia Woolf and French philosopher Simone de Beauvoir.

During that period of the first wave, according to Plato in Coole (1993), there is neither reference to reproduction nor a differentiation of function between male and female anatomy, since the private family and property were to endure among producers. The argument concerning sexual equality referred only to the minority of women who were literate and more knowledgeable.

### **2.5.2 The second wave feminism**

The second wave feminism emerged in the aftermath of, and in conjunction with a number of radical political movements. For many women writers, critics and activists, the personal became the political in contexts as diverse as the American Civil Rights Movement and the British Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND). The result of this activist parenting was, according to Plain and Sellers (1989), a critical practice in contradistinction to the assumptions of common-sense patriarchal humanism. The emergence of such a discourse was dramatic and at times confrontational.

The second wave feminism's radicalism alienated many women from the movement as some feminists formed separatist communes to eliminate men from their lives. Lorde (1984) challenged the separatist vision of the second wave and pointed out "that men are an integral part of the movement for racial equality". She insisted that it was not feasible for black women to sequester themselves in communes and ignore the black men working for racial equality beside them.

Women like Daly (Kaplan, 1976) advocated to exclude transgender women from feminist struggles. Meanwhile, Julie Bindel and Andrea Dworkin in Kaplan (1976) focused heavily on critiquing sex workers and pornography. The second wave feminists aimed to shake up the status quo. Many feminists during that period were influenced by the rise of a Marxist intellectual movement called the New Left. While

Marxism cast the working class as an oppressed social class, the second wave feminism saw women as an oppressed class.

The longest Revolution had appeared in the *New Left Review* (Millet, 1971). This movement fostered the cause of the anti-colonial movements. At these stage predominantly white and middle class women challenged on a wide front, attitudes to class, race, social authority and colonial dominance.

Greer summed up the new movement with her usual panache in the female Eunuch. She wrote:

Then genteel middle-class ladies clamoured for reform, now ungentleel middle-class women are calling for revolution. For many of them the call for revolution came before the call for the liberation for women. The New Left has been forcing the house for most movements, and for many of them liberation is independent on the coming in of the classless society (Greer, 1971).

Ellmann's critique of misogynistic stereotypes is the only work of American feminist criticism praised by Moi (1985), who wrote largely against British women writers who produced those stereotypes in their works.

### **2.5.3 The third wave feminism**

History has made a theoretical turn during the period of the third wave of the 1970s. The numerous theoretical positions that became current in the academy during the 1980s and beyond often looked back on 70s feminism as untheoretical, naïve, hopeless and unsophisticated notions of identity. That period ignored the existence within the period of both self-critique and a wide range of theoretical positions with which feminism engaged.

During the 1990s, the third wave feminism emerged in an effort to address earlier critiques of feminism. They attempted to reach out to women of colour, transgender women and sex workers. During that time Heather Corinna (a feminist writer) published a website magazine called '*Scarleteen*', offering sex education to young people. Corinna emphasised personal sexual autonomy, distate for sexual shaming and commitment to enthusiastic sexual consent. Groups like the Sistersong Women

of Colour Reproductive, Justice Collective spearheaded a reproductive rights movement that treated reproduction as more than just access to birth control and abortion rights.

The third wave feminism rejected earlier feminist eugenicist thinking and insisted that marginalised women be supported when they choose to have children. The result was that history and critical literature were equally flattened because of sniffy attitude which ignored the political and intellectual context in which 70s feminism developed.

Folklore studies of the 1960s and 1970s (Parades and Bauman, 1972) presented a shift concentration to text to exploration of process and context. In this era the contemporary paradigm of performance developed and spread. Performance theorists emphasised the context in which an individual shapes and performs a text for an audience. Folklorists came to view artistic expression as a process of creation shaped, but not controlled by, community standards. Researchers began to look into the individual's role in shaping tradition while feminist scholars, on the other hand (Farrer, 1975) began to look into women's expressive behaviour. Feminist folklorists argued that there was more to study among women than quilting, herbal remedies and food-ways.

In the first collection of writings about gender and folklore, the 1975 special issue of the *Journal of American Folklore*, "Women and Folklore", Editor Claire Farrer argued that women's genres have been downplayed and even ignored by folklorists. Farrer cautioned that cultural expectations of gender roles affect what is studied by ethnographers as well as how it is studied. She further argued that the women's genres as studied by folklorists seemed to fit the prevailing cultural images of women as nurturing, domestic and residing in the private sphere.

In the early days of the rising of the post-1970 consciousness, the emphasis was on getting more women's choices and genres into academic consciousness (Kalcik, 1975; McLeod & Herndon, 1975; Stoeltje, 1975). This period had its share of essentialising because scholars problematised the concept of genre rather than of group.



## 2.6 FEMINIST ALTERNATIVE VOICES, METHODS AND STRUCTURES

Several collections focussed on finding new women's genres and creating theory that reflected women's concerns, including Jordan and Kalcik's women's folklore, women's culture (1985), symposium issues of the *Journal of Folklore Research* (1988) and the *Journal of American Folklore* (1987), Hollis, Pershing and Young's *Feminist Theory and the study of folklore* (1993) and Radner's *Feminist Messages* (1993). These and other genre specific collections such as the Personal Narratives Group's *Interpreting Women's lives* (1989) demonstrated that women's repertoires included "unladylike" genres. Women performers could exist in the public sphere, women scholars could be rigorous in their application of theory, and ethnographies could be done that reflected feminist issues and applied feminist theories to the in-depth study of women's lives.

The edited volume, *women's folklore, women's culture* (1985), attempted to relegitimate and redefine the private sphere. As Yocom (1985) argued, the private sphere is not so much a space as it is a mode of social interaction that bonds women together. Moving beyond the functions of women's speech, the volume addressed issues of women's power and folklore; aesthetics of women's storytelling male versus female worlds' worldviews gender and group identity. The more recently published *Feminist Message* (1993) and *Feminist Theory and the Study of Folklore* (1993) were important because of their presentations of feminist theory appropriate for folklore. The articles in these collections took precious folklore theories and methods to task and engaged in feminist critique as revisionary enterprise.

Along these lines, work in feminist theory has had a significant impact on folklore theory more generally. Feminist work in folklore made inroads in the important areas of genres and fieldwork and began to deconstruct previously unquestioned assumptions about authority, agency and power hierarchies. According to feminist theory folklore (1999) (Appadurai, Korom and Mills, 1991; Shuman and Briggs, 1993). Mills (1993) noted in her assessment of the field twenty years after the publication of the ground breaking *towards New Perspective in Folklore* (1972) that this early volume, while it had a radical and changing influence on the field, was striking in its lack of deep discussion of class, race, or gender issues. The two 1993 collections,

feminist messages and feminist theory and the study of folklore attempted to remedy this lack in folklore theory.

This latest phase of feminist folklore emphasised deconstructing concept of “group” and “identity” and moving from essentialising to describing difference. The feminist folklorists whose essays were presented in the TW 1993 volumes relied on performance theory. The ethnography of speaking *écriture féminine*, African-American feminist theory, personal narrative theory and phenomenological approaches attempted to create work that “fit” theoretically as well as methodologically.

Shuman, in her 1993 article in *Feminist Theory and the Study of folklore*, entitled “Gender and Genre” addressed Ben-Amos’ concern of “ethnic genres” (Ben-Amos, 1976). While advocating his approach, she also problematised it in terms of gender and power relationships. In her look at genre as context specific, she drew on Bauman’s and Briggs’ work in “*Genre, Intertextuality and Social Power*” (1992) to argue that “ethnic genres” are important to strive for, but perhaps problematic to find. In the same volume, Kodish echoed this concern in her essay “Absent Gender, Silent Encounter” (1993), wherein she examined the old style patriarchal conventions previously engaged in male ethnographer’s accounts of their encounters with female performers. She deconstructed some of these written conventions by placing them alongside two women performers’ accounts of these same encounters.

It is this same concern in Kousaleos (1999) that promoted feminist ethnographers like Lawless and Lughod (1990) to develop new ethnographers’ methodologies and styles of written presentation in their studies of women’s narratives. Lawless and Lughod (1990), rebuffing the somewhat, antifeminist stance of Clifford Marcus’ (1987) writing culture, described her approach as “writing against culture” to get to the root of power difference in ethnographers’ representations of “the other” (1993). Lawless, in her 1993 work ‘Holly women, wholly women’, brought feminist folklore theory and ethnography together, tackling gender, experience and reflexivity by focusing on the polyvocality of women’s life stories and problematising them as created texts. Lawless and Lughod challenged her to develop new methodological approaches that addressed the process of text-creation in the ethnography.

Lawless and Lughod (1993) wrote from this theoretical base, assuming that the way they create meaning, she attempted to find a methodology that could include women's expressions of their experience in various forms. In her work using "reciprocal ethnography", authority did not rest solely with the "author" of the ethnography but came out of a collaborative process between two women negotiating meaning, identity and text. It allowed women collaborators to censor, change and respond to transcriptions and to take active roles in the process of interpretation.

Increasing in recent years, feminist theory developed new ways of asserting difference without essentialising gender, race, class, or genre characteristics. Grosz (1994) wrote, "In opposition to egalitarian feminism, a feminism based on the acknowledgement of women's specifications and oriented to the attainment of autonomy for women has emerged over the past ten years or more". Feminist folklorists (Mills 1993) have been quick to note the problematic nature of social group coherency with their focus on artistic expression, and have drawn on the new French feminism or *écriture féminine* of (Kristeva, Cixous, Irigaray and Showalter, 1985). Some of the most radical of these writers believe that writing in the feminine was connected to experiencing the rhythms of the female sexual pleasure (Moi, 1985; Showalter, 1985). Showalter (1985) wrote: "They urged woman writer to ally herself with everything in the culture which is muted, silenced or unrepresented, in order to subvert the existing systems that repress feminine differences". Ethnographers' women and writers on culture have asserted their gendered identities as both women and scholars have challenged and subverted norms of writing and representing women's experience (Lawless and Lughod, 1990).

The work of this kind in folklore and anthropology responded to a more general call within women's studies for trans-disciplinary qualitative research that acknowledge difference. Critique previous epistemologies, prioritised experience and advocated for new approaches and methodologies (Allen, 1992; Harding, 1991; Stoeltje, 1988; Tiefer, 1995). It was these feminists' commitment to deconstructing academic definitions of class, race, sexuality, ethnicity and group that allowed them to reformulate notions of identity, power, experience and agency in both ethnographic and text-based studies. By questioning the authority of the academic discourse to

name and create meaning, and by exploring reflexive research methodologies, feminist folklorists and anthropologists brought new dimensions to contemporary feminist theory.

The methodologies and theories of contemporary feminist research in folklore and anthropology have much to offer a trans-disciplinary dialogue in women's studies. New innovations in feminist ethnographic techniques allow women to speak the body to discuss and explore how their physical experiences shape the way they form meaning. Examples of qualitative research in women's health and sexuality show feminist scholars beginning to develop approaches that connect the study of bodily experience with ways of knowing (Davis-Floyd, 1992). Tiefer (1995) argued in their book of essay, "Sex is not a natural act", that what is currently needed in the multidisciplinary field is a pluralistic approach that embraces difference rather than rejects it. By combining the study of personal experience with political activism, applied feminist research has the potential to change cultural practice.

## **2.7 SOUTH AFRICAN FEMINISM: RACE AND RACISM**

De la Rey (1993) asserts: "The difference debate is one of the hottest issues in the broader context of gender discussions right now". Besides *Sexuality* (No 28, 1996) and *Sexual Politics* (No 11, 1991), women and difference issue has been one of the most talked about issues of *Agenda*. While the difference debate has many meanings in international feminist writings and discussions, in South Africa it has been primarily deployed to refer to race and racism specifically the relations between black and white women involved in gender activism.

This debate first became public when black feminists interrupted the proceedings of "*Women and Gender in South Africa*" Conference in January 1991, to note concerns about dominance of white women's voices. According to De la Rey (1993), it was a landmark to the conference organising committee and forum that Rennex (1991) publicly criticised *Agenda* for its white dominance. Rennex critique acted as a catalyst for changes in the composition of the editorial collective. Weems (2007) said:

“This landmark pioneering treatise of African woman’s realities cannot be ignored ..., it will unlock closed doors and usher in a spirit of renewed plenitude. African womanism is reminiscent of a comparable Avantgarde movement of the 1930s by diasporan (sic). Black scholars struggled to seek the reassurance of their blacknessness”. (De la Rey, 1993:10-11)

The emergence of the difference debate ruptured many of the ideal notions of the times. The ideal called non-racialism and the ideal of a shared universal sisterhood struck the very centre of a then dominant feminist understanding that men and women have fundamentally different experiences, and gender is the primary social category of analysis.

The difference debate introduced other categories of social relations such as class, sexual orientation and ethnicity. Race and class were two issues that had assumed greater visibility in South African feminist writings and debate. These debates tested the notion of triple oppression, which basically postulated additive or accumulative model oppression. The relative significance of each of these forms of oppression was contested.

Feminism at this time Mills (1993) encountered the problem that there was no unified consistency of ‘women’, and every attempt to clarify one produced disunity, an internal contestation by groups who felt themselves to be marginalised. Mills takes the risk that it simply will matter to others. Through her autobiographical genre, she imagines herself addressing a different, less specialised audience. However, questions about what those commonalities might be and who her audience is refuse to go away. Indeed they become, as Mills proposes it, the motivating force behind memo writing.

## **2.8 FEMINISM IN AN AFRICAN CONTEXT**

One of the most controversial issues in contemporary discussion of African literature (Masuku, 1997) is whether or not various Western critical approaches and methodologies are suitable for or even adaptable to the African context. Feminism has been branded as an all-white embracing theory and a movement that does not see beyond Western societies. As a result, it ignores or marginalises specific problems of African women. Molar (1987) is one of the proponents of feminism in

Africa. She asserts that “feminism can be applied with success in the African context although there are problems when it comes to the implementation of feminist ideas in Africa”. She holds that the issue of racism in the white feminist movement prevents men and women from understanding what feminism is all about in Africa.

She further argues that some men discourage women from reading white feminist theories because they see it as a sign of domination, colonialism, and destruction of the marriage institution in Africa and regarded as one of those borrowed “isms” which militate against the development of Africa. Aligning oneself with the feminist ideology, according to Davies (1986), seems to be a major obstacle as most African women realise that feminism in essence is a struggle between husband and wife, brother and sister, father and mother.

Feminism is seen by most literate theorists as a movement which aims to change the status of women in a society. Achifusi (1994) provides this definition of feminism: “Feminism is a politic directed at changing existing power relations between women and men in a society”. From the above quotation, it is evident that feminism aims at changing existing chains of relationships between men and women in society. Does being a feminist in any way imply inadequacy in a wife or mother? The answer is definitely “No”. Such attitudes give an impression that both African women and men lack a thorough understanding of the main objective of feminism, especially in the African society.

Molara (1987) mentions that by refusing to align oneself with the movement that aims at changing the whole society is a result of the successful intimidation of African women by men over the issue of women’s liberation. Male ridicule, aggression and backlash have resulted in making women apologetic and have given the term feminism a bad name.

This brings us to the question of what feminism entails in Africa. This subject, according to Masuku (1997), is complex to define and raises many questions. For example, does feminism exist in Africa? Should it exist in Africa? What is the relevance of feminism to an African woman? An obvious connection between African feminism and Western feminism is that internationally, both identify a woman’s position

as inferior to that of a man and both seek to change that African feminist consciousness acknowledges a specific African feminism with specific needs and goals arising out of the concrete realities of women's lives in African society.

## **2.9 COMPLEXITIES SURROUNDING THE TERM "BLACK"**

The term "feminism" in an African context as propounded by Haidara (1986) and African students at Virginia Technical Institute, is a search for a new terminology to adequately convey black women's feminism. In thinking about Africa, people always wonder "what is an African context?" Why can feminism be in Africa? When they think of Africa most Africans think only of Black African or more correctly if they are honest with their own little ethnic groups. According to Molar (1987), it is a cumbersome exercise to explain what an African context means because Africans cannot be generalised. Blackness cannot be used as criteria for taxonomies. It should be borne in mind that there are many kinds of Africans in Africa. There are no colour purities in Africa. Biology and culture have been "dynamised" by Africa's historical movements of people.

Terborg-Penn (2001) has the opinion that before applying the African feminist theory to Black women's past, it is important to look at the term "Black", because not all women of African descent identify themselves with this term. She feels that "Black" symbolises a cultural milieu more than does colour. To her, it indicates a preference for the term African feminism over Black feminism.

Molar (1987) poses the question: "What is feminism for you?" What is your feminism? In response to the above questions, the researcher sees feminism belonging to all people in Africa. Feminism is to me the way in which people should express their voices if they are suppressed and dominated by the hierarchical patriarchal power structures in society in which they find themselves. Molar poses other questions: do you in fact have an ideology of women in society and life? In response to this question, the researcher explains that women in particular are marginalised by the societies in which they live, and as a result, they are regarded as inferior citizens. Molar poses again this question. What is the total conception of women as agents in human society? The researcher's response to this question is that the total conception of women in all societies is that their role is prescribed by nature that they must nurture and rear children in their homes and no other role is given to them.

Finally, the researcher agrees with Molara that there is so much feminism in existence in the African continent. It depends on the centre from which one is speaking or theorising. These feminisms have to be theorised around the juncture of race, class, and gender. More research is needed to uncover what Africans themselves, particularly the working class and the peasantry, think about themselves as women, what common agenda they have for themselves, daily and historically. Once it is agreed that an ideology of women once existed in Africa, a question can further be posed if these existent ideologies remain relevant or need to be changed. The researcher's response is that an ideology once existed in Africa that women are subservient and inferior to men, their counterparts. This ideology, in the researcher's view, is no longer relevant to the African society, it needs to be changed because women participate actively in society and render the services in the public sphere with effectiveness.

Molara (1987) feels that both men and women, everywhere even in Africa should be involved in feminism. All men, according to Molara, need to be progressive feminists, committed to a socially just society. She has further pointed out that men are not the enemy, but the system of oppression and domination is the enemy.

## **2.10 THE CRITIQUE OF FEMINISM**

### **2.10.1 The consolidation of the neoliberal project**

Most recently, post-modern or post-structuralist feminism has come to the fore in these accounts of feminism, characterised as seeking to move beyond the essentialisms of gendered binaries and fixed identities towards a queering of our practices of self and other. Despite important point of divergence, most feminists would agree that contemporary society remains systematically shot through with oppression and exploitation in a multitude of different forms. Indeed, as Motta, Fominaya, Eschle and Cox (2011) assert, "the consolidation of the neoliberal project in recent years is widely acknowledged to have worsened the situation for many women and men and to have put feminist aspirations under sustained attack".



In this context, it would seem that feminist political strategies have not achieved the emancipatory result for which their proponents were hoping. It is in this context that liberal varieties of feminism have achieved what amounts to a hollow victory. In this line of argument, according to prominent feminist critics such as Fraser (2009), Eisenstein (2009) and McRobbie (2009), feminist efforts to lobby and work with the state or to pursue formal equal rights within a fundamentally exploitative labour market have not only failed to pose an effective challenge to neoliberalism, but also supplied key cultural justifications for its modernising projects of individualisation, flexibility and the pruning of the state. These critics and others imply that a reconsideration of feminist political strategies is long overdue.

### **2.10.2 The strength of the patriarchal power continues**

Our consideration is to acknowledge that the liberal “long march through the institutions” may have brought a wide variety of significant changes in its train, but many of these have served the interests of only the most privileged women. What is more, gendered inequalities are not and have never been reducible to the overt legal, educational and political discrimination that continue to scar some societies. As documented by the proponents of other feminist theories, patriarchal power is bound up with practices of identity production and selfhood, with gendered divisions of labour, with the separation of the private and public realms and with relationships of power over those that have emotional, intellectual, psychological, spiritual, symbolic and corporeal dimensions, all of which have been neglected by liberal feminism.

### **2.10.3 The tendency of radical feminist to privilege patriarchy**

While it is hard to deny the important contribution of radical feminists in challenging rape and domestic violence among other oppressions, the pursuit of entirely separatist organising, which many radical feminists advocate, the tendency of radical feminists to privilege patriarchy in their analyses (Mohanty, 1998) is the most basic form of power that has now been thoroughly criticised for ignoring the ways in which gender hierarchies are intertwined with race and class in mutually constitutive ways. Notions of a universal sisterhood based on shared experience and identity are thus fatally undermined.

#### **2.10.4 The limitations of the Marxist feminism**

Marxist feminism in a narrow sense is marginal outside a handful of states where orthodox communist parties are still significant political actors. Although there has been a resurgence of Marxist feminist thought as part of the Pink Tide, or shift to the left, in Latin America, particularly in Venezuela, it often remains separated from the demands and identifications of women in the barrios.

Having said all that, the argument remains that woman's groups and feminists remain tenacious (Eschle & Maiguashca, 2010). Thus despite the contradictory current scenario, there is much remarkable and potentially radical, progressive or emancipatory feminist praxis to be seen if we look hard enough. There is also a resurgence of women's and feminist organising and feminist theorising at the heart of a range of social movements today. Much of this is documented in the special section of interface of Motta, Fominaya, Eschle and Cox (2011).

#### **2.10.5 Black feminist thinkers**

Collins (1990), a highly influential Black feminist thinker, argues for the existence of a specific black women's standpoint that is based on a particular life experience and excluded from both patriarchal thinking and white feminist critiques. In order to avoid the problem of including other marginalised standpoints and knowledge such as that of immigrant women, for example, Collins elaborates on Bell Hooks' (2000) notion of politics of domination that operates across interlocking, rather than cumulative, axes of oppression. Hooks (2000) argues that the standpoints of black women, emerging as they do at the intersection of multiple axes, enable both a distinct consciousness of the "racist, classist, sexist" dimensions of hegemony and the capacity to envision and create a counter hegemony.

Women who are calling themselves black feminists need another word that describes what their concerns are. Black feminism, according to Phillip (1987), is not a word that describes the plight of black women. In fact, black feminists have not even come together and come to a true core definition of what black feminism is. The white race has a woman problem because the women are oppressed. Black people have a man and woman problem because black men are oppressed by their women counterparts.

What is generally understood to be black feminism criticism is a body of critical and creative work written by women of African descent in the United States. While black feminists have arisen in other sites of the African diaspora, for example, in Europe and Latin America, the United States has been the site of the most sustained black feminist critical discourse. Contemporary black feminist criticism came in the late 1960s and early 1970s fostered by the Civil Rights Movement and developed in conjunction with the second wave of American feminism, which was dominated by white women, the Black Power and Black Arts Movements which were dominated by black men.

A major thematic and structural element of black feminist criticism, from its roots in the era of slavery to the present, has been its simultaneous attention to multiple oppressions and multiple categories of discrimination that work together. Black feminist critics have articulated the layered effects of racism and sexism.

#### **2.10.6 The association of feminism with lesbianism**

According to Lorde (1984), challenges facing black feminism concern the direct conflict between feminism and selected elements of black religious traditions. For example, the visibility of white lesbians within North American feminism overall comes into direct conflict with many black women's articles of faith that homosexuality is a sin, while individual African American women may be accepting gays, lesbians and bisexuals as individuals.

Another challenge confronting black feminism concerns its perceived separatism. Many African Americans define black feminism as being exclusively for black women only, rejecting black men. In explaining her preference, Williams (1990) notes, "one of the most disturbing aspects of current black feminist criticism is its separatism, its tendency to see not only a distinct black female culture but to see that culture as a separate cultural form having more in common with white female experience than with the facticity of Afro-American life". This is a valid criticism of black feminism to uphold major ideas of separatism.

Since Mary Wollstonecraft, generations of women and some men wove painstaking argument according to Seyla and Drucilla (1987) to demonstrate that excluding women from modern public and political life contradicts the liberal democratic promise of emancipation and equality. They identified the liberation of women with expanding civil and political rights to include women on the same terms as men and with the entrance of women into the public life dominated by men on an equal basis with them.

After two centuries of faith that the ideal of equality and fraternity included women has still not brought emancipation for women. Instead, contemporary feminist have begun to question the faith itself. Recent feminist analysis of modern political theory and practice increasingly argue that ideals of liberalism and contract theory such as formal equality and universal rationality are deeply marred by masculine biases about what it means to be human and the nature of society.

## **2.11 CONCLUSION**

Today, the different branches of feminist theory, construct, argue and analyse gender as a significant category in a variety of ways. Like most theories, feminist theory has a long and complex history in Western European political and social thought. Its roots date back at least to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and spread to other places gradually until it reaches its peak in the Eastern parts of the world.

Feminist research continues to be the subject of debate and it is open to constant modification by critiques from all walks of life. Although there are obstacles of class, racism and ethnicity, its primary aim is to put women's issues on the forefront. If these obstacles can be resolved, women will have one common problem of fighting for equal rights with men their counterparts.

The researcher closes this chapter by pointing out that the strength of the patriarchal power structure continues because women have failed to argue in one voice, and as a result, they will not achieve their objective of rendering their services in the public with freedom that they have long fought for. Unity is strength and the basis for collective achievements.

## **CHAPTER 3: THE ROLE OF FOLKTALE IN SOCIALISING BOYS AND GIRLS**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter will define and discuss the concept “family” and its complexities in modern realities. It will examine how folktale is used to socialise boys and girls. Finally, it will examine chores and activities assigned to each gender.

### **3.2 DEFINING THE CONCEPT “FAMILY”**

The family has traditionally been defined as a group of kin united by blood, marriage, or adoption, who share a common residence for some parts of their lives, and who assume reciprocal rights and obligations with regard to one another. Today, however, an increasing number of writers define families differently (Eshleman et al., 1993). Recognising the reality of childless marriages, step-parents, one-parent households, same sex unions, cohabiting couples and so forth, families are being addressed and defined in terms of intimate relationships, sexual bonds, and family realms, rather than some fixed legal or residential criteria (Beutler et al., 1989; Scanzoni et al., 1989 in Eshleman).

### **3.3 COMPLEXITY OF FAMILY IN MODERN DISCOURSE AND LIFE**

The traditional definition of family suggests ideas of legal unions, permanence, children, intergeneration continuity and a perceived ideal of what families should be. The non- traditional definition suggests a broader and more comprehensive portrayal of intimate relationships that often fall outside fixed legal boundaries. Thus, a cohabiting couple, with or without children would not be family in traditional terms of blood, marriage or adoptive ties. However, in terms of family - like relationships based on what families do, some same-sex or cohabiting partners are being viewed as families for purposes of property settlements, housing regulations for “family only” or employee benefit plans.

This is not to deny the tremendous variations in traditional family structures and processes that exist in our own culture and in others around the world. There exists recognition of differentiating families as conjugal, nuclear families of orientation and procreation, as well as extended or modifications of an extended structure. The smallest units are called conjugal, which must include children. Nuclear families may or may not include a husband and wife. They consist of any two or more persons related to one another by blood, marriage or adoption and who share a common residence. Thus a brother and sister or a single parent and child would be nuclear families but not conjugal families. These terms are sometimes used interchangeably and some families fall under both categories.

### **3.4 A TYPICAL AFRICAN FAMILY**

Among the Sepedi speaking people, as in the case with other African groups, the family is a social unit which is basic and most fundamental. The household is the smallest unit of the family, consisting of children, parents and sometimes grandparents. It is what one might call 'the family at night', for it is generally at night that the household is really itself. At night, according to Mbiti (1969), parents are with their households. They educate the children in matters pertaining to domestic relationships. The household in Africa is what European and American societies would call "family".

According to Masenya (1989), the family can assume two forms, a simple legal variety in which the man has one wife, and a compound family in which the man is a polygamist. This idea of a family is well supported by Mönnig (1967) and Whyte (1974). The family, whether simple or compound, in each case every new marriage is viewed as a house established for a woman concerned. However, the Sepedi phrase *ba ntlo ya gago* (those of your house) is closer to the context of 'family' linguistically. It is clear that the one who possesses a house is not a woman but a man. If a man has two or more wives, he has as many households since each wife would usually have her own house erected within the same compound where other wives and their households live.

In African context, the area or compound occupied by one household or joint households is a village. It includes houses, gardens or fields, the cattle shed, granaries, the courtyard, threshing ground, the men's outdoor fireplace, children's playground and family shrines. In some societies, Bapedi in particular, the village has a fence around it, marking it as a single village or household or as a family. As a rule, traditional African houses are round in shape, built around the village compound so that if there are several houses in one compound, they also form a circle or semi-circle. The houses generally face the centre of the compound and towards the main entrance into the village.

### **3.5 ROLE OF THE FATHER**

Traditionally, the father was expected to take up the role to support his wife and children. The mother in turn, ran the home and cared for the children. In a polygamous family, there might be quarrels and fights among the wives; the father was a symbol of unity to settle up these misunderstandings. He must not neglect some of his wives in favour of others. This may spread jealousy and disrespect among his wives. He must rebuke and guide his children where they are wrong and instil love to all of them.

In case the father has problems of discipline that he cannot handle, the matter is referred to the corporate group because according to African life, children belong to the corporate body of kinsmen, even if they bear only their father's or mother's name. Whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the group happens to the individual. The individual can only say, according to Mbiti (1969) 'I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am'. This is a cardinal point in the understanding of the African view of man.

The father is the primary provider in his family. He must also protect his family because according to Popenoe (1993), he is the ultimate authority where all family members are to submit to his authorityfully (Whyte, 1974; Hammond-Tooke, 1974; Lieberman, 1972 & Duminy, 1967). Today the role of the father has changed a little.

### **3.6 SUCCESSION**

Upon the death of the father, the house property is inherited by the eldest son of each house. In the event of the failure of a male “house” heir in any house other than the great wife, the next to succeed is the eldest son of an affiliated house (Krige, 1985). Where there is no affiliated house, resource for an heir will be taken to the chief house on the same side of the kraal as that on which the heirless house is, and on failure thereof, the lower houses of such side, and upon failure of such houses, to the great wife heir, who is the eventual heir of both sides of the kraal when either or both sides of these are heirless.

#### **3.6.1 Kraal property and powers of the Kraal Head**

All property not allocated to house is kraal property and belongs to the owner of the kraal. The kraal head is the absolute owner of any property of the kraal which does not specially belong to an individual house or to an inmate not of his own family, and any property which may have been acquired by a foundling reverts, on failure of an heir to such foundling’s estate, to the estate of the kraal head. In addition to this, he has charge, custody and control of all property belonging to the different houses, and he may in his discretion use the same for his own personal wants and necessities. Or, he may exchange loan or otherwise, alienate the same for the benefit or in the interest of, the house to which it belongs. But he may not use or deal with house property for the benefit or on behalf of other houses in the kraal without creating an obligation on the part of such other houses to the return of the property so alienated of its equivalent in value.

The kraal head also has power to alter positions of the houses of the several wives, provided no house is assigned a lower position than that previously held by it. If the great wife dies in her husband’s lifetime without leaving any male child, the husband may regulate the future position of the houses as he sees fit. If there is any male child, he has to nominate from the right hand house a wife to act as great wife and look after such children. The kraal head may also transfer a child of his from the next lower house to an upper house when the male heirs of such upper house have failed.



The kraal head is under a moral obligation to render assistance to the inmates of his kraal in the payment of *lobola* for their wives. As it is usual for a daughter's *lobola* to be used for acquiring a wife for her brother, the father generally allocates the daughters of a house to the sons of that house, indicating thus the source from which each of the sons of that house, and indicating thus the source from which each of the sons might get cattle. When, however, the father dies without providing wives for his younger sons, a moral obligation is attached to the heir in each house to make such provision for his younger brothers.

### **3.6.2 Succession to kraal property**

The eldest son of the chief wife succeeds to the property and status of the kraal head. Should he be dead, his eldest son will succeed his father. Failing such eldest son and all male lineal descendants through him, the second son of the chief wife succeeds, and failing him, his male lineal descendants in due order to seniority. Failing a third and all other sons of the chief wife and all the male lineal descendants there, the succession will devolve upon the eldest son of the house first affiliated to the chief wife. Failing all heirs of this house, the succession devolves upon the next affiliated house and so on according to the order of affiliation. Failing an heir in the chief wife or affiliated houses recourse will be had to the chief house on the substitute side, only in the event of a failure in all these will the succession devolve upon the eldest son of the second wife to the chief wife.

In the event of a failure of heirs on the second wife and the substitute wife sides, the kraal head's eldest brother succeeds and thereafter, failing his male descendants, all his brothers in turn. On the failure of all brothers and their male descendants, a succession goes to the paternal grandfather and so on until the male lines of the next of kin and collaterals are closed. Failing all heirs kraal and house property revert to the chief. Every heir of a kraal head must, upon taking up duties after the death of his father, report himself to the chief with a beast called his late father's shield. Nowadays the beast has changed; money is given instead.

Succession of chiefs, both as regards chieftaincy and kraal property is regulated on the same principle as succession to kraal property, except that the great wife of a chief is chosen differently.

### **3.6.3 Succession of chiefs**

Succession procedures differ considerably all over Africa. The ruler's son, daughter, brother, nephew, mother, uncle or other member of the royal relatives may succeed the ruler or the chief. In some societies such as Bapedi, the new ruler is chosen by the council made up by close relatives of the ruler or chief (Mbiti, 1969). Traditionally, they are known as *sebešo* in consultation with the spirits of the departed rulers. The chief minister is consulted after the council has known who will be the next ruler of chief.

Many customs and ceremonies are followed at the coronation of the new ruler or chief. On the day of the ceremony, the other chiefs and their subjects are invited to come and witness the coronation officiated by the chief minister. The ruler or chief wears the animal skin of the tribe concerned. The animal symbolises power and strength. Other customs will be the horns, bark cloth, beads, two-bladed sword or hoe. The keeping of sacred fire is reported in many African societies and is associated with the chief or ruler. At the death of one ruler, this fire will be extinguished but relit when the new ruler is installed. This fire must be kept burning perpetually during the reign of a given ruler. The sacred cattle that the ruler or chief must have are used for meat, sacrifice and milk.

Fire symbolises life, continuity and vitality. Its burning is the symbol of prosperity of the ruler and his people. Cattle are symbols of providence - food, drink, property and means of keeping in touch with the spirit world. The king's or ruler's blood may not be shed because blood is the very essence of his life and of his tribe. The chief or ruler must also observe various taboos of his tribe. If he breaks them, he will be disqualified from his office. This is the picture of the person and office of a traditional ruler. Other important officials include sub-chiefs, councillors, advisors, priests and diviners. It is through these people that the ruler manages to maintain his authority over the tribe.

The ruler or chief must know what is going on in his tribe by these people. He must be reachable by his subjects in order to keep his position in contact with the spiritual world.

### **3.7 LINEAGE**

A lineage group is all persons that are descended through males from a common ancestor (Mbiti 1969). In a matrilineal system, descent is traced through women to a common female ancestor. It is an unilineal descent - group according to Myburg (1991), in which members can trace their ties of kinship; each member can accurately trace his or her descent either through the male or female lines to a common male or female ancestor. A lineage can be divided into smaller units for different purposes. This division is termed segmentation.

Lineages have an important role to play among weakly centralised people. Political units are organised on the basis of lineages, as among the Longo of Uganda and the Nuer of the Sudan. Members of a lineage need not necessarily live together, if they did constitute a local descent-group. A lineage includes both living and deceased members. The term lineage-group denotes living members.

### **3.8 THE ROLE OF THE PARENTS**

According to Forte's paradigm (1963), an African family develops in the following way: the first stage occurs when the marriage is validated publicly by handing over the bride's price (*lobola*) to the bride's people and the subsequent birth of children to the marriage. In the first place, children are economically, emotionally and judicially dependent on their parents. This point highlights the role played by parents in the rearing of their children. In the first place, children are taught to accept and value the behaviour of their own society. They are educated in conservation and conformity in acceptance of and loyalty to the traditional way of life. The second phase in the development of Sepedi family is experienced when children of the marriage union(s) become adults and marry. The trend is that sons will bring their wives to their father's homestead, resulting in the formation of an extended family.

Brym and Lie (2007) asserts that “marriage is a socially approved, presumably long term sexual and economic union between a man and a woman. It involves reciprocal rights and obligations between spouses and between parents and children. “Besides the role of education into societal values, parents must make an exceptionally efficient unit in order to exercise caring for their children. Parents must provide food, clothing, education, shelter and leisure”. This fact is echoed by Murdock (1949) who argues that “marriage exists only when the economic and the sexual are united into one relationship, for providing the needs of the family”.

Another role of the parents is spelled clearly by Parsons (1955), mentioning that parents must give its members love, affection and companionship. He stressed that in the nuclear family, it is mainly the mother who is responsible for ensuring the family’s emotional wellbeing because she is the one who bears children and nurses them. It falls on the husband to take on the more “instrumental” role of earning a living outside the family and providing food to the family. In case where both parents are working, time should be set aside to enable both parents to listen to their children’s complaints. Children’s problems must be solved amicably to enable them to have good relationships with other people in their community. Working parents who can afford may send their children to day care centres, but such parents often feel guilty that they do not spend enough time with their children.

The investment in children can be realised only if parents rear the young to maturity. This involves not only caring for them physically but teaching them language, beliefs, skills, religion and values. Parsons (1955) regarded socialisation as the “basic and irreducible” function of the parents and family. This concept “socialisation” will be dealt fully about in the next subsection of this chapter.

### **3.9 THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHILDREN**

As parents carry out their responsibility of reaching their children in an attempt to train them into future responsible adults, children must listen and obey the words of their parents. It is not only a child’s physical parents’ responsible to mould the child’s behaviour, but all people around are looked upon as models for right behaviour, which means all members of its community must have the child’s welfare at heart. They can praise or punish the child’s conduct. Children must learn by imitating the parents’

behaviour. This elucidates the corporate nature of African family relationships. Van der Vliet, Junod and Jaques (1978) support the view that children's kinship and social relations are organised around the principles of seniority and male dominance.

Children must realise that kinship system is like a vast network (Mbiti, 1997) stretching laterally (horizontally) in every direction, to embrace everybody in any given local group. This means that each individual is a brother or sister, father or mother, grandmother or grandfather, or cousin or brother-in-law, uncle or aunt, to everybody else. Both parents are to be respected by their children, and those who show respect will stand out wise, while children who deviate from the rules of their parents and their community will be punished. The foolish behaviour of the children causes the parents great sorrow, and indicates failure of parents in their upbringing. Respect for seniors is therefore also one of the basic rules enforced on children by parents. Respect for adults is an integral part of the functioning of the whole social system of Africans. This rule forms the pivotal point of all other social relations.

### **3.10 DEFINING THE TERM SOCIALISATION**

Socialisation, according to Stark (2007), is the learning process by which infants are made into normal human beings, possessed of culture and able to participate in social relations. Giddens (2006) supports what Stark has said by defining socialisation as the process whereby the helpless infant gradually becomes a self-aware, knowledgeable person, and skilled in the ways of the culture into which he or she was born. Socialisation among the youth allows for more general phenomenon of social reproduction, the process whereby societies have structural continuity over time.

#### **3.10.1 The functions of the peer group**

The first socialising agent is the family into which one is born because adult family members are available for child care. Although this has changed especially after the 1950s, in which women had to work outside the home for their families. A second socialisation agent whose importance increased in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is the peer group (Brym and Lie, 2007). Peer groups consist of individuals who are not necessarily friends but are about the same age and have similar status. Peer groups help children and adolescents separate from their families and develop independent sources of

identity. They are especially influential over lifestyle issues such as appearance, social activities and dating. As from middle childhood through adolescence, the peer group is often the dominant socialising agent.

### **3.10.2 Socialisation of boys and girls**

Differential socialisation has long been the object of considerable sociological research. Parents' expectations about their children's future influence patterns of socialisation. Most societies, Bapedi included, begin socialising children for their adult future roles as early as possible. Parents raise boys and girls differently because they will lead quite different adult lives. Mbiti (1969) asserts that "what happens to the single youth happens corporately to the parents, the relatives, the neighbours and the living dead".

During socialisation, boys and girls are ritually introduced to the art of communal living. This happens when they withdraw from other people to live alone in the forest in the case of boys, or in specifically prepared huts away from the village. They go through a period of withdrawal from society, absence from home, during which time they receive secret instruction before they are allowed to re-join their relatives at home. This is a symbolic experience of the process of dying, living in the spirit world and being reborn. The rebirth, according to Mbiti (1969), is an act of re-joining their families, emphasises and dramatises that those boys and girls are now new; they have new personalities.

This period marks that they have lost their childhood and that they are introduced to adult life. They are now allowed to share in the full privileges and duties of the community because they have now entered the state of responsibility and new obligations are expected of them by society. This incorporation into adult life also introduces them to the life of the living - dead as well as the life of those yet to be born.

Boys undergo circumcision and girls under clitoridectomy. Special men circumcise boys and specialist women perform the operation on the girls. A special knife is used in each case. The foreskin of the boy's sexual organ is removed or cut-off and a small portion of the girl's clitoris is similarly removed. Initiated men during this time will

gather around to watch the boys undergoing the circumcision process while the elder women on the other side will be watching the girls. The operation, according to Mbiti (1969), is very painful, but the children are encouraged to endure without crying or shouting. Those who manage to go through it bravely are highly praised by the community. Meanwhile, the wound is healing, relatives will come to visit the initiated boys and girls bringing them food, ornaments and any other presents that they can afford.

The cutting of the skin from the sexual organs symbolises and dramatises separation from childhood. It is parallel to the cutting of the umbilical cord when the child is born. The sexual organ, according to Mbiti (1969), attaches the child to the state of potential impotence. But once that link is severed, the young person is freed from the state of ignorance and inactivity. He or she is born into another state, which is the stage of knowledge, of activity and reproduction. The shedding of his or her blood into the ground binds them mystically to the living-dead who are symbolically living in the ground or are reached at least through the pouring of libation on the ground. It is the blood of new birth. The physical pain which the children are encouraged to endure is the beginning of training them for difficulties and sufferings of later life.

Endurance of physical and emotional pain is a great virtue among Africans, since life in Africa is surrounded by much pain from one source to another. The presents given to the initiates by their relatives are tokens of welcome into the full community. They also symbolise the fact that now the young people can begin to own and inherit property. They are entitled to new rights and can say, 'this is my property', even if they own it jointly with the corporate group. Owning property leads eventually to the next important stage of the period of marriage. The dancing and rejoicing strengthen the community's solidarity and emphasise the corporate of the whole group. It is only after initiation rite that young people are allowed to join in the public dance. Making of offerings and pouring of the libation to the living-dead emphasises and renews the link between human beings and the departed, between the visible and invisible worlds. The return to home is like an experience of resurrection. Their seclusion is ended and now they re-join their community as new men and women.

The parents of the initiated boys and girls can have a ritual sexual intercourse, according to Mbiti, as the final seal of the ceremony and symbolic gesture that their children are fertile; that their children are now initiated and authorised to carry on the burning flame of life; and that a new generation is now socially and educationally born. The initiation rites prepare young boys and girls in matters of sexual life, marriage, procreation and family responsibilities. They are henceforth allowed to shed their blood for their own country and to plant their biological seeds so that the next generation can begin to arrive. Initiation rites have a great educational purpose. It is during this time of the initiation that mentors of the initiates instruct them or educate them by means of different folktales that reinforce responsibility, caring and commitment.

The folktale performance is an occasion to articulate, in symbolic ways, what may be considered socially acceptable. The boy child has to be courageous, brave, independent, self-reliant, free thinking and adventurous. This is necessary in order for him to protect those around him and to create wealth for his family. Sepedi boys grow up with this attitude into adulthood. The boy is thus, according to Rousseau (1911), a natural man, not governed by the 'slavish prejudice' or 'control', 'constraint and compulsion' found so offensive in the civilised society. He is the real man who will become the responsible head of the family and protect all the people around him.

The girl child, according to Rousseau (1911), rises above as an object of male desire. She must be subordinate, governed by fear and made a coquettish slave in order to render her a more alluring object of desire; she must be a sweeter companion to man in order to relax him. It may appear that although women are the ones who tell these stories, they indulge in a semiotic discourse but only within the confines of the symbolic order. However, it could be argued that the tales, to some extent, are discursive agencies deployed by culture to subject women to a patriarchal ideology. The deeper reading of the folktales reveals ambivalence of the discourse of the women who supposedly speak against themselves. The discourse reveals what Foucault (1985) terms as the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be an instrument and effect of power but also a hindrance, a stumbling block. This marks a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing ideology. In this instance, women project a new ideology which views them positively.



Althusser (1970) notes in 'ideology and ideology state apparatus' that there are two major mechanisms for ensuring that people within a state behave according to the rules of that state even when it is not in their best interests. The first is what Althusser calls ISA or Repressive State Apparatuses. These ISAs are institutions that generate ideologies, which individuals and groups then internalise and act in accordance with. These ISAs, according to Althusser, include schools, religions, the family, the legal system, politics, sport and arts.

The Bapedi people endeavour to socialise their young ones through the narrative process so that they take up their future responsibilities as responsible husbands and wives. The narrator, while presenting patriarchal tales, transmits signal through archetypal characters that reveal the overwhelming responsibility of the female members of society.

### **3.11 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENTS AND CHILDREN**

Conformity and subordination are dominating values and the only rules and standards of correct behaviour to be tolerated in the family into which the child is born. Duminy (1967) asserts that such rigidity and conformity accounts, among other things, for the reason why the African world-view is considered too optimistic and non-critical. Children are supposed to obey their parents and elders unquestioningly. The children grow up under the guidance of a mother because the father is always out for work. The mother strives to produce children with good conduct. Each child is taught to know his or her position in the hierarchy and the appropriate respect to other members of the family.

On the other hand, there are children who will not listen to the words of wisdom handed down to them by their parents. They will rob and curse their parents. Such foolish behaviour is not acceptable because children are the object of care and the concern of their parents. Giddens (2006) asserts that "many people admire the apparent discipline and stability of the past family, because parents used to be strict in their authority".

The way in which this authority was exercised would be considered exceedingly harsh by today's standards of life. The traditional family life has little altered because both parents are working today, but several factors can be picked up as especially important. For example, the spread of the Western culture, western ideals of romantic love, the development of centralised government in areas previously unknown, and people's involvement in politics. All these factors influence the traditional ways of behaviour. In general, these changes are creating a worldwide movement towards the breaking down of the extended family systems and other types of kinship groups. This was first documented by Goode (1973) in his book called 'World Revolution in family patterns'. Today this issue has been borne out by subsequent research.

With respect to recent development as laid down by Goode (1973), the most important changes occurring worldwide include:

- Clans and other kin groups are declining in their influences;
- There is general trend towards the free selection of a spouse;
- The rights of women are becoming more widely recognised in respect to both the initiation of marriage and decision making within the family;
- Arranged marriages are becoming less common;
- Higher levels of sexual freedom for men and women are developing in societies that were very restrictive;
- There is a general trend towards the extension of children's rights; and
- There is an increased acceptance of same-sex partnerships.

It would be a mistake to exaggerate these trends because in most societies today, extended families are still the norm and traditional family practices continue. Moreover, there are differences in the speed at which changes are occurring.

### **3.12 COURTSHIP, DECEIT AND PRIDE**

The image presented of the ideal girl growing up is that she must get married and bear children. This is the greater hope and expectation to the individual for herself and of the community in which the individual finds herself.

Different customs are observed in the matter of finding partners for marriage. In some societies the choice is made by the parents, and this may be done even before the children are born. The children, however, get married only when they are old enough and not immediately after birth or while very young. Traditionally, African parents arranged marriages for their children. When parents wish to arrange marriage for their sons and know of a suitable girl, they confide the matter to a close and trustworthy relative. The use and help of a marriage intermediary is reported among Africans. The intermediary plays an important role when the time comes for the actual marriage to take place. The girl and boy are not allowed to meet until the wedding has taken place.

If the parents of the boy are satisfied with the choice of the boys' marriage partner, an intermediary will be sent to go and negotiate the '*sego sa meetse*' (bride) with the girl's parents. The intermediary will present a token of a gift (*pulamolomo*) before the negotiations can start. During the negotiations, the intermediary will declare the intentions of the boy's parents and the girl's parents will in turn inform the intermediary how much cattle and money they need for their daughter. As soon as the two parties have agreed, the intermediary will return home to explain what the girl's parents need for their daughter. The boy's parents will start to arrange the marriage goods after they have heard what the intermediary had said.

Both parents will inform their relatives and the community about the marriage of their son or daughter. It is a popular story that girls become jealous if one of their age group is more beautiful than they are or has found a marriage partner. Madiba (1949) relates the story of Ntsobe, as an example of this behaviour. Chieftain Ramadubanya had a lovely daughter called Ramatsobane. She was known as Ntsobe in the family. Ntsobe was tall and very beautiful. She presented herself very well like the chief's daughter, who is known by wearing beautiful clothes. One day her friends invited her to go with them by the river side to go and wash themselves. She agreed to go with them but delayed in the house. That was her shortcoming and weakness character. She was not time conscious and as a result the other girls could not wait for her. They arrived first at the river and threw their beads into the little lake they were swimming.

On their way to the river side, they spoke about the beauty of Ntsobe. Others became jealous to an extent of saying: “*O phala mang, Ntsobe yoo wa lena? Kgane le kgantšha gona ge e le morwedi wa kgoši*”. (Is Ntsobe the most beautiful girl than us? Is it because she comes from the royal family, that she is regarded as such?) When Ntsobe arrived at the river, the other girls got out of the water and started singing, as an indication that they wanted to go back home. One of the girls with a filthy heart threw Ntsobe’s beads in the spring of water. Ntsobe tried to plead with them not to leave her behind but failed to convince them. Ntsobe remained there washing herself in the river. After sometime she did not see those girls until she was caught up by a giant, which made tricks to cook her because she was very fat, but Ntsobe was tactful and she managed to escape the giant (Madiba, 1949).

It is not only in this tale that girls are seen as being evil, jealous and unkind to a fellow girl. The tendency of a girl to be unreasonable and insensitive is also detected in Makopo (1993) where the two sisters have agreed not to marry any man. The two girls were Mmaphuti and Mmakwena. At a later stage, Mmaphuti married Mahuma. She was forced by the parents to do so, and unfortunately the man turned himself into an ogre while they were on their way home. In Makwela (2000), the girls convinced a friend to close her eyes while they were harvesting fruits; she was foolish enough to fall in the trap. Findings by the researcher are that girls have an inborn tendency to cheat one another and to be careless.

To some degree, it may be concluded that girls have the desire and tendency to destroy one another. The girl child, socialised by these tales, internalises certain values about herself indeed as Althusser (1970) observes, ‘ideology works, speaks to us and gives us the illusion that we are in charge. We freely choose to believe the things we believe and find lots of reasons why we believe in those things’. We may say that the folktales embody these ideologies internalised by the listener.

### **3.13 BITTER FRUITS OF DISOBEDIENCE, DEFIANCE AND THE PERVERSION OF BEAUTY**

As noted at the beginning that girls look forward to marriage as their ultimate goal, this fact is emphasised in folktales and in other cultural expressions. Madiba (1949) relates a story about Mokgaetši who was stubborn, and said: long time ago, at a place

called Bokgaga, there once lived a woman who had a girl child by the name of Mokgaetši. She grew up being responsible but after a long run she became irresponsible. The character disappointed her mother. She was her mother's only child. When her mother requested her to do this and that at home, she kept quiet. Mokgaetši was spoiled to an extent of boasting to all the people in the village because she was her mother's most beautiful girl.

Mokgaetši was a proud girl. "If anyone could appreciate her beauty, she would boast more to all people in her surrounding to show her beauty". It was during harvest time that her mother asked that she gives a hand in all that her mother was doing, but all was in vain. She kept quiet and did not listen to her mother. Mokgaetši's mother put a pot of mealies on the fire while she did other activities in the field. The mother asked Mokgaetši to keep the fire burning for the pot of mealies to cook. Mokgaetši refused to do what she was asked to do. She kept on playing; the mother went to put the fire by herself.

On her way back from the pot, she saw enemies hiding under a big tree. She became frightened. She tried to call Mokgaetši in order to send her to fetch something at home, but she failed. The mother called again and said:

*"Mokgaetši, ngwana'ka, hle nke o re kitikiti o ye gae gomme o ntlisetše lemao la go roka mokotla woo ke o tšhelago mabele. Lemao le ka lefereng la ntlo ka gare ga legapana. Hle, Mosebjadi. O tla ba wa boa ra tla ra ipshina ka lewa le ke le apeilego le".*

Mokgaetši my child, run and fetch a needle to sew the mealie bag. The needle is in the hut inside the calabash. I am pleading with you Mokgaetši, please go, when you come back, we shall sit down and enjoy the mealies that I have cooked.

Mokgaetši did not listen until her mother went home to fetch the needle by herself. Her last words to her daughter were:

*"O tla di bona le tsebjana tša mangotwana, o re ke le mmago, ke go tswetše, o gane ke go roma ka tsela ye? O padile".*

“Worse things will befall you, since you don’t listen and refuse to carry all the instructions of your mother. I give up on you”.

Mokgaetši remained and played until the enemies caught her. It was the end of her life.

The values instilled in Ntsobe and Mokgaetši’s stories are from the patriarchal society that expects women to adhere to the rules of society without questioning them because culturally, women are portrayed as little more than a slave who goes about her task in silent acceptance.

From a feminist perspective, both Ntsobe and Mokgaetši have to raise their voices so that we know their responses. The common assumption drawn in these stories is that women are oppressed and exploited, have little freedom of action and are held in low self-esteem.

Mokgaetši’s behaviour, according to Farrer (1975), has been downplayed and even ignored. She is portrayed as being rude and arrogant because she does not respect what her mother is instructing her to do. The community’s expectations are that she lives according to the cultural values she has been instilled with. Her behaviour is uncalled for.

The community expects her to listen and to act accordingly without raising her voice. Mokgaetši’s failure to listen or to heed her mother’s instructions make her to be killed by the enemies.

From a feminist perspective, the researcher concludes that this is a patriarchal story written by men who always threaten females by killing them because of the authority they have been bestowed with. Men are portrayed as being strong and brave. As a result, they end up being feared and treated morally as superior to females.

The proverb cited reflects men's perspectives of having authority over women and children in the family and in the community. This proverb also reinforces the idea that men are superior, strong and have voices to express themselves whereas women are encouraged to be dependent upon men, their counterparts.

Masenya (1989) supports the view by asserting that "*ngwana magana go rongwa, o wetše dikomeng a re dikoma ke tšešo*" (A child who refuses to heed the counsel of the elderly people has landed in trouble and said trouble belongs to his/her family).

Krappe (1965) argues that proverbs are the sum total of the everyday life experience of the community. They are the embodiment of the qualitative and the corporate experience of the community in different situations. They portray the wit and wisdom of the community whose heritage they form (Guma, 1977). Issues raised in these stories are that all children are socialised in a way that they must have respect, be obedient and loyal to their parents.

### **3.14 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE BRIDE AND THE MOTHER-IN-LAW**

It is a custom in Sepedi for a junior brother to take the wife of his deceased elder brother in order to "raise up seed" for the latter. This is resorted to as a means of preventing the home from breaking up. The children that will be born from this union are the elder's brother children.

The introduction of the mother figure is a significant move since it presents a subtext that provides a feminine and glorifies the role of women. The girl who has been socialised in the right way will, and thus will exercise the right conduct that leads to a healthy relationship with her mother-in-law. She will be respected and will uphold the values of the dominant patriarchal culture to ensure space of expression of herself within the culture; she will speak in the dominant ideology voice. Matoula married Kubela in Mangokoane (1975). Her role was confined to the child on her back. She never complained that the mother-in-law was not helping her. The mother-in-law was proud about Matoula. Mangokoane (1975) asserts:

*Morwedi wa Matoula e be e le seroto, sethakga le botho a na nabo. Mmago lesogana o ile a ikhutša go hlwa a fetokga le dipitša le leswielo; a thoma go swana le basadi ba bangwe ba thaka tša gagwe. (Mangokoane, 1975)*

Matoula was a hardworker, virtuous and humane. She was the pride of Kubela's family and mother-in-law retired from the domestic duties since Matoula did everything on her behalf, she was like other women her age.

Matoula's mother-in-law has attained authority reinforced by age. Her status has risen above the level of the ordinary woman. The relationship between the bride and the mother-in-law can be strained by other members of the household, such as the sister-in-law and daughters-in-law of the extended family, particularly if the household has one basic economic unit. It is common among the Pedi families to hear songs in highly negative terms referring to the in-laws to symbolise dissatisfaction in the family. For example:

*Mmatswale o a loya, o loya ka ditšhwene, di lala di go hlola ka mo dikamoreng.*

The mother-in-law is a witch; she is inclined to use baboons which scream in her room at night.

The words in a song are undoubtedly reflecting reality. This reveals that oppressors are presented as other women rather than men. The system of oppression in patriarchal families as in the class system, according to Nenola (1982), forces the oppressed to fight each other and makes it difficult for solidarity to exist. The bride must always guard against other women who may also function as a lightning rod for quarrels. The bride will be blamed if she listens to negative talks which will end up breaking the family relationships.

### **3.15 WOMEN ATTAIN THE ASEXUAL STATUS IN WIDOWHOOD**

Kweya (2011) asserts that "Queen Victoria of England only managed to assert her authority after she attained the asexual status following the death of her husband". Mrs Ndege's speaking position in this thesis seems to be authorised by similar adversity: widowhood reinforced by age.



The widow is free to venture out of the defined domain for women. She is fundamentally alienated, turned into an object for others and compelled to think of herself as inferior. She has to review everything she does because of how she appears to others, and ultimately how one appears to men, which is of crucial importance for what is normally thought of as the success of her life.

Bapedi has a tradition of cleansing the widow after a period of one year. On this day the widow, according to Phatudi et al. (2006), has to choose one of the brothers of her husband in accordance with the custom of levirate. She is free to choose whom she wants; but the eldest brother of her husband is by virtue of seniority the one who is illegible to be chosen. Phatudi asserts: "*Rangwane yo mogolo a emelela a kgopela tshwarelo gore a lokollwe a kgone go phetha ye mengwe merero*". The eldest brother to the deceased apologised and asked permission to go and attend other family matters.

The other brothers refused to continue with the discussions because their eldest brother has excused himself from the meeting. They agreed to continue with this matter when their eldest brother was not busy because they could not make any decision without his concern. They asserted "*Ba hlompha mapai a mogolo wa bona*". They respect their eldest brother's house.

The mother-in-law has taken a decision to call upon all her daughters-in-law to a meeting. They all came being angry because "*Ba a tseba gore ka setšo mohlologadi o swanetšwe ke go kgetha yo a tlogo mo hlokomela*". They know very well that culturally, a widow has to choose one of the brothers to look upon her:

*Mokgekolo o be a šokela ngwetši ya gagwe le bana bao ba tla šalago e le ditšhiwana.*

The mother-in-law felt pity for her daughter-in-law and her children.

One evening the younger brother of the deceased visited his sister-in-law thinking of having a lunch with her. Phatudi asserts "*lehono gona o iphile sebaka sa gore ge mosadi wa mogolwagwe a ka dumela, a ka tlogela mošomo gomme a otlela dithekisi*

*tša gagwe*. Today, he has given himself time to visit his sister-in-law. If she can agree to be partners, he will stop working in order to drive her taxis. While he was enjoying his food, her sister started to communicate and to engage Madimetša in her jokes and love stories:

*O bona e ka o tla nthlalefetša, ke ya go olela dikhontomo tšeo di tletšego mo tseleng go itšhireletša.*

Do you think you will trick me? I will go and collect all the condoms for protection purposes.

These words did not surprise him. From that day onwards, Madimetša inherited his brother's wife.

According to Phatudi, Sekole and Nkopodi (2006), culture is made by man himself to direct his way of life and mode of acting. It is conveyed from one generation to another by means of language or other forms of communication. It is known that throughout history, a widow is not left alone. She is by practice given the younger brother to inherit his brother's family. This tradition has often been called the way of life of a society to protect the widow and society at large. Matsepe (1978) asserts: "*Banna ba bothane kgorong ya mošate. Re di kwa gabotse mosadi, a o kgopela tšhireletšo go rena? Ke tumo le maikemišetšo a ka mong waka*". Men assembled at the chieftaincy with the purpose of reallocating this woman to the younger brother for being protected and given respect.

It is apparent that to perceive natural limitation in the feminine is the controlling ideology, as Masheti (1994) notes, "culture operates on the premises that men are biologically superior to women who are weak and have to depend on men for survival". Although the assigned roles fit within a defined gender framework, which give the male a distinct elevated role, voices of contest and disapproval can be heard. These voices are expressed in the subtexts, and legitimately gain entry into socially accepted norms in the art of the folktale telling tradition. It is therefore true that the constraints necessitate contest in the folktale tradition through the creation of subtexts.

These subtexts are crucial for the survival of female voices. Marxist analysis suggests that oppression necessitates resistance, the development of class-consciousness and finally action. It is one of the great realisations of analysis of the oppression of women that this resistance occurs in a cultural discourse such as folktale. The supposed complexity in exchange of survival is balanced with production of subtexts that fight the extinction of the self.

### 3.16 THE POWER OF THE SUBVERSIVE WOMAN

Magapa (2000) relates the story of a certain family which was poor. One day they made a decision to go and hunt food in the forest. She was a Bushmen. A man and his wife went to and fro but could not get anything. After a while the man was very tired to an extent of showing weakness. The wife said to her husband:

*“Nna ke na le leano. Ge o ka ntshepiša gore o tla ba monna nka loga maano a gore ke kgone go bona dijo”*

I have a plan. If you can listen and trust me, and behave like a man, I can make a plan to bring you food.

The man agreed to keep quiet about the matter. The wife said *“nna ke tla iphetola pitsi gomme wena o se ke wa ntšhaba gomme wa tla wa gobala”*. (I will change myself into a riding horse and you must not run away because you will get hurt).

The man has sworn to his wife that he will not run away. The wife grew up hair, a tail and feet. She went among the riding horses and they welcomed her. The wife broke one of the horses' neck and changed herself into a woman. Both the man and his wife enjoyed the horse's meat.

The tale above reflects the strength of a woman who carries the burden of ensuring the survival of their families, combining escalating domestic responsibilities with integration into a labour market that is increasingly precarious and unregulated (González de la Rocha, 2001). Such conditions serve only to deepen women's experiences of poverty, inequality, exclusion, alienation and violence.

Women have been victims of the historical moment and its peculiar dynamics of depoliticisation. It is now time to revisit and reinvent cultural practices of portraying women as dependent upon men economically. From a feminist perspective, there are women who are responsible, assertive and have vision for the future, and as a result, they perceive feminist-labelled arguments as marginal to their struggles. Motta, Fominaya, Eschle and Cox (2011) are of the opinion that we seek to explore the relationship between theory and practice as a means of opening up possibilities for the recognition of feminist analysis to women's everyday struggles, contributing to a more emancipatory feminism.

The researcher, however, sees that there are some obstacles to such a project of revisitation and reinventing cultural practices or long-standing practices and resisted black women's culture for its silencing and sidelining of their experiences. The problem of unity between women is still a dilemma for their development.

In the tale of "why the cat always stays with women", the cat made friendship with the elephant, the hunter and the lion. All three animals ended their friendship with the cat because of the wrath that it displayed. As a result, the cat decided from that day to stay close to women and asserted, "now I know that someone is stronger than the man" (Kabaji, 2009).

The argument raised in this tale is that women are the centre of socialisation from this vantage point; they take up the role of socialising children and influencing their gender perspectives. The very nature of the stage is subversive and determines the relationship between the audience and the performer. The small space next to the heart, being the woman's area of jurisdiction, gives women performers power to influence the audience. It is made up of impressionable young minds and produces a more intimate physical relationship between performer and audience. The audience, mostly children, surrounds the performer expectantly and gives their undivided attention. The direct communication that ensues between performer and audience create an enviable ambiance for absorption of the ideological position and a lifelong bond.

This stage gives the female performer the power and authority to subvert patriarchy, shape and influence behaviour of the young from her pivotal domain. The formulae, as a strategic feature, created distance from the present world, the reality, to a world in the fictive (past). Through this technique, the performer creates illusion in the audience that how they are being treated has nothing to do with the present. It is this denial that enables the performer to pass across and sometimes subvert society gender ideology however objectionable, in a subtle pleasure, and convenient way without eliciting questions from her audience.

In the real world, gender ideology is communicated through instructions, taboos, warnings and orders directed to the conscious mind. In the real sense of the folktale fantasy world, gender ideology is transferred through pleasurable means. For example, through fascinating patterns of images directed to the unconscious mind. The success of the performance, therefore, depends to a large extent, on the performer's repertory of images. It may be argued that images are the basic materials of the tale, which are evoked during performance through that externalisation of experiences that members of the audience share. The narrator repeatedly evokes well-known images in a common context to invite the audience's participation. Mention of, say, the ogre or trickster evoked variegated images in the audience. While doing this, the performer relies on voice and rhythm, creating levels of tension and involvement by increasing or decreasing the speed of delivery, raising or lowering her voice, using different voices for different dramatis personae and introducing sung elements. Songs are important in the daily life of Sepedi folktales. Cultural activities such as naming, circumcision and burial ceremonies, work and weddings are accompanied by music. The repetition of song in the folktale is therefore an imitation of the repetition of songs in Sepedi life. Songs deal with gender roles and the expected behaviour from men and women in society.

### 3.17 A WOMAN'S OTHERNESS IS FOREGROUNDED BY THE SOCIAL MODE OF RECOGNITION

Madiba (1949) relates the story of Ramakgahlela, a brave girl who went out a long distance alone. On the way, she was caught up by a giant, which did not waste time but put her inside a big drum. The giant carried her on its back and instructed her not to cry and finally said: "if you cry, the giant will cut you into pieces". Ramakgahlela must only sing this song:

*Ke rile ke ya gaMalome lela! Ka humana ke sekgalabjana se,  
lela! Se rwelerwele dikomana tše, lela! Sa re ngwanana tsena  
ntlong fa, lela!*

As I was going to my uncle's place, I found an old man carrying the parcel and asked me to enter the house.

The giant and Ramakgahlela went from village to village, visiting beer places. In one of the homes, the giant put down his luggage, and Ramakgahlela sang her song. The giant drank the beer to an extent of falling asleep. Ramakgahlela's uncle recognised the voice of his niece. During the night, Ramakgahlela was taken out of the drum, and on his way to his place wanted Ramakgahlela to sing for him. He opened the drum and the bees killed him.

This is a patriarchal story which does not portray women as brave as such, but put in the position of being weak and cowardly. Ramakgahlela has risen to be the object of the male desire because of her bravery which, according to culture, is the characteristic of being a man.

The argument in this narrative is that the straightforward, open/light, the shrine and the front yard are the male domain, and highlight the peripheral location of Sepedi woman in relation to *kgoro* (courtyard) in which historical lessons are taught. Women are never part of this location.

Issues raised are that women are never entirely articulate in historical knowledge. The little they know is gleaned "informally from their husbands, sons and fathers" (Hofmeyer, 1994). This implies that the exclusionary gendered configuration of the home space is applied more broadly across Africa.

The narrative reveals that Sepedi folktales define what the community perceives as the proper domains of operation for the sexes. There exists, within Sepedi worldview, three gendered domains: the home, environment just outside the home and the world beyond the wilderness. The girls and women only operate in the first and the second spheres, but only boys and men venture into the third sphere. These instances constitute the subtexts created to contest patriarchal order. Paradoxically the home, which is the domain of women, provides the framework for negotiating, contesting and subverting gender ideology.

Men as the privileged group are more often out of the home, leaving this core domain for women who utilise it to form special bonds and to establish power block that relegate men to the periphery. The tales subtly draw a picture of the dominated in society and show them in confrontation with patriarchal forces. It is through this medium that women as underdogs achieve, albeit fantastically, a wish-fulfilment through the process of identification with the heroes and heroines. The tales also provide a means through which boys and girls are socialised to understand the limits of their relationships while providing a wish fulfilment medium for them.

While upholding the values of the dominant patriarchal culture, which are biased against women, a number of the tales reflect the prevailing misogynist images to create subtexts that glorify women. Protest activities are evident from the symbolic surface of the tales. This is evident in tales that depict women who defy the social order and set masculine goals for themselves. Makgamatha (1991) relates the story of Sewela and Korintsane. In this tale Sewela refuses to marry her cousin because she is in love with a snake-man. Her father watches her movements stealthily and discovers her relationship with the snake. Finally, he kills it. Sewela is then released from the spell, and agrees to marry her cousin. Such female characters rise above being objects of male desire. By telling these tales, the women indulge in a semiotic discourse and project a female perspective of society with desire to change it.

### 3.18 THE CHARACTERS OF THE IDEAL AFRICAN WOMAN

Magapa (2000) gives us characters of the ideal African woman in singing the following song which is called Modumelatsela:

*Tšhilo ya rare e ya bogadi'a Mmadumela samma bogadi o ba tswirinonyanaseotswa, samma bogadi bo dulwa ke ditšhakamereba...Bogadi go a šongwa sa ngwetši ke go dula a šomela ba bogadi ka dinako tšohle tša phaku tšhilo o yo huruhlela, ka mafurifušana gwa lla nna tšhilo.*

A woman is symbolized as a grinding stone. She is instructed by her family to work tirelessly. She is symbolized as a bird which is adulterous, stubborn, brave and quiet. She is instructed by her parents to work very hard all the time. All her stupid ways must be thrown away. She must provide food by grinding with the stone at the back of her home. The woman should always be quiet.

The transformation of socio-economic and cultural conditions is nonetheless impossible without information concerning why things are what they are. The task of the feminist studies is to obtain that knowledge. But the task is also to clarify what they have been historically, and what they are at the present moment. Women have, in any case, lived their lives, thought their thoughts and even expressed them publicly in earlier times as well. The fact that women's ideas and articulations have not been part of the mainstream of cultural tradition does not mean that they never existed. It only means that they have remained invisible in life as in scholarship and research.

The main responsibility of the woman is to rear the children in an appropriate manner. She must teach them to accept and value the traditional way of life of the family. Masenya (1989) asserts that "the folktale performance is an occasion to articulate in symbolic ways, what may be considered socially acceptable". Although it can be argued that the tales, to some extent, are discursive agencies deployed by culture to subject the girl child to a patriarchal ideology, the deeper reading of the folktales reveal ambivalence of the discourse of the woman who supposedly speak against herself.



The proper African woman submits herself to the authority of her husband. She must give respect to her husband and look after the income of the family. She must work willingly with her hands without complaining. She must wake up early in the morning to provide food to all members of the family while carrying the child on her back. She will therefore be praised and trusted by her husband.

Today, the situation has changed. There is a shift of individualisation which affects both parents and children. The woman deems it her role to train children into good adults; but she is likely to succeed because through education they are exposed to a western way of life. As a result of this exposure, they develop a feeling of individual responsibility which makes them self-sufficient. It is no longer the responsibility of the woman alone to train children. Mbiti (1969) sees both parents as role models of their children; they must impart knowledge and wisdom that will help them to acquire good morals.

### **3.19 CONCLUSION**

Stories about women, however, still do not portray them in the variety of extra familial roles that characterise actual social situations of women in contemporary African society. However, there may be greater acceptance of girls engaging in activity roles than of women, or animals representing women to take on roles that are gender specific. The social marginalisation of elderly women, particularly of widows, literally shaped her to fill a “convenient” social role. Vejvoda (2004) asserts that “she uses this traumatic experience to create another role for herself; that of a respected storyteller”.

Mashabela (2007) also supports what Magapa said by asserting: “*lekgarebe a ka se bule molomo wa gagwe go bolela*”. The wife shall be quiet and not supposed to say anything. Mashabela relates the story of a certain girl called Legwalakatsepa who knew the characters of an ideal woman of keeping silent. This is the weapon she used to overcome all the tricksters of her suitors.

There is no emphasis on other skills of the ideal Sepedi woman than keeping quiet. Patriarchy is a system that encourages silence on the side of women. The implication is that the woman must be dependent on a man. Things work on smoothly if the woman is submissive and marginalised.

Marriage is seen as a reward for the woman for saving a man's life. The wife is also expected to help with the provision of sustenance for the family. Humility is another admired characteristic of the ideal wife. Such would be the desired qualities of a woman in marriage, and not the exercise of intelligence, which is hastily dismissed as ill temper, the result of bad upbringing.

The position of women remains unchanged. Married women toil, and are beaten if they do not obey the dominant patriarchal structure. The maintenance of the status quo, however, is naturally in the interests of those at the top of the hierarchy, and of those in power. Thsi behaviour clearly calls this hierarchy into question and can be interpreted as a 'ritual of rebellion' whose only function is to defuse social tensions and vent social pressure, thus reinforcing even more strongly the prevailing situation.

## **CHAPTER 4: ROLES WOMEN ARE PUT INTO AND CONDITIONS THEY INCUR AFTER MARRIAGE**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter will examine roles women are put into as well as conditions such as the bride, widow, motherhood, primary wife, secondary wife and wife of a king.

### **4.2 MARRIAGE IN BAPEDI SOCIETY**

Marriage in Bapedi society is not just an agreement between the two people, a wife and husband or between two families, that is the groom's family and the bride's family. Mönning (1967) views it as a legal act in which the relatives of the groom publicly transfer certain goods (*magadi*) to the relatives of the bride. Ember and Ember (1977) in Makgamatha (2000) views marriage (*lenyalo*) as a socially approved sexual and economic union between a man and a woman. This view is supported by Mathumba (1990) in Makgamatha (2000) who asserts that "marriage establishes a range of affinal social relationships between the husband's family and the wife's family". All these views entail that in marriage, a man and his wife form a sort of corporation in which they help one another throughout life. They are entitled to share almost everything they have.

### **4.3 AFRICAN CONCEPTS AND PRACTICES OF MARRIAGE**

Marriage is the focus of existence for African people and the point at which all the members of the community meet (Mbiti 1969). For example, the departed, the living and those yet to be born. Mbiti further indicates that marriage is a drama in which everyone becomes an actor or actress and not just a spectator. Marriage is therefore viewed as a duty, a requirement from the corporate society and a rhythm of life in which everyone must participate. According to the African view of marriage, there is no "*lefetwa*", that is, all the people must get married. Failure to do so means a person has rejected society and society will reject him/her in return.

#### 4.4 WOMANHOOD

The start of preparation for marriage of the girl is after initiation. This point is echoed by Mönnig (1967), who thinks that after the completion of the *byale* session, the girl is entitled to marry. The initiation rites that the girl went through are like she is born into the state of maturity and responsibility. During the initiation period, the girl is introduced to matters of sex, marriage, procreation and family life. One can say that initiation is a ritual sanctification and preparation for marriage. It is the entire corporate body of society which prepares the girl for marriage and family life.

In societies where there are no initiation rites, parents and other relatives gradually educate their children in marital affairs. Girls are taught how to prepare food, how to behave towards men, how to care for children, how to look after the husband and other domestic affairs. As far as sex knowledge is concerned, it is often difficult for parents to impart to their children much of the information. Girls receive from friends, who do not always tell the truth, but a mixture of guesswork and jokes.

##### 4.4.1 Choosing the marriage partner

In terms of Sepedi culture, if the son is mature enough to get married, he communicates his standpoint with his parents, who in turn know who will be their daughter-in-law. Parents prefer to get the daughter-in-law from a relative, particularly from the father's sister's home. Boys know that this is tradition, which they must follow.

Lesiba, having worked for five years as a bus driver, decided to get married, but he said: "*Ga ke nyake mma a hlwe a re o nnyakela lešaetšana la kua gae*". (He does not wish his mum to find him someone at home). He continued "*Le ge motho, wa gona a hlapa ga kwale meetse*". (Even if they wash themselves, they do not look clean). "*Ke kganyoga go inyakela lekgarebe*". (He wishes to find his own marriage partner).

Different customs are observed in the matter of finding marriage partners. In societies like Bapedi, traditionally parents made the choice for the girl's partner. The girl married a cousin that is on the father's sister's family although this view has changed. Currently, the girl is free to choose her own marriage partner. A fairly widespread view

is the one in which parents and relatives of a young man approach the parents of a particular girl and start marriage negotiations. In other societies, it is the young people themselves who make their own choice and afterwards inform their parents about it. The parents and relatives would then begin the betrothal and marriage negotiations, because the individual, according to Mbiti (1969), exists only because the corporate group exists. It is important that at this time of taking a contract in life, other members of that corporate community be involved in the marriage of the individual.

#### 4.4.2 Betrothal and courtship

In betrothal and courtship, the young man must work very hard to attain the lover of his heart. There should be agreement reached between the young man and the girl whom he wishes to marry. In the tale of “*Ke Mmatswale*”, Mangokoane (1975) argues:

*Lesogana ka mehla ge le binabintšhetša kgarebe molomo le re  
“kgarebe a re yo ikagela motse wa rena”*

(If a young man always murmurs with his lips to a girl, he asserts: “let us go and start our own family”).

By so doing, the girl will also respond with gestures of love if she is in favour of what the young man says, or responds negatively if she is not in agreement with him. Makwala (2005) also reiterates the idea of working hard by citing a tale of *Mokgekolo wa Mehlolo* who came up with the bride’s price. She said:

*Mohlanka yo a dumago go nyala morwedi wa gagwe o swanetše  
ke go rema mehlare yeo e dikaneditšego tšhemo ya gagwe ka  
moka.*

(A young man, who wishes to marry her daughter, must chop all the trees that have surrounded her ploughing field).

The interpretation to the tale above is that a man who would like to marry should try his luck to get his daughter in marriage despite the challenges they are going to meet. The old woman, on the other hand, made things difficult for them so that the young men failed. The other two strong young men tried their best to chop the trees, but the old woman robbed them by giving them a break while they were busy chopping the trees. They failed because they listened to what she said. The third young man was tactful enough. He chopped and did not listen when the old woman gave her a break.

She advised the young man by saying: “*O tla hwa ka tlala le go lapa*” (you will die of hunger and exhaustion). The young man pretended as if he did not hear the old woman. He continued to chop all the trees. The hard work and tactfulness made the young man to win the price. Another tale by Makwala (2005), which also emphasises hard work of a young man during betrothal and courtship as discussed by Mangokoane (1975) is the tale of “*Mmapoti a hlogo*”. In this tale, the young man has also won the price of a beautiful girl by working very hard and being tactful that he did not laugh when the old woman danced in a surprising manner. She sang this song:

*“Mmapoti a hlogo, Popoto, poto, poti, Ke be ke sa ntše ke tla,  
Popoto, poto, poti,”*

The old woman danced until she fell down. Her niece used water to wake her up. That happened during the third young man’s trial to get her niece in marriage. The young man did not laugh and that made the old woman to fail. Mangokoane (1975) says: “*Lesogana le ile la laelana le lekgarebe la le botša gore le botše koko a lona gore a dule a letile bommaditsela*”.

The interpretation to this tale is that a young man faces many challenges in getting a girl to marry. He must be tactful and work very hard. Mashabela (2007) also supports the above tales by relating the story of a girl who could not speak a word to any man who proposed love to her. Her daily duty was to arrange flowers. Mashabela asserts:

*“Ka mehla ge lesogana le le tlile le hloma hlogo matolong go  
bontšha gore le swerwe ke boroko.”*

(When the man visits the girl, he puts his head on his knees to indicate to the girl that he wants to sleep.)

The interpretation of the story above is that his actions prevented the girl from saying anything. She responded by giving him a place to sleep on a daily basis until he was warned by his parents to stop visiting the girl because they did not agree. The other young man who made her to speak won the price of getting the girl in marriage. In betrothal and courtship, there must indeed be an agreement reached between the man who wishes to marry the girl and the girl. The parents must also be involved to witness every step the young man and the girl take. During this time of betrothal and courtship, no rites are performed to mark this stage.

It is against the customary norms of Bapedi for a girl to propose love to a boy. Instead, it was and still is expected of a boy to carry out the task of proposing. Mashala (1981) asserts that “*phookwana*” (he-goat) is known for its sexual desires by always walking behind she-goats. The aim being copulation.

The girl’s behaviour towards the boys will also show modesty and coyness as a sign of respect when talking to a man, especially when they are talking affectionately about intense intimate issues of love. Makgamatha (2000) further believes that she will hide her head when she sees people particularly when she talks to or even sees her lover. If the marriage is not prearranged, the young man is advised to visit faraway places in search of a fiancée’. The following riddle points to such advice:

*Thai! Ke tlhantlhagane ke tšwa Mokwena, ke latela makgalo o se fano*

I am a scalyfeathered finch from Mokwena. I am following a kloof that is not close.

## **4.5 CONDITIONS OF MARRIAGE**

### **4.5.1 Bride**

The actual wedding ceremonies are thus allowed to take place after the wedding rites have been performed. The custom of presenting a gift to the bride’s people is a common practice all over Africa, including Bapedi, though in varying degrees. Different names are used to describe the marriage gifts. Some call it ‘bride-price’. In sepedi, the marriage gifts are called “*magadi*”.

Hlongwana, in Lemekoana and Masola (1990), having reached maturity, communicated his idea of getting married with his mother. His mother thought of a girl called Mafirihlokgo, who was born from a royal family. ‘*Mmaditsela*’ who is a go-between, continued the marriage negotiations until agreement had been reached by the parents.

The interpretation of the above tale is that the parents of a young man approach the parents of a particular girl to show that they agree that the girl and the boy can marry one another. When the two families agree, they will send their *mmaditsela* to run the processes of marriage negotiations until all the matters of marriage negotiations are being concluded.

Makwala (2005) supports what Chokoe in Makgamatha (2000) noted concerning the young man who has found someone to marry by relating the tale of Ralehopše who also went through the stage of marrying a certain girl. Makwala argues:

*“Gwa ba gwa fihlwa nako ya gore o nyale. Ge a dutše a ema-ema, a fihla nageng ya Tlhotlhokwe. A kopana le ngwanenyana. Ntle le go senya sebaka, ba beakanya tša lenyalo ba phetha.”*

(The time for Ralehopše to get married arrived. He looked around until reaching a place called Tlhotlhokwe. He met a girl whom he loved. Without a waste of time they arranged the marriage procedures until they were done.)

The interpretation of Ralehopše’s tale is that he will communicate with his parents to send *mmaditsela* to the girl’s place. When the two families agree, the marriage gifts will be paid. Traditionally, the gifts were in the form of money, foodstuff and other particulars. These marriage gifts are an important institution of African societies. They are a token of appreciation on the side of the bridegroom’s people to those of the bride for their care over their daughter and for allowing her to become his wife.

At her home the gifts ‘replace’ her, reminding her family that she will one day leave them to go and reside with her husband’s family. She is not stolen but is given away under the mutual agreement between the two families. The gift, according to Mbiti (1997), elevates the value attached to her both as a person and not as a wife. Furthermore, it is not only the man and his family who give gifts, the girls’s family also give gifts in return, even if these may be materially little than those of the man.

It is therefore expected that a young man should strive by all means to accumulate *magadi*, ‘lobola’. A young man should sweat, according to Chokoe in Makgamatha (2000), in order to get *magadi*. It is not an easy matter to obtain a bride as, according to Makgamatha (2000), a bride is likened to the hippopotamus’ eggs which are laid



right in the deep sea and makes people not easy to find. Hippopotamus in this case symbolises and emphasises the importance of one's fiancé. A man of perseverance and strength finds the bride after he has displayed the characteristics of self-confidence because marriage needs a strong and self-confident man.

Krige (1985) mentions that some of the rules connected with *lobola* are that the mother of the girl must always be given the beast for looking after her daughter and for her virginity. This beast is not part of the *lobola* and need not be handed over at any particular time, though it is generally sent before marriage, when the first *lobola* cattle were brought. As far as Bapedi custom is concerned, the beast that must be given to the mother is unknown. Her responsibility of looking after her daughter will be appreciated on the day of the wedding ceremony. As the child is a corporate being, the mother will be appreciated together with all the relatives concerned.

It is customary that mediators be sent to negotiate marriage at the bride's place. When the two parties have agreed on the marriage gifts, the day for the marriage ceremony will be arranged by both parties. In the meantime, the bride's parents will be preparing the wedding gifts. All the relatives must be informed about the day of the ceremony. African beer will be prepared and the bride's people will be practising the dancing and songs for the wedding. Very often the two parties will be making final preparations for the wedding to take place. The elderly people and relatives do not forget their role to guide the bride to behave at the bridegroom's place. She is told that she represents her relatives and her parents at the bridegroom's place, and as a result, she must not be surprised if they call her a witch, a wizard, a harlot and all sorts of bad names as a form of ill-treatment. Finally, they will inform her about the hardships she will undergo and therefore she must persevere in order to stay at the bridegroom's place.

On the day of the ceremony, the bridegroom's people arrive a day before the wedding day. They will be welcomed if they do not arrive after sunset. If they arrive late, they will be punished by sleeping on empty stomachs. As soon as they arrive, the wedding procedures will be followed until the next day when they celebrate the wedding. The bride on the other side will be under the care of her relatives. The sister to the bride or aunt is the most important person to take care of the bride and to inform her on what

should be done next. On the day of the wedding, the gifts will be exchanged by both parties.

When the bride leaves her home, people will be singing and ululations will be made, the bridegroom's people will be singing powerful wedding songs to demonstrate their strength in winning the bride. Magapa (2000) has pointed to one of those songs, as Modumelatsela asserts:

*Hee wena Modumelatsela! Wa dumela o a ya Modumelatsela, tšhilo ya rare e ya bogadi'a Mmadumela, Mmadumela go iwa bogadikana. Tša phaku tshilo o yo huruhlela.*

(You have agreed to go to the bridegroom's place, where you are going to face the hardship of grinding the food for the in-laws, because you have agreed to be a stone that will grind everything.)

*Rakgadi* (aunt) will be singing a praise poem for the bride's family. She will not leave empty handed from the bridegroom's place. She carries presents in the form of meat, mats, baskets and food stuffs. The seeds of the mealies, millet and other articles will be carried by the bride as gifts that she will give to important members of the bridegroom.

On arrival at the groom's kraal, the bride will be hidden in the centre of her family, and when her family enters, she will be taken straight to the hut allocated to her family, where she will remain until the next morning. She does not eat any food of the kraal but eats and drinks what her family brought from home. Before the bride's people reach the gate of the bridegroom's village, the bridegroom's family will go out to meet them, and during the rest of the ceremony, they remain with the bride's people as though they belong to their group.

The next day the marriage celebrations continue. The people will be singing marriage songs which indicate how the family of the bridegroom is superior to that of the bride. The bride and the bridegroom have support of their whole kraal to show that they are welcomed into the kraal of the bridegroom. The bride brings with her a cow, meat and presents which will later be given to the most important members of the groom's family.

The cow is meant for bringing the milk that will be sucked by the baby that is not yet born. The bride's relationship with the bridegroom's family is that of respect. She will be carrying her duties in silence in order to observe carefully how they are carrying out theirs.

On the other hand, the bride will be instructed on how to handle the in-laws, and in particular her husband as it is done with Mafirihlokgo (Lemokoana and Masola 1990).

*Mafirihlokgo o ile a fihla bogadi a laiwa melao ya bogadi.  
Mmatswale o ile a mo fa molao o tee wo mogolo a re:  
“Ngwanaka, pitša ya go apea še! Seo o swanetšego go se tseba  
ke gore mogopo wo o bonago mo, O swanetše gore go solelwa  
o o iše ka ntlong yela ya ka mafuri. O fihle o o bee fase, o bee  
le sešebo, o sepele!”*

(Mafirihlokgo arrived at the in-laws and she was instructed into the laws of the family. Her mother-in-law gave her one important rule and said: “My daughter, here is a pot you are going to cook with. You should cook and dish food, porridge and meat and take them to the backyard and walk away”.

Mafirihlokgo listened carefully and adhered to her mother's instructions.

Beer on the wedding day symbolises friendship, communion, oneness and acceptability. The beer that the bride's family takes to the bridegroom's family shows their friendly attitude, their willingness to establish fellowship with the other family and their readiness to form a marriage covenant. The words that will be articulated by the bridegroom's father will be words of appreciation that his son has managed to get a wife. He will serve as a bridge, the link and the solemn knot in tying the marriage covenant. He is ready to become alive in and through his son. This is a solemn religious act of the father's devotion for the sake of his son and the community.

#### **4.5.2 Widow**

According to the African custom, when a husband dies, his widow is not free, that is, the husband's death does not terminate the contract. Myburg (1991) supports the above idea by asserting that “The widow's marriage is continued by a relative of her husband while the agnatic group of the deceased retains guardianship over the widow and her children”. The marriage may be continued by the husband's brother or a son

from one of his other wives or any other close male relative. Children born to the widow are regarded as those of the deceased.

The leviratic husband does not exercise immediate authority over the widow and her children. As a rule, this rests with the head of the agnatic group who is often the deceased's successor. The main duty of the leviratic husband is to procreate descendants on behalf of the deceased. Levirate occurs especially among patrilineal people. The importance of levirate is the continuation of the lineage of descent of a married man who dies without children or without a son. This custom is common among the indigenous people of Southern Africa.

The levirate and ghost marriage emphasises the continuation of a man's line of descent, since the expansion of his group is important (Mbiti 1997). The reciprocal duties result from the levirate and those between brothers and other male relatives. These usages are sometimes also associated with the view that as an ancestral spirit, a man should be remembered by his descendants, and that he can influence the living through dreams and otherwise.

Another custom associated with marriage is the sororate or sororal polygyny. According to the custom of the sororate, a man marries a sister or other female relatives of his wife. Among some people, it is the duty of the wife's group to provide the husband's group with a substitute in terms of the marriage contract should the wife die young or be barren. In the former case, the marriage is terminated and a sister or other female relative of the deceased takes her place. In the case where the wife is barren, her reproductive duty is taken over by a sister or other female relative and the two wives are united in a single nuclear family.

If the widower or widow remarries, the compound family is formed. The group then consists of the widower or widow and any children from the first marriage as well as the spouse of the second marriage and children born of the second marriage.

#### **4.5.3 Motherhood**

A woman is married to bear children. If after marriage this 'kraal', according to Makgamatha (2000), remains without cattle, the family of the bride would devise some means of protecting this marriage by providing a substitute. Marriage is an institution

through which a man and a woman are united with the purpose of procreating children as legitimate children, according to Myburg (1991), are especially important in matters such as succession. The birth of a child is important not only as the advent of the individual into society, but as making a further stage into African tradition. Childlessness is the greatest curse of all misfortunes, for not only will the woman be taunted and glibed at by her fortunate sisters, but she may even be divorced on that account.

Makgamatha (2000), Mathumba (1990) in Makgamatha (2000) and Kayongo-Male and Onyango (1984) in Makgamatha (2000) support the view that a woman is married not for the purpose of making love only but of bearing children. They emphasise the point that if after marriage this kraal, meaning the woman is without children, the family of the bride would devise some means of protecting the marriage by providing a sister to raise seed on her behalf. Such a step will however, not be taken until the woman herself and her family have done all in their power to promote conception.

The groom and his group, who hand over the marriage goods, expect to see a bride who is fertile, industrious, obedient and of irreproachable conduct who will respect and perform her duties in marriage. Mathumba (1990) in Makgamatha (2000) asserts: "marriage is a pathway into the bedroom. It is in this place that a man must regularly make love to his wife so that they can produce children". If not so, Krige (1985) is of the view that the woman has been bewitched or she may be the victim of an angry or spiteful ancestor; for reproduction of the species is regarded as the work of ancestors of whom it is said they can make a man in the dark without seeing him. If it is ancestors, they may require a sacrifice in terms of African tradition. Nowadays people do not put their trust on the sacrifices only, but they also visit medical doctors to establish the true cause of her malady. He will then take the necessary steps to remedy the situation after examination by a doctor.

#### **4.5.3.1 Observance during pregnancy**

The moment a woman learns she is to become a mother should be one of the happiest moments in her life (Mother's Encyclopaedia, 1958). Childbearing is a woman's priceless privilege. When a woman conceives and bears a child, she is truly fulfilling

the role for which she was born to do. Every woman should have an intelligent grasp of what pregnancy means to her. First of all, there are adjustments to be made. The care of a competent physician is essential and if possible the facilities of a modern hospital or clinic must be used from the start of pregnancy until delivery.

Pregnancy is a time of great concern not only for the health and successful confinement of the mother, but for the welfare of the child, who is easily affected by anything the mother may do. A woman must be very careful indeed, for there are all sorts of dangerous things in the world around her that will harm her unborn child unless proper precautions are taken care of. A pregnant woman must observe the sorts of food she eats and the manner in which she takes exercises. It is important that the pregnant woman be guided by a medical doctor. This will make the road much easier to travel and the mother will reap the reward in a happy pregnancy that will progress in time to a triumphant conclusion.

#### **4.5.3.2 The birth of a child**

Childbirth, among Bapedi, is the concern of women only. Midwives who are in attendance use experienced knowledge together with many magical or superstitious beliefs that are applied in the treatment of the patient. Midwives, according to Krige (1985), are always women of the kraal who have passed the stage of childbearing themselves and who are thus free from being harmed by contact with the patient. They have the necessary experience in dealing with cases of this nature. But today pregnant women no longer depend on experiences of these old women because there are various kinds of resources for expectant parents who want help in working out plans for care or in answering some of their questions.

#### **4.5.3.3 Strengthening the child**

It is customary that a child be strengthened by using *muti* from traditional doctors. Soon after birth, the child is held in the smoke of burning animal charms, comprising of small particles of every possible animal for ill-luck. This is believed to counteract all diseases which the child may have contracted while in the womb of its mother. To make sure that the strengthening medicine is effective, some of it is given to the child to drink with its food, while the ashes of the burnt animal charms are put as medicine

in a necklace of the child. On the day of the birth, the traditional doctor is summoned to come and make incisions on different parts of the child's body. The powdered medicine is put all over the incisions. This medicine is kept in a special horn taken from an ox born in a kraal. All these medicines mentioned above are thought to have power to strengthen the skull and the body of the child.

#### **4.5.3.4 Isolation**

Both the mother and child are isolated for a certain period after the birth of the child. They are strictly isolated usually until the navel string of the child falls off. The isolation period lasts for ten days, and others eight or even five days. It is, however, permissible for a woman who has no one to work for, to go out of the isolation hut sooner than the period mentioned above. The seclusion of a woman and child is not as strict towards the end of the period as in the beginning. For the first few days after delivery, all people except the midwives and traditional doctors are excluded from the hut, since according to African tradition they bring bad luck or *makgoma*. All visitors will see the child after the process of strengthening has been done. Women from neighbouring kraals observe the precaution of scrubbing their feet in the ashes before they enter the mother's hut.

#### **4.5.3.5 Wife of a king**

It is customary of Bapedi culture for the chief to be married to several wives as it is related in the tale of Masilo Komeng by Makwala (2005). Masilo's sister was chosen by the people in the village of a certain chief to go with three other girls to release Masilo from the mountain school (*morotong*).

Masilo's sister went to the mountain with the other three girls from different families of the chief. Makwala asserts: "*basetšana ba ile ba hwetša ba go tšwa ka malapeng a kgoši*". (Girls found the other family members of the chief). Masilo's sister was the youngest of them all. She told the chief's kraal to be ready with all sorts of weapons.

The interpretation of this tale is that she will come back from the mountain with *Nyamabolele*, the animal that Masilo has chosen to make his clothes with. She has won by singing:

*Masilo o rile geke tlo goroga, le mpolaele Nyamabolele le ntlisetse mongatse le baramphašane ba Nyamabolele.*

(Masilo said that when he arrives from the mountain, the village community should kill Nyamabolele and they should bring his hat and shoes).

The status of the wives of the chief is not the same. It is regulated according to the order in which they were married. The first wife is called the great wife and must be chosen in consultation with the chief's men of the tribe after the king has become a full-grown man. This great wife is rarely the chief's first wife. In any kraal the chief's wife occupies the chiefs' hut, which is situated at the top end of the kraal exactly opposite the main entrance. Not only is the eldest son of this hut the chief's heir and his father's successor, but he has an important position in religious matters.

The ancestral assegai of the kraal is kept at the back of this hut. It is here that the meat of a sacrifice is placed overnight for the spirit of the ancestors to partake before it is consumed. Upon the chief's wife devolves the proper treatment and care of strangers. The role of the chief's wife is to give strangers food and shelter, and this duty is considered very important to an extent that she may be ejected for failing to perform it.

The chief's wife's position in any village is so important that if she fails in her duties, she can no longer hold office. She can be ejected from her position for adultery too. If she is found to be guilty, she will be demoted from her office and be given a hut near the gate or at the side of the kraal, and be left with only the necessities for existence. She will be replaced by a new virgin wife. The dispossessed chief's wife's children do not share their mother's disgrace. The eldest son remains the chief's heir, and the new wife becomes the mother of these children. The children born to the new chief's wife will therefore rank after the children born by the old wife before her disgrace.



The right-hand wife is a kind of supplementary great wife so that if the great wife fails to provide an heir, the eldest male of the right-hand's wife hut becomes an inheritor on his father's death. It seldom, however, happens that the right-hand wife's hut inherits because of the failure of the great wife to give birth to a male son. The husband usually remedies the situation by taking a new wife with cattle belonging to the great wife's hut. This new wife then becomes a subordinate in the Great wife's section. She will be placed in the chief's hut until she gives birth to a son. She will be given some hut in the great wife's section of the kraal. Her own son is looked upon as the actual son of the chief's wife. The hut of the right-hand wife is situated on the right-hand side of the great wife's hut. This side of the kraal is usually referred to as part of the great wife's hut, while the whole of the left side of the kraal is the subordinate side.

The subordinate wife occupies the second place of dignity in the kraal, and in the case of the chief of the tribe is very often the first wife he married, she, together with all the subordinate wives attached to her husband. This household is entirely independent of the great wife's hut. This section of the kraal can never produce an heir, and has no part in the personal property of the head of the kraal, which pertains to the great wife's hut. The left-hand wife occupies the third place of dignity in the kraal, and in the case of the chief of the tribe is very often the first wife he married.

#### **4.5.4 The Primary wife**

Farlex (2014) defines the primary wife as the first wife of a man. She is the chief, worth, and important woman of high rank. The synonymous word for the primary wife, according to Reverso English dictionary (2014), is the principal wife, who is foremost in importance, rank or degree. She is entitled to all financial transactions of the family, house, land, property and titles because her marriage was legally binding and involved a contract. She has the power over everything attached to her family and she must be consulted in all matters concerning the family. Even if the husband wishes to marry a second wife, she must be informed, and if not, the second marriage will not work.

The primary wife is the lovable, prestigious and important woman in the family. She needs to be appreciated and be given all the respect she deserves by members of the family. The house or kraal property should be carefully distinguished if the rules of

succession and inheritance are to be understood. With the primary wife's line, the son inherits positions of power in the family and he is the one who will succeed his father after death. The primary wife's place in the family is superior. That is why her place is in the front room so that she can be able to oversee all that is happening in the family. She is accountable to what goes wrong in the family.

One of the things that every woman wants to know is how to make her husband feel honoured and loved. She tries her best to make the house welcoming and strive for perfection even though she meets challenges because marriage is no longer as it was before. There are many factors that influence the family such as social conditions, friends, parents and close relatives. Janeth (2014) asserts, "I believe that a marriage can be successful even if only one partner is willing to try to make things work". With these words, Janeth encourages all women to persevere and be positive about their marriage.

The primary wife must show respect to all the members of her husband's family. She has to work very hard by doing all the work, such as fetching water, cooking, sweeping, gardening, wood gathering and grinding of corn. She must have listening skills because in the first year of her marriage, she lives under the control of her mother-in-law. She has no fire in her hut, but lives together with the mother-in-law. She is being guided and instructed in all matters concerning the marriage, and as a result, she needs to obey in order to maintain the good relationship with the mother-in-law. This period usually comes to an end after the birth of her first child. She is then given her own utensils to use, cattle to provide milk for her baby, and finally installed in her own hut.

There are many emotions that are significant or attached to marriage. Mathumba (1990) in Makgamatha (2000) asserts, "marriage is a pathway into the bedroom". Men in particular associate sex with affection and receive an incredible emotional satisfaction from the sexual pleasure their women receive during their intimate times. Mathumba goes further by indicating that if a young man or woman appears dull towards sex, the parents do not hesitate to go into the matter to rectify this because if the couple do not make love and leaves any one hungry and dissatisfied, the wife will

concede to any love or lovemaking proposal. It is therefore important to take the matter of sex seriously.

Ember and Ember (1977) in Makgamatha (2000) support the above view by defining marriage as a socially approved and economic union between a man and a woman. Looking closely at this definition, one is inclined to believe that one of the main reasons behind marriage is lovemaking, although the in-laws put priority to children. If after marriage, one partner becomes tired and loses interest in making love to the other, the marriage may dissolve. Fletcher (2014) comments by saying, "Women don't understand how important sex is to a man, and how emotional the subject is for them", with this comment, Fletcher encourages both couples to take love seriously.

The primary wife's conduct must be welcoming. She must maintain her position as the principal wife. All the people are waiting to see the successor of the family been born. When a man who suspects his wife, according to Krige (1985), of adultery, a woman may be divorced for adultery but the adulterant's children belongs to her husband, even when the mother is divorced afterwards and re-marries. By operation of the law, Farlex (2014) supports the view by maintaining that a husband may sue for a divorce on the grounds of (a) adultery; (b) continual refusal to render conjugal rights, (c) wilful desertion; (d) continued gross misconduct; and (e) becoming the subject of any criminal sentence carrying five years imprisonment. A wife can sue on those grounds but (d) is substituted in her case by cruelty or ill-treatment. She may sue for divorce on the ground of impotence and he for barrenness. A woman who seeks divorce, seeks the protection of her father or relative who received *lobola* on her behalf. A divorced woman is under the guardianship and control of her father and resides at his kraal, thus reverting to her position as an unmarried daughter of the kraal.

In a case where a husband ill-treats his wife, she would go to her father to report the matter. The father could, if ill-treatment is proved right, fine the husband. Or if the woman wished for divorce, this could be granted and the husband would not be able to get his cattle back. If the primary wife is barren or dies before she has borne children to her husband, he can reclaim his *lobola* but usually a sister is sent instead. On the death of her husband, a woman becomes subject to his heir. For the period of a year after her husband's death, she wears clothes that identify her as a widow, and any

child born during that period is considered a child of her late husband. If the woman is young and remarries, the *lobola* received for her is accounted for at the house which she leaves; otherwise the deceased husband's brother may raise seed for him through the widow.

The primary wife, being the first, highest and the chief woman, must be confident of the role she is playing in the family. She must not consider certain friends as part of the family because she feels love for them. Friends' behaviour can affect the family in a positive or negative way; and as a result it is better to appreciate them and not make them part of the family. The researcher's view is that the first wife has powerful political support of her in-laws unless the political support is shaken by crime. She has rights and privileges as the first wife of a man. She must strive for peace and not live with guilt.

The man must never reduce anything of what he gives to his first wife because of certain people outside of their marriage. The first wife's feelings need to be appreciated; if not so, she is naturally going to suffer from jealousy against the woman who has come into a marital relationship with her husband. The primary wife and her children need to be treated with great care to honour their rights.

Finally, the primary wife needs to be open to the situation and accept that there are problems in any marriage. She needs to beseech the Lord in supplication, to make her stronger than her problems. She must exercise patience, be kind, gentle, and be open-hearted throughout the difficulties. Problems like these are common and many people face them.

Although not a new problem, divorce remains an important challenge for families to overcome. Most men and women who seek a divorce do so because they cannot solve certain problems in their marriage. Such problems may include differences in goals or financial difficulties. If such problems remain unsolved, the marriage often breaks down. Divorce can affect every member of the family deeply. Children, for example, may grow up in a fatherless or motherless home. If one or both of the parents remarry, the children may fail to develop loving relationship with their new step parents.

The primary wife therefore takes a leading role. She is the participant in any situation and therefore she must show strong character in the position that she holds. She is looked upon as the role model of the young women because she holds the starring role. She must not be more satisfied with divorce settlements but think about the life of her children and their future.

#### **4.5.5 Secondary wife**

According to Fernandes (2014), if a man marries his first wife, he follows certain procedures depending on different cultures or dynasties. The marriage can be arranged by the parents, or sometimes the couple initiates the marriage themselves. Usually the marriage involves two families and is being legalised by paying "*lobola*" to the bride's people. After some time, a man can marry another wife or wives into the family on different occasions.

Secondary wife is a term specifically for a man's "second wife". The next wife the husband will marry is referred to as the third or fourth wife if the man wishes to go that far. These types of marriages are referred to as polygamous marriages which have been more present in the whole history of Africa like in no other continent in the world. Reasons why this has happened, according to Giddens (2006), are because the African societies have managed to see that children are a form of wealth, and in this way, a family with more children is considered to be more powerful. The Muslim community believed that polygamy will make sure that Muslims get a lot more children than Christians by marrying multiple wives.

This type of marriage is closely tied with decadence or the man will need to give title to. The man will marry the first wife as his favourite among his wives. The woman, according to Muslims, gives man statistics. The secondary wife, according to Muslims, does not give stat boosts. Getting married to two or more wives is a custom found all over Africa, though it is less common than in others. For example, traditional China before 1949 had always practised polygamy, allowing one man marrying multiple women as wives. Currently polygamy is very widespread across Kenya and in the Arab nations.

Murdock (1949) found that in famous societies in the mid-twentieth century, polygamy allowed a man to have more than one spouse. The custom of marrying more than two wives fits well into the social structure of traditional life and into the thinking of Bapedi people. Mbiti (1969) maintains that the more wives a man have, the more children he has likely to have and the stronger the power of immortality in that family. Such a man has the attitude that “the more we are, the bigger I am”.

Chan in Crusader Kings II Wiki (2014), asserts, “I don’t quite understand what the secondary wife is”. She is of the opinion that there is no such thing as a “secondary wife” because according to her, there can be only one wife and many concubines. Fletcher (2014) also supports what Chan said by arguing that no one understands this phrase of the secondary wife better because she has heard about it time and again throughout her courtship, marriage, friends, family members and even her husband that, being a secondary wife is like one lives in the shadow of the first wife. She has further remarked that the role of the secondary wife is the most complicated and demanding one in any family set up. She writes:

This can escalate the marriage to the point of creating a saint-like image and to a new wife, it can become overwhelming (Fletcher, 2014).

She goes further by mentioning ten top things she has learned as a “secondary wife” in the second wife’s café file://g (2014):

- That all people are created equal, but we do not remain so. She mentions that people become more entitled than others and remain so.
- The “justice system” is misnamed. By this, she meant that there is precious little justice in our system, politics, bribes, self-aggrandisement and agendas are everywhere. Justice is hiding in the closet from them.
- “Firsts are priority”. Not in every case, no, but no judge has ever cut alimony to the rich first wife, so innocent children of the second marriage can have a fighting chance. Her own children were used as a liability to her husband when his ex-wife decided she only wanted to work part-time.

- Guilt is a terrible justification. “How could one leave him?” and the like have cost men more money than all monster trucks combined.
- “Judicial discretion” is the broadest term she has ever heard. There is nearly infinite judicial discretion in our system, yet no judicial accountability, judges and courts are “rated” by how many of their decisions are overturned, so that appellants will decline to overturn in the name of “judicial discretion”.
- Nice guys often do finish last. Everyone else tramples them.
- If anyone gives a damn, hang on tight to them. True friends and loved ones- people who will stand by her- are precious beyond words.
- It’s not the first marriage that’s for love. That so much that was for love.
- You do not marry for money, you divorce for it. Dr Sanford Braver, as quoted by Menweb (2014) says, “On average, mothers are more satisfied with divorce settlements than fathers”, and “75% of fathers thought it (court system) was slanted in favour of mothers-and more than a quarter of mothers agreed”. In an informal survey here at Second wives Café, 63% of the ex-wives had more disposable income than their ex-husbands.
- Finally, she did not have a clue of what she was getting into.

Concubines, however, while occasionally wield some political power and still of high class, are temporary fixtures at court; they do not have the same rights and privilege as the primary wife (Crusader King II Wiki (2014)). It is not surprising that Landers (2014) remarked:

Being my husband’s second wife makes me to become incredibly resentful to the first wife and her children because my children take a back burner.

Landers’ husband had many children and his wife became the baby sitter, although her parenting skills were compared to those of his first wife. One of the things that has been the hardest for her as the second wife is the fact that her husband had children before he met her. This made her mother-in-law and himself not to come to hospital to see her new born baby because he had seen babies before through the pregnancy and birth processes three times before he met her.

Lander is not alone in her personal experience. Other second wives women gave their comments in Top Ten Things file://g (2014), that becoming a second wife can mean marrying into a tangled financial surprise because one cannot get the prestige care one expects to get while the first wife is still living. The second wife's position and rank is always inferior and low.

Many women feel guilty about being secondary wives; this subject makes them angry and is eating at them. Often men do not understand what is eating at their wives because the second wives cannot address the issue with them.

The researcher's view on being the secondary wife is that being the first wife is a very prestigious title. The secondary wife will always try in many ways to attain this title because her son does not have the right to inherit his father's legacies unless the first wife has no son or the son has died or other similar scenarios. Her status, rank and position is inferior and lower to that of the first wife. Emotions of the secondary wife run high, doubting always if her marriage will be successful or not. She becomes desperate and asks herself how life was in the first marriage that she can copy or excel in all responsibilities of parenting, such as cooking, cleaning and laundry. While spending quality time thinking of what can better her position, traditions, laws and social conditions help determine her roles and place in the home.

The secondary wife generally has more powerful political support if she comes from an important family like the royal family. A good example is the daughter of a chief; her position is always the first, despite being married last. Other wives of a chief are ranked second, third, or fourth even if they were married before her. Her son is also eligible for inheritance when his father dies and is likely to be the one to succeed his father after his death.

The secondary wife often has to play second-fiddle to the children from the first marriage. She can be hurt, alone and be confused by why this is happening. Bitterness can build in her heart if she is neglected, or if she is given too much of a role of caring for her step-children. She can become incredibly resentful of her step-children; and it is taboo for her to discuss this topic, with her husband or with her friends.



These bits and pieces come to the surface every now and again in many second marriages. Some past issues need to be dealt with gently and firmly, while others need to be handled by a trained counsellor. The husband's relationship with his first wife can affect his relationship with the secondary wife in a profound way. At the very least, the husband should make it that each of his wives lives her own life comfortably, focusing on her own household and children. Generally, these problems are worse at the beginning of the marriage. After a few years, things usually calm down.

#### **4.6 CONCLUSION**

Marriage is indeed not an individual's affair, to legalise the relationship between a man and a woman, but a group concern, which legalises the relationship between two groups of relatives. The husband's family and the wife's family from the day the couple marry establish a relationship to work together throughout life. They form a corporation in which they bind themselves to give the couple the economical, emotional and physical support.

After marriage the bride does not stand aloof from the mother-in-law. She lives under the control of her mother-in-law to a period of one year. At this period in time, she learns a lot about family matters. She works very hard while the mother-in-law is watching and giving her guidance. She does the cooking, sweeping, gardening, gathering of wood and grinding of the corn alone without complaining. She gives respect to the mother-in-law and all the relatives of her husband.

All the families and kinship systems have norms concerning who makes important decisions. These norms follow the pattern of other norm variations in that they are lined with gender. Most societies, including Bapedi, are patriarchal. Men have power and authority. They are dominant figures of authority. It is also important to recognise that although authority in most families rests with the males, other family members have a strong influence on the decision-making process. Male family members are generally most influential, but wives and mothers often have a strong impact on decisions as well.

Conditions of marriage, such as being a bride, a mother, a widow, a primary wife and a secondary wife, put women in a subservient, inferior and powerless positions. It is only the daughter of the chief or king who acquires a superior status over all women married to her husband irrespective of whether or not they came before her in that family. In matters concerning the succession of property, the son of the great wife succeeds his father and inherits all the property of the kraal.

Finally, the widow does not become a free woman as such. As marriage is a group concern, the widow must marry or be inherited by the younger brother of her husband to keep her in control. The younger brother continues to plant his seed in the widow's family but the children born from that union belong to his elder's brother family.

## **CHAPTER 5: GENDER STEREOTYPICAL PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN CHARACTERS**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate gender stereotypical portrayal of women characters in Sepedi tales. Themes as already mentioned in Chapter 1 will be analysed by citing Sepedi folktales relevant to each theme. In this chapter the theme of stupidity, ignorance, passiveness and Trickery of the Ogre will be key to the discussion.

### **5.2 STUPIDITY**

#### **5.2.1 The meaning of the word stupidity**

Welles in Wikipedia encyclopaedia defines stupidity as a word that may be used to designate a mentality which is considered to be informed, deliberate and maladaptive. The modern English word, according to Wikipedia, sees the word 'stupid' having a broad range of application ranging from being slow of mind (indicating a lack of intelligence, care or reason), dullness of feeling or sensation (torpidity, senseless, insensitivity) or lacking interest or point (vexing, exasperating). It can either imply a congenital lack of capacity for reasoning, or a temporary state of daze or slow-mindedness.

Longman's Dictionary of American English, on the other hand, defines stupid as a word showing bad judgement or lack of intelligence. Finally, the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2008) defines the word stupid as a word that shows the state of being silly or unwise.

#### **5.2.2 The Portrayal of women characters as being stupid in Ntsobe's Folktale**

Madiba (1949) relates the story of Ntsobe, who was the daughter of Chief Ramadubanya. Her real name was Ramatsobane, but she was known in her village by Ntsobe. She was so beautiful and had beautiful attire. One day, her peer group asked her to accompany them to the river side with the purpose of going to have a bath. She agreed to go with them but delayed to start the journey with them as she

was held by some duties. Her friends could not wait for her. They continued with their journey and Ntsobe did not catch up with them. Along the way Ntsobe's friends started to talk bad things about her as a result of jealousy upon her.

They arrived at the river and washed themselves. Just a minute before they left, Ntsobe came and pleaded with them to wait for her. They could not listen but left Ntsobe while she was still bathing. Soon after they left, Ntsobe was caught up by an Ogre which asked her to wash her dirty back. She did not waste time but complied with the request. The Ogre was not satisfied, hence its request to go away with Ntsobe with the intention of devouring her. She managed to rescue herself by cutting her hair at the back of her head. She went home and her parents punished the culprits.

### **5.2.3 How Ntsobe's tale reflects the stupidity of the woman character**

A number of issues emerge in the tale of Ntsobe that reflects her stupidity (Madiba 1949). The tale apart from making salient comments about the proper conduct of girls in the community, defines Ntsobe's place and space. Ntsobe should only venture out when she is ready to follow instructions she is given. It is also clear that the tale owners believe that for a woman or a girl to escape from Ogres or to fight Ogres, external assistance is required. This signifies that women are perceived as being stupid and incapable of decisive action.

Ntsobe's stupidity is also reflected in her failure to manage time from the very beginning of venturing out. The presence of the Ogre in the Sepedi folktale is therefore a symbolic warning to girls and women folk to confine themselves to their defined spheres of operation. Through the performance of these tales, the female performer in a subtle way presents a critique of the masculine oppression by depicting unfair restrictions imposed on the feminine. This is indeed a patriarchal tale because it is possible to read subtle voices that uphold the fact that women are active agents of subversion.

A beautiful girl like Ntsobe is thus obsessed with the male. She rises above being an object of male-desire. It may appear, according to Masheti (1994), that although women are the ones who tell these stories, they indulge in a semiotic discourse but

only within the confines of the symbolic order. Although it could be argued that the tale, to some extent is discursive agencies deployed by culture to subvert women to a patriarchal ideology, the deeper reading reveals ambivalence of the discourse of these women who supposedly speak against themselves.

The discourse reveals what Foucault (1985) terms as the complex and unstable process whereby a discourse can be an instrument and effect of power but also a hindrance and a stumbling block. This marks a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing ideology. In the instance, women project a new ideology which views them positively.

Woolf (1966) sees the works of male authors with a different attention to authority and gender. He also prompts the readers of a text to consider the nature of a literary canon that includes women authors, and the nature and form of literary texts written by and about women. In doing so, Woolf also revises and opens up the very nature and form of literary criticism and theory, forging a new feminist literary critical language, a new feminist agenda.

Ntsobe's tale is a patriarchal story because of the language that belittles women and instil fear in them. The Ogre represents the male voice which is silent and hidden, only what men have thought women should be. The woman reader should become conscious of these narrative strategies in order to interpret stories meaningfully for future debates. Women are not stupid but culture which is man-made has made them to behave as if they are mad.

#### **5.2.4 Human beings with Ogres**

Although animals are not mentioned in the heading of this group, they also occur here as characters. Ogres are non-human beings or semi-human beings appearing as enemies of man. They are generally cannibalistic in nature. They are animals with physical abnormalities. Ogres terrify human beings like they did to Ntsobe. They threaten to swallow and devour Ntsobe. An attempt to avert the danger makes the story in this folktale. Masheti (1994) further notes that folktale performance is therefore a sophisticated practice aimed at imparting the ideological proactivity of society in the

audience. It is an exercise in publicising, remembering and confirming the Sepedi culture, history and cosmic consciousness. In a sense, a performer is a mediator between people and their literature. Just as tales have a structure, the narrations conform to rules governing the shape of the tales, which in turn depend on the cultural truths defined by society.

The overt instructions being given to the girls among the audience is that they should not venture out of their domains of operation. They are also warned to adhere to instructions given by those in authority. However, another subliminal voice in the tale gives women a window through which they see their role as that of lighting evil among society at large.

As reflected in Moselapše's folktale, the victims of the ogre are usually young girls (Makgamatha, 1991). Moselapše meets a fabulous animal that is hard to describe whether it is male or female. One cannot detect whether this animal is clever or stupid. It successfully presents itself as an imposter characterised by magic and transformation. It has the typical trickster ability of duping people to believe it is another human being.

Like the ogre, Moselapše is an unsuccessful trickster who will try any trick while being driven by the insatiable appetite, until he lands in serious trouble and eventually self-destruction. This tale, according to feminist critique, is accompanied by the search for lost women's voices. Showalter (1977) asserts that the myth of feminine mystery is an elaboration of the fact that other people are always a mystery, since one can never know how others' experience their subjectivity.

Moselapše has no voice even if she was in trouble. She did not shout for help but gave up herself to the ogre without challenging the situation. Women have been invented by men for the specific purposes of keeping women in their place. In her deconstruction of them, she indicates clearly how cultural myths operate in conjunction with economic and social factors to reinforce the oppression of women as a group.

### 5.3 MOSELAPŠE'S FOLKTALE

*Moselapše's* folktale is about a young girl on her way to the grandmother. She was robbed of her clothes and the baby on her back by *Moselapše* (a man-like creature that had a long tail). He took the girl's place as an imposter. When the imposter was discovered the creature was scalded to death in boiling water and buried.

According to Makgamatha (1991), this animal is commonly known to try to imitate the traditional trickster by setting rude traps into which it eventually falls into. As in the case of the Ogre, the trickery of the animal is normally characterised by 'unrecognised arrival' followed by 'exposure' (usually brought about by its inordinate appetite for food and meals) and the inevitable 'punishment' (to borrow from Propp's (1968) functions) as the conclusion of the narrative.

#### 5.3.1 How the tale (*Moselapše*) reflects the stupidity of the woman's character

The young girl's sphere of operation is the domestic domain. The girl's venturing alone in the forest reflected her stupidity because she knew that being alone she is inviting trouble and enemies. Again, being alone evokes fear that she can be killed at any time. The girl's other failure lies on her trust that *Moselapše* can really look after the baby, when she handed the child over to the stranger, *Moselapše* who was cannibalistic and animal like in nature. All that the girl did reflects stupidity that she will regret later.

#### 5.3.2 *Moselapše's* Character

*Moselapše* is a character that seems to represent a certain kind of evil in society. In the tale in which *Moselapše* appears, one finds that this is a fabulous animal that is hard to describe. It is not clear whether it is male or female. One cannot say whether this animal is clever or stupid but it successfully presents itself as an imposter 'characterised by magic and transformation'. It has the typical trickster ability of duping people to believe it is another human being.

### **5.3.3 The Ogre symbol of Masculine Hegemony**

Sepedi folktales use Ogres instead of human males, according to Makgamatha (1991), to create social distance for contemplating acts and ideas that otherwise might appear as intolerably disturbing. For instance, mention of the Ogre in Sepedi. Folktales evoke a sense of shock, awe and fear among the audiences. The tales are thus appropriate to some of the evils attributed to men as Ogres. The driving vitality of men, striving to achieve their pleasures, ending in the face of social and cultural confines, seems to be the overriding motif of the ogre-centred tales. Yet even as they perform these patriarchal tales, the performers also show instances where women outmanoeuvre the ogres. This is, however, accomplished through external help.

Through these moves, Makgamatha (1991) notes that mainly women performers pass a warning to males in society that they can be out-matched. Since men are cast as the only beings capable of combating the excesses of ogres, it appears that the ideological position is to compel women to accept patriarchal authority and power. This is precisely why ogres easily manipulate female characters in the tales. As symbolic figures, ogres are presented as being larger than life creatures, exceedingly greedy, crafty, willy, patient but sometimes gullible like in another popular ogre tale in Sepedi, that involves a young girl who was left behind a mountain by her peers and is later captured by the Ogre (Maboshego and Shai, 2006). The girl is carried by the ogre in a drum and ordered to sing a song wherever he instructs her to do so. The ogre then carries the drum from one village to another, and fools the people into believing that he has a 'magic drum that sings'.

The first few attempts through which the Ogre manages to gain favours from the people in the form of food and other gifts create the impression that the trickery has been successful. But the cunning victim in the drum deceives the stupid Ogre by singing out her fate, which leads to her being identified by the villagers who deceptively substitute a swarm of bees for the girl in the drum. In this way, the trickster is turned into the dupe, and is later killed by the bees.



Just like in Tselane's tale, Tselane outwits the mother of the ogres who is supposed to kill him while the ogres are hunting (Makgamatha, 1991). He slays and cooks her in turn, thus deceiving the ogres into unwillingly eating their own mother when they return.

The ogre represents a greater evil than the negative attributes that the girls can be associated with, while this is always caught and killed at the end of the folktale to the delight of the audience.

Again on stupidity, Madiba (1949) relates the story of two girls called Mokete and Lehlokwa in "*go se tsebe ke kots*". Both girls worked for a white farmer who had large fields of nuts and mealies. Mokete and Lehlokwa, like all other workers, were remunerated one shilling per day. After paying other workers, the farmer came to the two girls. He gave them two shillings that were not separated. He instructed the two girls to share the money; unfortunately, they did not know the meaning of sharing the money.

They did not even bother to ask the farmer what he meant by sharing the money. On their way back home, they went out of the road and looked for a big stone which they used to beat the money until there were no letters visible on the coin.

The two girls were uninformed. They lacked knowledge of sharing money as it was their first time to enter into the work situation. Bushbinder (1993) rightly asserts: "the myth of the mother is the effect of a division of reproductive labour, as well as the result of the repression of the feminine within the masculine imagination of self". As portrayed in this literary text, men are seen as people who should pay attention to their family issues and not to feminine matters like fetching water. Hofstede (1991) writes:

Men are supposed to be concerned with achievements outside the home-hunting and fighting in traditional societies, are the responsibilities of men. The same but translated in economic terms in modern societies. Men, in short are supposed to be assertive, competitive and tough. Women are supposed to be more concerned with taking care of the home, of the children, and of people in general to take tender roles.

The above statement expresses the traditional perception that women's responsibilities revolve around their domestic tasks. It can be further argued that a female cannot enter into the work situation because that is the world of a man. The woman's place is in the kitchen where chores such as cooking, washing, sweeping and scrubbing the floors take place.

This is in accordance with the stereotypical division of work. Krige (1985) pointed out that:

On the whole, the rougher tasks requiring strength are done by the men, while to the women falls the work that requires more continuous attention.

The housework naturally falls within the sphere of woman's activities, cooking and beer-making, sweeping, washing of utensils and fetching firewood and water.

In these duties they are helped by their daughters who at an early age begin to fetch water, sweep and look after their baby brothers and sisters.

The above statement shows a stereotypical view of women as being less physical, and they should therefore carry out the less important housework. Their future role as adults is determined during these formative years. However, as Hadfield (1999) points out, the sexual division of labour is fairly constant across societies, that is, all tasks in a society tend to be gendered easily identifiable as either women's work or men's work. However, the sexual division of labour varies considerably across cultures.

Patriarchy is therefore an ideology legitimatised, but also subverted by centuries of tradition. Snippets of women's subversive tendencies can be read in their participation in politics of modern times. Gilman (1966) in a paper entitled "Purchasing Praise: Women Dancing and Patronage", shows how women subvert the notion that they are stupid as politicians use them to spice up their campaigns through dance and song. Women take advantage of this perception to exploit political parties that offer money. Some women who dance at functions held by political parties are not even supporters of the party. They pretend that they are members of a party, especially the ruling party by regularly attending meetings,

wearing party clothes, and dancing in order to receive material benefits. Come voting day, however, they cast their vote secretly voting for a different party. Essentially, this is an act of resistance and rebellion.

Related to the theme of stupidity, the researcher will deal with the theme of ignorance.

#### 5.4 THE THEME OF IGNORANCE

Ignorance, according to Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia means a state of being uninformed (lack of knowledge). This word is often used to describe individuals who deliberately ignore or disregard important information or facts. The *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2008) defines ignorance as lack of knowledge, understanding or lack of information about something. The *Longman's Dictionary of American English* defines the word as disapproving lack of knowledge or information about something. All these definitions emphasise a situation in which a person or an individual is lacking knowledge about something.

Magapa (2000) relates the story of a certain man and his wife who arrived home late after their hard days' work in their field. They were very tired and have agreed that they will sleep on an empty stomach. While the woman was preparing the place they were going to sleep in, a wolf sneaked inside and hid itself behind the door.

The woman went in the dark room first, and without checking whether she was speaking to her husband or whatever, she said:

*"Ntshwarele ngwana ke kgone go ala!"*

(Hold this child for me, while I am preparing the bed)

The woman did not know that she was speaking to a wolf. She thought those words were directed to her husband. The wild animal (wolf) laughed and welcomed the child from her mother and ran away immediately with the child. After the woman had prepared the bed, she said to her husband who was entering the house: "*Mphe ngwana ke kgone go mo robotša*". (Give me the child so that I can lay her to sleep).

“*O ra ngwana ofe?*” (Whose child are you referring to?), her husband responded. The wife said: “*yo ke go neetšego*” (the one I gave to you). There was a moment of silence from both parents, and later on, they were surprised, confused and crying over the child. They looked around and saw pieces of cloths, but the child was nowhere to be found.

The woman in this tale was ignorant. She gave her child to a stranger. A person that she has never seen before. She has also entrusted the stranger to look after the child. The woman’s ignorance is emphasised by her own actions of not checking the house before she went in. The darkness of the house had messed up everything. It is also clear that the woman was giving the instruction without checking to whom she was talking. The women or wives are portrayed as sources of stress. She has caused confusion, suffering and hatred in the home hence: “*o ra ngwana ofe?*” (Whose child are you referring to?).

Kleinhans (1994) has observed that while it might be argued that the situation of powerlessness is not ironic to those who suffer it, it is necessary to recognise that one of the ways that the oppressed have dealt with their situations is by them being ironic about it, in a protective and tendentious way. This is what women in Bapedi culture do through the subversion of the narrative process of the folktales.

According to Snyman and Slabbert (1992), victimisation takes place in many forms. It can be direct and clearly interpreted as such, and the perpetrator (wolf) is sometimes so subtle that only the victim (a woman) is regarded as ignorant or the victim perceives it as such. In some cases, the victim can be socialised to accept certain behaviour which can only be interpreted as victimisation. Snyman and Slabbert further endorse the fact that women fall victim to males because of men’s traditional role and their status in society.

Men are portrayed by literary works as people who are off to work, while women characters are expected to do the domestic chores. This creates the view that men alone should support their families. Nwapa (1969) in her interview with James alludes to the fact that:

The oppression of women starts in the home. In our homes today we treat girls differently, and we treat boys as if they are kings.

This gender belief that the world of work, the public sphere, is a rough world where men do what they have to in order to succeed is a world that is full of temptation, violence and trouble. Women who venture out like in the folktale of *leswiswi la ntshwarele-ngwana* could easily fall prey to it because they are portrayed as delicate creatures.

Literary texts suggest that women characters' place is therefore in the private sphere, where they are portrayed as being in charge of all that goes wrong in their homes. It is suggested that in whatever situation of life that women characters are portrayed, from the cradle to the grave, a spirit of obedience and submission, pliability of temper and humility of mind is required of them. These women characters are perceived as being the weaker sex, and in some cases, they are relegated to the same status as that of a child. Women characters are portrayed as people who are expected to uphold the values of stability and morality. They must make their homes a special place, a refuge from the world where their men can escape from unstable and immoral world.

Victims can easily become believers and imitators of hostility directed at them to such an extent that self-doubt, self-blame and self-hatred become second nature. This approach of male writers who concentrate on blaming their women characters as dangerous people should not be employed to place all the blame on male writers. This approach has been promoted by a brand of feminism which holds the male-dominated patriarchal system responsible for all the evils in such a cultural set-up.

Ignorance becomes clear when one considers the fact that *mmutla* (hare) in the folktale of "*mmutla le bana ba tau*" is a stranger or unknown animal among the lion and her cubs. A lion was very ignorant and careless with her cubs. Hence in the folktale, Makgamatha (1990) says:

*Bjale bana ba be ba robala le mmutla. Ba be basa robale le tau.*

(Now, these children used to sleep in the company of the hare and not the lion).

The result was that the lion's cubs were eaten one after the other by the animal that has offered to nurse the children while the lion was away hunting. Each time the lion wanted to see the cubs at the end of the day, they were brought more than ones to be counted in the place of missing ones.

Animals are symbols of masculinity. They have one significant characteristic: they are uncanny and human-like. They offer help at times when human beings need it most. For example, in the above tale, *mmutla* has offered to look after the lion's cubs. *Mmutla* in this case acts like a human-being, and the lion acts like a woman, who reflects the ignorance of the woman's character by not checking if the hare is doing the work correctly or is cheating or robbing the lion. She does not even care to count them. During the night, the lion is also ignorant by sleeping alone while the cubs are with the hare.

Berger (1982) agrees with this position when he argues that the social presence of a woman is different from that of man. A woman (like lion) has to review everything she is saying and everything she does because of how she appears to others, and ultimately how she appears to men, which is of crucial importance for what is normally thought of as the success of her life. It is established that the Sepedi community, like many other African communities, is patriarchal, and therefore the tales perpetuate the dominant ideology in terms of what is perceived as the correct gender values, which enable them to preserve their sense of social order. Yet underlying this supposition, it is revealed that the folktale narrative process is also a site from which the dominant ideology is contested and subverted through the creation of sub-texts that contest and subvert patriarchy.

Some degree of ambivalence is discerned in the tale. Women, according to Kabaji (2009), are cast as jealous, hard-headed, disobedient, foolish, vulnerable, callous, deceitful and stupid. Yet at the same time, the same tales uphold their role in reproduction and as nurturers of children. The tale thus places the power and

control of resources within the family in the hands of the male characters while upholding women's reproduction capabilities and care of children. Various stimuli are invoked in order to uphold the status quo and instil a sense of fear in the women characters.

## **5.5 IGNORANCE IN MOKGAETŠI'S FOLKTALE**

It was during harvest time in Bokgaga village that a certain woman went to the field together with her daughter named Mokgaetši. She was a beautiful girl. She grew up being a caring and a responsible girl but later on, Mokgaetši developed characters of being proud, lazy, irresponsible and ignorant. She refused to do all the domestic work her mother instructed to do. That is, of taking care of the home, weeding, gathering firewood, planting some type of crops, cooking and drawing water. She depended on her mother even if she was a grown-up girl. Her mother pleaded with her to go and fetch a needle at home. But all was in vain, hence she (her mother) said: "Mokgaetši, *ngwanaka, hle nke o re kitikiti o ye gae gomme o ntlišetše lemao la go roka mokotla*". (Mokgaetši, my daughter, please run and fetch the needle at home to sew-on the bag of mealies). She refused until she was killed by the enemies.

### **5.5.1 How the tale reflects the ignorance of the woman's character**

Mokgaetši was stupid and ignorant. As already pointed out, she was ignorant that a basic unit like the family is an economic entity where a woman like herself is partly a co-owner of the land that belonged to her mother. She lacked information that women do much of the domestic work. This would later give her power over the home. Mokgaetši was also ignorant that the world outside is the forest where ogres attempt to devour girls who are ignorant and stubborn like herself. Finally, Mokgaetši was ignorant of the fact that her mother was a symbol of pleasure and blessing of her future role as a mother or an adult.

### **5.5.2 Sources to prove the point in terms of negative portrayal of women**

In all the relationships in which the ogre appears, the element of evil creates disharmony and hence the symbolic significance as the villain who is always ready

to commit evil. Within the framework of the tale, the ogre is sometimes cast as a powerful man who came to devour Mokgaetši. Viewed through a gender sensitive lens, Brinkman (1996) argues that ogres seem to represent strong, violent and destructive males. They are devoid of human compassion, whereas the females whom they devour seem to symbolise the wise and the oppressed. The ogre tale thus contrasts weakness with power, gentleness and courtesy with brutality. In so doing, the main female performers subvert the patriarchal ideology. It is therefore possible from the outset to read voices of transgression on the part of the performer who contrasts women with men and evil with good through the performance of this tale.

Women characters are seen as subsidiary characters. The subsidiaries level at which women characters are placed, according to Achebe (1958), make them silent throughout the text. This shows that Achebe and other writers write about themes of male interest often placing women characters in uncomplimentary roles. Stralton (1994) further argues that in "Things fall Apart", women characters are silenced in the face of their oppression under a patriarchal system. None of the women characters attempts to rebel against the patriarchal oppression which is oppressive to women in many ways.

The figure of beauty, according to Ogundipe-Leslie (1987), is usually related to the woman as the passionate and sensual lover; a view that makes women feminine archetypes and objects of sexual desire for men. Mostly, women characters are fixed by gender stereotypes so that their attempts to transcend this position are often questioned. It seems that women's own attempts to cope with situations that they find themselves in are regarded as a "problem" by men and a betrayal of traditions which are often confused with women's roles. Such idea which have been identified by Ogundipe-Leslie limit females' ability and serve to silence them, making them invisible in circles that have been deemed "exclusive for men".

The patriarchal perception of female characters has produced hardship, not only as it is practised from the traditional perspective in real life, but also more specifically, by male writers themselves in their writings. According to De Beauvoir (1949), humanity is male, and man defines female not as she actually is in herself, but as



one who is relative to him. She is not usually regarded as an autonomous being. She further claims that man is the subject, he is “the absolute”, while the female is “the other”. According to Cuddon (1992), literary work is the long-standing, dominant, male phallogocentrism ideologies, patriarchal attitudes and male interpretation. Cuddon attacks male notions of value in literature by offering critiques of male authors and their representatives of female characters in literature. She does this by privileging women and showing how they feel, act and think, or are supposed to feel, act and think, and how in general, they respond to life and living. It thus questions numerous prejudices and assumptions about women by male writers.

## **5.6 WOMEN AS PASSIVE SUBJECTS**

Being passive, according to Doll (2000), means not being active or doing nothing. The Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (2008) defines the word ‘passive’ as allowing other people to be in control or often not acting to influence or change the situation.

Literary texts portray the authority of men over women in a patriarchal society as being not the same. Some are portrayed as being weak, dependent, stupid and poor, while others are portrayed as being disobedient, witches, rebellious and victims. Maboshego and Shai (2006) relate the story of Refilwe, who was born and bred in a poor family. She was privileged to go to university, although her two siblings did not manage to go thus far. Her mother was a widow. She worked at their nearest town where she earned very little money for the survival of the family.

Refilwe was a beautiful and intelligent young girl. She fell in love with Matome at a very early stage because he was a well-to-do man. Refilwe depended on Matome financially until she completed schooling. She suffered verbal abuse from Matome who accused her of stealing his money.

Women are regarded as minors. This underlines the gender inequality that prevails between the sexes in literature. Refilwe’s poverty made her to depend on Matome on almost everything. The verbal abuse increased Refilwe’s fear and the level of intimidation towards life. The verbal attacks from Matome made her to be passive.

Her level of intelligence was reduced to nothing. The writer of this tale has portrayed Refilwe as a victim, and is thus vulnerable to her situation.

Refilwe is abused, not only by being married to a man much older than herself, but also by finding herself being a slave to the older wives of Matome's family. The age of a bride, as in the case of Refilwe, does in fact matter because it is linked to the relationship of power between the sexes.

Doll (2000) writes: "Good girls become idealised, perfected objects, pedestalled for the male gaze, schooled in passivity, devitalised and dehumanised – the good girl is all surface". Doll's description of a good girl as an object stems from the passivity of heroines in patriarchal tales. Such a girl is a little more than an inanimate object to be placed on a pedestal. The patriarchal tales widely known are the animated versions of fairy tales produced by the Walt Disney's company. The first of which was Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. The second was Cinderella and Sleeping Beauty.

Stone (1975) states: "If the Grimm heroines are, for the most part, uninspiring, those of Walt Disney seems barely alive". Thus, Disney's films are seen as amplifying the stereotype of a passive female. Others, however, have defended Disney's animated versions of fairy tales. Hearne (1997) writes, "Disney's modifications originate from accurate readings of our culture". If the film's heroines seem passive, it is because passive heroines are what the culture wants to see portrayed.

In addition to being passive, the patriarchal "good girl" is valued for her beauty. Lieberman (1972) writes that in popular fairy tales, beautiful girls like Refilwe are ones chosen for reward. This singling out of the most beautiful girl identifies beauty as "a girl's most valuable asset". Lieberman has further pointed out that powerful women who are bad vastly outnumber powerful women who are good in fairy tale collections; the wicked women are frequently assumed to be bad because of their race. A lot of women in a patriarchal society which priviledges them as valuable possessions (of men) or brands them as worthless and contemptible make it inevitable that women should perceive other women as dangerous rivals. Wamer (1994) also notes the rival aspect of the portrayal of women in fairy tales. She writes,

“All over the world, stories which centre on a heroine, or on a young woman suffering a prolonged ordeal before her vindication and triumph, frequently focus on women as the agents of her suffering. Thus, women are each other’s worst enemies because they are the ones who tell the stories”.

Veblen (1949) supports what Lieberman has said by asserting that “Like every unfree person, women are denied the right to aspire to a self-directing, self-centred life”. For Veblen, this is evidence “to the effect that in the modern civilised scheme of life the woman is still, in theory, the economic dependant of the man, that, perhaps in a highly idealised sense, she is still the man’s chattel”. Her sphere is “the system of honorific expenditure and conspicuous leisure” to which the reputation of the head of her household is sustained and her sphere is therefore ancillary to the activity of the man.

In the meantime, the woman is damaged by the canon of pecuniary decency, which requires the observance of ceremonial futility. The greatest damage, according to Wharton (1990), is done when the woman believes that the life of leisure, consumption and futility is not only her fate, but also the only fate she is capable of doing. In Wharton’s novel, men look much more like the extension of women by bringing money in their possession, thereby securing their luxurious standard of living and the women’s reputation as an influential member of society.

The word greedy, according to Longman’s Dictionary of American English, means wanting more money, power, possessions or being selfish.

### **5.6.1 Lesiba’s Folktale in *Mokutwaneng wa borakgolokhukhu***

Lesiba was an orphan. He grew up under the guardianship of his grandmother as his parents passed on while he was still young. His parents left money and other possessions for him; but his grandmother did not want him to know about his riches. She (Lesiba’s grandmother) took care of other boys in the family whom she loved very much.

Lesiba was forced to herd the cattle away in the forest. His grandmother's intention was to see him being killed by wild animals so as to be able to share his riches among her other three grandsons. All was well with Lesiba, he came back home being safe. His grandmother thought about other evil plans to kill him. She thought of poisoning his food. A bird came to Lesiba in the forest and said:

*Lesiba! Lesibana! Ge o fihla gae o se jele moo o jelago gona,  
ka gore ba tšhetše mpholo! Lesiba, Lesibana wee!*

(Lesiba! Lesibana! When you arrive at home, do not eat in your usual dish, your food is being poisoned Lesiba! Lesibana!)

The bird disappeared in the forest and went away. Lesiba was well coached by the bird. When he arrived at home, he used one of the other boys' dishes and he was safe. The other boy who used Lesiba's dish ate the poisoned food and died. Lesiba's grandmother was furious and changed her plan. She put the poison where Lesiba used to stay. The bird came again and rescued Lesiba. His grandmother watched Lesiba's actions and finally said:

*“Wena ngwana wa moloji matšatši a o a telela, ke a bona o  
gopola gore omonnanyana”.*

(Look here, the son of the witch, these days you are no longer respectful, you think you are a grown up man).

Lesiba's grandmother thought of killing him by letting the snake bite him. While he was herding the cattle, the bird came to rescue him again, by saying:

*Lesiba! Lesibana! Ge o fihla gae o tsene ka fase ga kgomo ye  
e hwilego pele, Lesibana, Lesiba wee! Lesibana! Lesibana.*

When you arrive at home, get under the dead cow and you will be safe.

After the bird had disappeared, Lesiba went home and did what the bird had said. Sooner or later, rain came with lightning which burned and killed the old woman.

The preceding tale reflects various ways or different techniques in which women use muti to bewitch other people. The greediness of the woman in the tale is caused by the love of possessions that belonged to Lesiba. The desire for money and possession made her to be greedy and selfish. She is unsympathetic and cruel. Her actions speak volumes of words associated with a witch. Witchcraft is also associated with daily activities in the village, for example, the herding of cattle. The woman in this tale is full of jealousy, hatred and selfishness. Later, when the witch is discovered, she is being killed or murdered by lightning.

Greediness is motivated solely by the need to appropriate things belonging to others as in the above tale. Lesiba's grandmother resorted to means of killing her grandson in order to satisfy her need. She had little respect for life and she is not afraid of trying to kill her grandson who has, according to Makgamatha (2000), an obstacle on her path to get her satisfaction/ or his possessions.

Gérald (1981) argues that women who have been stereotypically accused of killing someone in the village may suffer severe physical punishment. They are burnt or killed by stones in order to destroy them. In case of Lesiba's grandmother, lightning came and burned everyone in her family as a revenge to her selfishness.

In many cases, Gérald argues that "it is females who are victims of stereotypical accusations of bewitching other people and they are killed or isolated by their communities because of those accusations". It may be argued that the bird in this tale has one significant role. It offers help at times when Lesiba needs it most. The bird that appears in the tale, according to Peter (2002), is male and so espouses those qualities of kindness, revenge, adventure, magic and strength which by patriarchal standards, are masculine qualities and so the bird is symbolic of masculine benevolence. Another thing about a bird is that it takes offence when they are cheated or taken for granted. They do not like greedy and evil people.

The greediness of Lesiba's grandmother makes the bird to appear. It may be assumed that the bird does not harm the boy (Lesiba) because he is not the one that had mistreated it. The bird is also capable of brewing trouble for human beings.

In this tale, it is the bird that transformed itself into lightning that consumed everything that belonged to Lesiba's grandmother.

It is therefore possible to say that in all cultures and societies, gender stereotypes begin from the moment we are born and are identified as either a boy or girl. These labels determine how we will be treated, how we are expected to behave and our view of the world. Gender characteristics are learnt at a very young age and as we grow up, we learn in our everyday interactions what appropriate behaviour is for a girl or a boy. "Boys do not cry" or "do not be sissies" are common criticisms made of little boys (Kumar, 2001). Indeed, Lesiba was ill-treated, but he did not cry, he remained calm and contained. Boys, according to Kabaji (2009), are presented with this portrayal for emulation. They are expected to be independent men, capable of entering into a number of fruitful relationships. It seems to be ordained that the boy hero will receive help from donors who support him from cradle to grave. Although highly vulnerable, the heroes are capable of reaching distant high-set goals. They are capable of withstanding tension. Often they reach their goals after struggle with powerful forces. They are also saviours of girls and destroyers of evil; yet ironically, they are also rescued from danger by benevolent beings.

The tales reveal a gendered division of roles and labour. The tasks carried out by women and those objects and beings, both inanimate and animate that symbolise femininity, complement the masculinity in a subordinate role. Some degree of ambivalence is discerned in the tales. Women are cast as jealous, disobedient, foolish, vulnerable, callous, deceitful and stupid; yet at the same time, the same tales uphold their role in reproduction and as nurturers of children. The tales thus place the power and control of resources within the family in the hands of male characters, while upholding women's reproduction capabilities and care of children.

## **5.7 CONCLUSION**

It appears that the process of characterisation in the Sepedi folktales is governed by a gender ideology. Every relationship, action and motif is gendered. Whereas boys and men are cast as brave, courageous, hardworking and adventurous; girls and wives are consistently presented as vulnerable, weak, stupid, jealous and

unreliable. These images therefore determine their gender. It is also clear that natural features such as forests, rivers and lakes are gendered for they represent the male domain. Equally significant are the animals and birds, which represent patriarchal hegemony. But female performers have a way of subverting patriarchy by creating sub-texts in which they exalt women attributes.

## **CHAPTER 6: GENDER BIAS WITHOUT BORDERS IN WOMEN'S CHARACTERS**

### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this chapter is to explore gender bias without borders in women's characters. At a micro level, discrimination impedes girls and women from achieving their individual hopes and dreams. To address this goal, the researcher will focus on themes such as the social exclusion of women from decision-making processes, implications for gender socialisation, the socialisation of boys and girls' barrenness, women characters as victims who are silenced and women torturing.

### **6.2 THE SOCIAL EXCLUSION OF WOMEN FROM DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES**

#### **6.2.1 The meaning of the word social exclusion**

Social exclusion or marginalisation refers to social disadvantage and relegation, according to Wikipedia encyclopaedia, to the fringe of society. It may also refer to the process in which individuals or entire communities of people are systematically blocked from (or denied full access to) various rights, opportunities and resources that are normally available to members of a different group, and which are fundamental to social integration within that particular group. Social exclusion may also refer to personal exclusion, as an outcast, such exclusionary forms may also apply to people with a disability, minorities, drug users, "Seniors" or young women.

#### **6.2.2 Social exclusion of women from decision-making processes such as**

##### ***"kgoro"* (gathering)**

Women are in a practical situation not part of "*kgoro*" where decisions are taken and put into practice for everybody, including women. It may be argued that from a general perspective, activities and the work assigned to any particular sex define the respective positions in the overall hierarchical order of social status in the African context. In this sense, women's roles are deemed inferior to men's. Rosaldo and Lamphere (1985) explain this phenomenon explicitly in their study "Women, Culture and Society". They argue that most and probably all contemporary societies, whatever



their kinship organisation or mode of substance, are characterised by some degree of male dominance. There is no society, according to Rosaldo and Lamphere, in which women have publicly recognised power and authority surpassing that of men.

### 6.2.3 Social exclusion of women in *Legwalakatsepa's* Folktale

Mashabela (2007) relates the story of a certain chief called Motšhatšhakholoma. He had two children, a boy and a very beautiful girl who never talked to a man who proposed love to her. His father, without consulting his wife, called everyone in his tribe for a meeting and said:

*Ke bea bohlatse bja gore Morwedi wa ka ga se motho wa go bolediša masogana. Yang le laye barwa ba lena gore go tsomega mokgonyana wa mošate.*

(The chief announced to everyone that his daughter does not speak to any man who proposes love to her. Go and deliberate this matter to your sons that the chief is in need of the son-in-law).

The implications of this quote from a feminist critique imply that the girl is voiceless and cannot make choices of what she wants in marriage. She is still dependent upon his father to choose her marriage partner. The tale is patriarchal in nature because culturally, she has no authority to voice her decision, and as a result, this will reduce her to an inferior being, and eventually to “become an object of contempt”, argued Wollstonecraft (1989).

The feminist critique is against women’s subordination and dependency syndrome. Its aim is to emancipate women so that they can have self-worth and participate in public knowledge.

The two statements above reveal that men have social power in every important structure of society and that women do not have any real access to such structures like “*kgoro*” because they are viewed as inferior to men. Patriarchy is practised almost everywhere in traditional societies. Rich in Kramarae and Treichler (1985) supports the above view by asserting that patriarchy is a social structure in which males have

more status than women. Morten, in Kramarae and Treichler (1985) views patriarchy as follows:

It is a way of structuring reality in terms of good/evil, redemption/guilt, authority/obedience, reward/punishment, power/powerlessness, haves/have-nots, and master/slave.

The first in each opposite was assigned to the patriarchal father, or the patriarch's father God, frequently indistinguishable from one another. The second refers to women as "the other" and, in time, to all "others" who could be exploited.

The father did the naming, the owning, the controlling, the ordering, the forgiving, the giving, considering himself capable of making the best decisions for all.

This definition of patriarchy shows that women are regarded as non-human beings. Power is always vested on the shoulders of the man, who is taken unquestioningly to be the head of the family. This is one of the main reasons why men, in the social power stratum, rank higher than women, while women are expected to take instructions from them.

The above statements also offer yet another way in which gender roles can be determined in the Sepedi folktales. The characters whose political and social status would legitimise their commands are kings, heads of the village who are males as we have seen in the preceding folktale of Motšhatšhakholoma, as well as adult males and sometimes mothers. In this list, women feature in very limited ways, while children would appear to have no authority at all. The structure for the exercise of authority places women at the bottom and men at the top, both in terms of the space over which their influence may be felt as well as in terms of how successful they are in imposing their will over their subjects (Rattray, 1977). "Women have no choices of what they think is right because the woman's voice in the tale is muted. She is represented as passive, unintelligent, voiceless, and her views on marriage which actually affects her are not tested or heard".

#### **6.2.4 Social exclusion of women as major providers in the family – Go phirimelwa ga Nyamenyame's Folktale**

Males are seen as major providers in their families, and as mentioned in the following folktale, a man's worth is measured by his ability to provide sustenance for his family. Mabilo and Maluleka (2005) relates the story of a certain man called Nyamenyane. He went out one day to hunt for food:

*Nyamenyame a bona tlala e tlileka maatla, a leba lešokeng go tsoma diphoofole go tla go fenyā tšhego ka lapeng*

(Nyamenyame was very hungry. He went into the forest to hunt for animals in order to get meat for his family)

The above statement reveals the fact that the responsibility to look after the family economically through various activities lies in the hands of males. The statement also offers another forum through which gender roles can be perceived. Nyamenyame's wife is excluded because women are constantly shown in their reproductive roles. They may be pregnant, bear children or in the company of children when men are out to hunt for some food. Women's roles seem relatively confined to the home, especially in sweeping, cooking and child-care. This situation, according to Kang (2006), suggests that the economic exchange of women seems to be given a foundational status. Women characters function as objects of every kind of economic exchange, both familial and psychic.

Rosaldo and Lamphere (1985) conclude that women are excluded from certain crucial economic activities everywhere because of their roles as wives and mothers. They are associated with fewer powers and prerogatives than are the roles of men. Therefore, it seems that all contemporary societies are, to some extent, male dominated and although the degree and expression of women subordination vary greatly, sexual asymmetry is presently a universal fact of human life. The emphasis on women's maternal role has led to a universal opposition between 'the domestic' and 'public' roles that are necessarily asymmetrical. Women are confined to the domestic sphere, and do not have access to the sorts of authority, prestige and cultural values that are the prerogatives of men. The avenues, according to Rosaldo and Lamphere (1985), by which women gain prestige and a sense of value are shaped and often limited by their association with the domestic world.

The fundamental principle in this analysis is that since the text is a signifier, there must be a knowable underlying system giving rise to meaning. Gender can be understood in terms of social roles of women and men, as determined by body female and body male, in terms of the attributes of feminine and masculine.

Mashabela (2007) relates the story of two rich men who had families. One of the men had mealie-fields while the other one had many cattle. The community lived happily because they exchanged what they have to get mealies and milk from these two men. One day this community observed that there is famine in their land. People ran short of goods to exchange with mealies and milk. The two rich men were also in trouble because of scarce milk and mealies.

Having observed this shortage, the man with mealies started to steal mealies from his family. Some of the bags were put inside the house where he knew this secret alone, while the other bags were taken up the mountain into the well. He did all this without informing his wife. He made this decision alone and asserted: "*Bana ba apee bogobe gatee ka letšatši*". (Children should cook porridge once in a day, particularly during the day).

The old man cooked his meal up in the mountain and ate alone. *Bana ba lale ba tsetsele bošego ka tlala*. (Children cried during the night because they ate nothing). The old woman comforted them with these words: "*Le tla tsoga le eja ge bo sele*". (You will get your share the next day).

During the night, the old man woke up and softly went to erect a pot of milk with sticks while on the other hand drank the milk. Some of the milk ran out of control and dropped on the old woman's clothes. The old woman thought that the rain is falling because she has prayed hard so that the rain must fall. She took an initiative to wake up her husband to thank God for the rain. The old man was nowhere to be found so that they can both thank God for the answered prayers.

The old man said: “*Ga se pula mogatšake ke nna ke a lla ke re bana ba tla jang?*” (It is not the rain my wife. What will my children eat?) The old man pretended to be crying for his children even though he ate alone up in the mountain without his wife’s knowledge.

There are strong echoes here of Wollstonecraft’s final work in her novel “The Wrongs of Woman” (1792) that shows the way in which a talented and spirited woman is expelled from polite society and made into an outcast by excluding her from the very information which she is supposed to know.

Wollstonecraft was fully rehabilitated as a feminist forerunner in 1890. She shares the sentiments that women must participate equally in the politics of the family so that subjection and ignorance that debased her can be removed. She echoes her call for intellectual emancipation for both sexes. The researcher’s view is that women should be informed about the status of their family in order to break their silence.

Long time ago, there was a certain girl called Mmadišodišwana. Mashabela (2007) argues: “Mmadišodišwana had bad sores all over her body”. People in her village did not know her very well because her parents hid her inside the house so that she could not be seen. Mmadišodišwana’s wish was to see people, but she was being refused to meet them. She was promised by her parents that she will be healed on the day of her brother’s marriage ceremony.

The argument in this tale is about the exclusion of Mmadišodišwana from the public because of her sores. The story is patriarchal in nature because it insists that good appearance of people make them accepted by people and welcomed in their homes. People and society at large need to be liberated from the oppressors’ mind and be taught to embrace people with shortcomings regardless of class, age and race.

## 6.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR GENDER SOCIALISATION

### 6.3.1 Socialisation of Boys and Girls

Smelser (1991) defines socialisation as the ways in which people learn the skills and attitudes relevant to their social roles. Eshleman et al. (1993), on the other hand, define socialisation as the process of incorporating new members into the group by teaching them about society (Long & Hadden, 1985). This learning occurs in all interactions from the minute a baby is born.

The researcher views socialisation as a way of learning new skills and instructing children to conduct themselves in accordance with norms of propriety in society.

### 6.3.2 Socialisation of Boys and Girls in Nogangaka's Folktale

Mabilo and Maluleka (2005) relate the story of a rich chief. His name was called Molapišane. He had six boys and he was sick. He tried all the doctors from his community, but they could not cure his disease. The chief was informed about the doctor who lived inside a river with snakes. His sons were asked to go and fetch the doctor and to take the doctor back.

The first son went and arrived at the river and sang the following song:

*Themma themma ke nyaka ngaka. Themma themma ke nyaka  
ngaka. Themma themma tate o a lwala. Themma themma tate  
o a lwala*

Themma themma I need a witchdoctor. Themma themma I need  
a witchdoctor. Themma themma my father is sick. Themma  
themma my father is sick.

The doctor heard the song that the first son was singing. He came out of the river in the form of a big snake. The first son was very much afraid to meet the snake. He ran home. He was tired and perplexed. He was unable to tell the father where the doctor was.

The second son went and failed, and all the rest of boys tried their luck, but they could not fetch the doctor. The last and the youngest went to the river. He came to the river with a small voice and sang:

*Themma themma ke nyaka ngaka. Themma themma ke nyaka ngaka. Themma themma tate o a lwala. Themma themma tate o a lwala.*

Themma themma I need a witchdoctor. Themma themma I need a witchdoctor. Themma themma my father is sick. Themma themma my father is sick.

The doctor came out after he listened to the song. The little son was brave to meet the doctor. The big snake rolled itself around the boy. The boy took it home. The snake cured the disease of the chief with its saliva. The boy was rewarded by being made a chief.

The boy child as is reflected in the proceeding tale is brave, intelligent, focused and articulate. He is the representative of the male culture. The language used in this tale emphasises the patriarchy that women are constrained; they cannot act like the young boy did because they have accepted their subjectivity, which is the source of the inferior positions that they find themselves in today.

Women find themselves cast into the role of subservient object cut off from an empowering autonomy and pressed into the role of supporting male subjectivity. They are underpinned by cultural production that prevents them from achieving the goal of feminism, which is aiming to empower women to their maximum potential.

Research, according to Eshleman et al. (1993), has shown that boys are often described as big, athletic, strong or alert, while girls are usually described as tiny, dainty, sweet, pretty, delicate, weak and inattentive. Boy and girl infants are also treated differently. Boys are handled roughly and tossed around playfully, but girls are held more, cuddled, talked to and treated as if they are very fragile. It is through the process of socialisation that boys and girls are encouraged to adopt and develop certain personality traits that are often referred to as masculine or feminine. These personality traits, according to Dietz (1998), have an impact upon the roles that

individuals assume (Freeman, 1985). The effect of television programs and advertisements upon the gender role expectations of both women and men has received considerable attention. However, as the popularity and accessibility of video games continues to increase, the question of the effect of the portrayal of women in video games upon gender role expectations as well as upon the use of violence arises.

As Gamson, Croteno, Hoynes and Sesson (1992) argue, “a wide variety of media messages can act as teachers of values, ideologies, beliefs and can provide images for interpreting the world whether or not the designers are conscious of this merit”. The development of gender identities and the negative portrayal of women may be affected by these portrayals. For example, girls may expect that they will continue to be victims and needy, and that their responsibilities include maintaining beauty and sexual appeal, while boys like the chief’s son may determine that their role is to protect and defend women and to possess them even through the use of violence.

Mead (1964) proposes that individual actors use the definitions of multiple roles, both their own and those of others, to interpret the interaction that takes place around them. Thus, boys and girls rely upon expectations about both masculinity and femininity to interpret interactions and to develop expectations for themselves and others. In turn, these expectations are further used to interpret subsequent interactions and situations. In fact, there must be a social agreement, more or less, about the definition of the role for interactions between individuals to even occur because roles are used to define the self; they become a point of reference for organising and classifying the world and ultimately, as a basis for action. Thus, the roles internalised by the child, including gender, become for the child, and later for the adult, a basis for other roles and for action. Thus, the gender role that is internalised by the individual when she or he is young necessarily has a significant impact upon the perspective of that individual and the additional roles she or he assumes later in life.

Children actively attempt to define gender by using the occurrences they witness every day (Ferrec, 1990). As Mead (1964) contends, children play “at” something. They pretend to be a mother, father, doctor or nurse, and in so doing, they internalise the role and the gender identity associated with it because they are able to locate a definition of gender through the occurrence that they witness. Moreover, in this



process of defining gender, children will not only base their expectations on what they have learned through their interactions with others, they may also associate gender identity with gender symbols like Barbie dolls. Thus, feminine symbols, according to Thorne (1986), become part of the female child's identity as masculine symbols become part of the male's identity. Thus, girls and boys alike may come to see Barbie and other symbols as the feminine norm. Likewise, Goffman (1979) argues that human displays, like gender advertisements, also play an important role in the development of gender expectations.

Technology is increasingly allowing individuals to identify the sex of the child well before birth. Consequently, gender role socialisation begins even before birth (Fagot 1984) through the way the parents talk to the foetus to the physical environment that is created prior to delivery. Quite often, these efforts represent traditional or stereotypical views of femininity and masculinity. For example, girls' rooms are often painted pink while boys' rooms are painted blue. Even the toys and clothing purchased for the new infant reflect these same patterns. Girls' clothes are frilly, while boys' clothes are made to handle their rough behaviour. Boys get hard tough toys such as trucks and baseball bats, while girls receive soft, cuddly teddy bears and dolls which they can practise and internalise their later life roles.

The family, too, often supports the traditional gender roles requiring girls to perform feminine chores such as setting the table and washing the dishes, and boys performing masculine chores such as carrying out the garbage and helping with lawn work. Moreover, traditional gender identity is frequently supported by family, teachers and peers when they reward children for demonstrating appropriate gender behaviours. It may be that language is the most important component of culture, and as Adams and Ware (1989) suggest, even the English language, which sexualises and trivialises women, becomes an important factor in creating gender identities and expectations of boys and girls. This results in further internalisation or gender role expectations. The mass media, although not always given the same degree of attention as other socialisation agents like the family or the schools, has been accepted as agent of socialisation as well. Milkie (1994) argues that media images play an important role in the socialisation of the youth.

## 6.4 BARRENNESS

### 6.4.1 The definition of the word “Barrenness”

The Oxford Dictionary (2002) defines the word ‘barren’ as a female who is unable to produce or bear young ones, and the word ‘barrenness’ as being infertile. Bosman (1991) also supports the *Oxford Dictionary* by defining the word barrenness as infertility or unproductiveness. The Cambridge Advanced Learners Dictionary (2008) defines the word as being unable to have babies or not productive. The researcher defines the word barrenness as a woman who is unable to bear young ones as the Oxford Dictionary has already alluded. Bosman (1991) also supports these meanings in his “*tweetalige*” or bilingual dictionary by defining barrenness as “*onvrugbaarheid*”, infertility or unproductivity and finally, Mbiti (1969) defines the word barrenness as being sterile, or inability to bear children.

### 6.4.2 The curse of infertility (Barrenness)

It is a well-acknowledged fact that motherhood is the highest goal of a traditional African woman. Upon marriage, women are prized particularly because of their ability to bear children, and their status is dependent upon the satisfaction of this function. Motherhood is, therefore, widely seen as a woman’s identity, and without it, her life has no meaning. To marry and to mother a child, preferably a son, according to Kabaji (2009), entitles a woman to respect both her husband’s kinsmen and his friends as she will thus be addressed as mother of so and so. It is this concern that makes Bapedi to discuss this aspect in their tales.

Lesiba and Mokgadi were married for about five solid years, and the wife did not become pregnant as it was expected by her in-laws. Among this couple, a desire to bear children was there, although things did not happen as they wished. Madiba (1949) discusses the sad plight of a barren woman in society. *Mahlomola a ka’s* Folktale:

*Ke kotlo ya eng? Goba badimo bešo ba ntebetše?*

(What kind of misfortune is this, is it because my forefathers have forsaken me?)

This statement reveals the pain that the barren woman experiences in a childless marriage. Other co-wives ask her why she is without children. They mock at her. She sees herself being unacceptable to her in-laws because without children, she misses the pleasures of motherhood and the joy of socialising children. To make it worse, she remembers that if she is barren, her in-laws will reclaim their lobola back, which will increase her agony, pain and bitterness. According to Bapedi customs, a younger sister to the bride will be sent by her parents to solve the problem of childless marriage.

According to Krige (1985), the children of the younger sister will never belong to the younger sister, but will be hers. The younger sister will also not have a hut of her own and her status will not be distinct in the kraal. This is how the barren woman has been dominated by the power of the patriarchal system. Peter (2002) argues: "literary texts are part of a particular community and their texts automatically reflect what is happening in their communities". They are therefore the means through which many societies come to know the social problems that exist and resolved in their communities.

The barren woman in the above mentioned statement does not give up. She attributes her good luck to her ancestors whom she thinks have visited her. This alludes to the belief in ancestors among Bapedi tribes through whom she thinks one approaches God. Bapedi believes that the ancestors have the ability to bring good or evil to a person, depending on the behaviour and conduct of the person. The barren woman puts her trust in the ancestors and has hope that one day her dreams will be met so that she is able to bear children.

The impact of education on this expectation of childlessness is striking (Eshleman et al. 1993). The proportion expecting no lifetime births is 6,9% for women who are not high school graduates. This increases to 8,9% for high school graduates, 11,9% for those with four years of college and 12,6% for women with five years or more of college. Higher levels of education plus the professional career orientation of those with more education are known to increase the proportion of women who expect to remain childless.

Most of these women are married to husbands who agree that children are not desirable. The wives too dismiss the accusation that childlessness is abnormal. Under some conditions, as in dual-career marriages, childlessness may be conducive to both personal and marital satisfaction and adjustment. Ogun-dipe-Leslie (1987) argues that most literary work reflects the belief that women characters have been forced into denial of their rights, and largely excluded from a man's literary world. Ogun-dipe-Leslie further shows a strong desire to rediscover the status of women, while providing a context that may be criticism, in particular, views general practice as an important matter between the sexes, and therefore, invites a reappraisal of literary texts and literary work from the ground. Goodman (1996) supports this idea as follows:

In recent years, academic institutions have witnessed just this shift, which may be referred to as a firing canon: a re-evaluation of the standards by which authors and texts have been singled out and canonized followed by an active research for other authors and texts for inclusion.

They must assist readers to understand what the women experience is, what it is like to be a female character, what a woman character thinks, and how women function. Literary texts must tell the world what it feels like to be a woman. Well-constructed literary texts should provide role models. They should instil a positive sense of feminine identity by portraying women characters who are self-actualising and whose identities are not dependent on men.

## **6.5 WOMEN CHARACTERS BEING VICTIMS WHO ARE SILENCED**

### **6.5.1 The meaning of the word 'silence'**

Recent definitions of the word 'silence' from Google search follow. According to Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia, silence is the lack of audible sound or presence of sounds of very low intensity. Dictionary.com defines the word as the absence or omission of mention, comment, or express concern. Meriam Webster, on the other, hand defines 'silence' as the lack of sound or noise.

Women characters are victims who are silenced. Contextually, in this research, the word means that women are not inclined to speak or to be talkative. In marriage, they are not allowed to say anything about a particular matter since men are people who must talk or decide on their behalf. Traditionally, women are inactive, unspoken and must refrain from speech as well as from making noise.

Women who are inclined to make comments or being voiced are always in danger of being beaten to refrain from speech. In most cases, family violence comes as a result of noise, responding on issues that concern men as heads of families. Women remain objects, subservient and silent in order to successfully carry out the reproductive role.

### **6.5.2 Silencing in *Phatana ya ka's* Folktale**

Mashabela (2007) relates the story of Mokgadi who was beaten by her husband for almost twenty years after their marriage. One of the elderly women in her community went to her home after she heard the cry of Mokgadi. The old woman wanted to know the cause of her beatings. Mokgadi remarked that her abusing husband does not want to hear her talking or responding to anything concerning their family matters. The old woman gave her a small stick and said:

*Tšea sehlare sese ngwanaka. O se khupe ge monna wa gago a bolela le wena. Sehlare se se tla go namolela. O se ke wa dira phošo ...*

(Take this medicine, my daughter, put it under your tongue when your husband talks to you. This is going to help you). Do not make a mistake, by not doing that).

The Revised Standard Version translates the text of 1Timothy, especially verses 11 and 12 in women, society and constraints in this way:

‘Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men: she is to keep silent’.

The interpretation and application of the above and related texts impacted on society at large. Commentators have often used these texts as proof that a woman's place was in the home (barefoot, pregnant and in the kitchen). Apart from being supportive

of subordinates and submissive to her husband, she has to make tea and arrange the flowers. In marriage, women are treated as possessions or sex objects, and their status and economic stability depend on their husbands. Women, children and slaves are grouped together and as a result, they do not have a say in whatever is happening in the family. That is why the old woman gave Mokgadi a small stick to make her silent. She knew that Mokgadi's husband, like all other men, appreciate a woman who is silent and not talkative.

Aubrey's (1997) views about the position of women in Bapedi traditional society are as follows: "the perception about women's status in African society is that it is one of inferiority when projected through the male literary works". Women characters are still regarded as minor under the authority of their males and, after the marriage, they are portrayed as individuals who succumb to the authority of their husbands. As in the case with Mokgadi, after her husband's death, she falls under the authority of the most senior member of her husband's family. Mashabela (2007) writes: "she is placed under the authority of Thebele, who was her brother-in-law, who looks after her home affairs because her husband has passed away". This means, among other things, that women characters are portrayed as people who may not institute proceedings.

Under normal circumstances, Mokgadi has no right to deny what her in-laws has agreed upon. Hunter and Forden (2002) see gender as an issue that selfishly and deceptively prevents those privileges bestowed upon males, and to the detriment of women. These literary texts show the victimisation of women characters. Ntuli (1984) complements this view when he says, "Throughout the ages writers have been found to express their displeasure about certain conditions and practices". He further stresses this view by commenting:

When the writer exposes the evils or irregularities, he notes around him, he wants to arouse in his readers a state of silence which will lead to some kind of reform.

The silent oppression of women characters, according to Peter (2002), is associated with a biased way of writing literature. The perception of literature is always non-reciprocal and hierarchical in nature when it is based on the relationship between male and female. For example, it is clear evidence that Mokgadi was not part of the

decision-making processes when she was told that she must obey what her in-laws have concluded. This attitude reveals the patriarchal silence imposed on her in-laws. She must comply with their decision as the males of the family have a type of culturally bestowed authority.

Related to the subject of inheriting the woman whom her husband has passed away, Thompson (1990) asserts that arranged marriages also contribute in silencing the woman's character because parents with money and economic assets were fully committed to the practice of making lucrative marital arrangements for their offsprings. However accurate this contention might be, it lends a good deal of support to the idea that a woman's main responsibility is to care for her children, and to the claim that any kind of unorthodox behaviour in this respect is likely to result in maternal deprivation.

Women are often blamed for talking too much. The truth, according to Coates (2004), is that there are certain expectations of women in traditional society and one of the English proverbs says, "Silence is the best ornament of a woman". Thus, women are expected to be silent, and in the past, they were always accused of over-talking no matter how much they ever talk. As a matter of fact, women have been forced to meet these expectations for such a long-time because of their subordinate status to men in a male-dominated society.

The younger generation still suffers because of silence. An older generation has planted the seed of humility and obedience in their children, and the seed of being voiceless in public meetings. The relevance of this heritage is that women cannot be found in Parliament, and are not prominent in managerial positions because they lack skills in public facilitation. Fentress (1992) supports the above statement by asserting that "although the younger generation has more space in which to come out of the closet, they have inherited another characteristic from their forefathers which effectively keeps them from having a public voice". The results are that they do not allow each other to move out of the private sphere of women's behaviour. A strong feature of women interrelations, legitimised by culture and religion, is the practice of keeping other women culture-bound.

## **6.6 WOMEN TORTURE**

### **6.6.1 The meaning of the word ‘torture’**

The *Macmillan Study Dictionary* (2009) defines the word ‘torture’ as an extreme physical pain that someone is forced to suffer as a punishment or as a way of making them give information. It goes further by indicating that to “torture” is to hurt someone deliberately, in a way of a punishment or in order to make them give information. To make someone feel extremely worried or upset about something. The Cambridge Advanced Learners Dictionary defines torture as causing great physical or mental pain to someone intentionally in order to give information or to be cruel to a person.

The Longman’s Dictionary of Contemporary English (2003) defines torture as the act of causing physical or mental suffering or to deliberately hurt someone in order to force him/her to give information. The *Oxford Dictionary* (2003) defines the word as the infliction of severe bodily pain as a punishment or a means of persuasion to physical or mental torture. The word ‘torture’ in the context of this research will be physical abuse through wife-beating or verbal abuse that will cause mental suffering.

### **6.6.2 The historical plight of battered women**

It is only recently that ‘the problem of domestic violence’ has been examined. Thompson (1990) argues that this is not to say that ‘wife beating’ is a new phenomenon or that the problem is well-documented. Thompson has further indicated how English law has historically supported the notion that women and children are an extension of man’s property. These kinds of assumptions have supported his right to treat them as he likes, and have long discouraged the intervention of the law in matters relating to ‘domestic arguments’.

Madiba (1949) relates the story of the two women who went out to fetch water by the river. It was during the time when ‘wife beating’ was encouraged and regarded as a sign of love. Selaelo and Ntlokwa were intimate friends. While on their way to the river, they discussed how their husbands loved them. Selaelo started to show blisters all over her body to her friend. Ntlokwa said:



*Bona ka moo Letšeka (monna'gwe) a nthatago, mmele wa ka ke mabadi fela. Tše ke dintho tša maabane, tša beke ya go feta di laetša go fola.*

(Letšeka my love, look at the scars all over my body. The one's that you see are yesterday's beatings. The previous weeks' blisters are about to heal).

Ntlokwa was surprised but pretended as if she understands the drama of wife-beating and she responded:

*Le nna ke nyaka ge ba ka mpetha ka patla, mmele ka moka.*

(I wish my husband can do the same to me. He should use the stick to beat me).

The above statements illustrate the fact that 'wife beating' was the norm and key to 'love'. The historic inequalities between men and women in African society, according to Thompson (1990), have contributed to marital and other sexual/social relationships in which men have traditionally been in control of women and in which women have learned to tolerate the less acceptable varieties of male behaviour as natural or inevitable.

According to Thompson, concerns about the plight of battered women first came to the attention of the public and the authorities almost by accident in the early seventies when a small group of women campaigning against rising prices in Chiswick High Street encountered lots of young mothers complaining about isolation. These young women decided to open a community centre of some kind where women and their children could escape from their loneliness for a time. This was the beginning of Chiswick Women's Aid, which rapidly became famous both as a haven for battered women and their children, and infamous for the overcrowded and even squalid conditions in which the women fleeing from domestic violence were forced to live.

In 1974, the government set up a select committee to investigate violence in marriage, and by 1975, approximately one hundred voluntary and charitable refugees for battered women and their children had been set up in different parts of the country. In 1975 they came together to form the National Women's Aid Federation (NAAF). In a

relatively short time, the battering of women became a public issue. The media was used to sensitise it and the government called for research to explain why it happening.

Small-scale research projects designed to investigate the causes of domestic violence have been established over the last ten years. They were pioneered by Gelles (*The Violent Home*, 1972), Wilson (*The Existing Research into Battered Women*, 1976), Gayford (wrote an article in the *welfare officer* (January, 1976), Goode (*Explorations in Social Theory*, 1973), Hanmer (*Women's Aid and the Women's Liberation Movement in Britain*, 1976), Pahl (*A refuge for Battered Women*, 1978), Marsden and Owen's (*Jekyll & Hyde marriages*, *New Society*, 1975), and Steinmetz and Strauss (*Violence in the family*, 1974). When it comes to explanations about what causes domestic violence, there is a good deal of disagreement between researchers and organisations such as the National Women's Aid Federation, which spend a lot of time with battered women.

### **6.6.3 The contentions revolve around the following fairly common but also fairly debatable ideas:**

1. That battering is often the result of a 'marital tiff' which 'gets out of hand'.
2. That domestic violence only occurs in 'problem families' already known to social work agencies.
3. That violence, because it is concentrated in 'problem families', is also largely a working class phenomenon.
4. That domestic violence is associated with masochistic and sadistic tendencies.
5. That women must enjoy violence in a bizarre kind of way, otherwise they would leave.
6. A common explanation for all kinds of personally experienced social problems is that of inheritance.

So far, therefore, arguments that attempt to explain domestic violence are inconclusive. But whilst the causes and the extent of domestic violence may be in dispute, there can be no doubt about the awfulness of its repercussions. As Pahl (1978) comments in her study of a Canterbury refuge, some women are appallingly

injured, they suffer broken bones, knife wounds and severe bruising, some are hit over the head with furniture, some are thrown downstairs, and one had a nail hammered into her foot. But some women suffer in other ways and may have no bruises to show for it. One of the women who has stayed longest at the refuge, putting up with what are clearly for her, extremely difficult circumstances, has never said what it was that drove her from her home. All that she said was that she was not physically battered, but her need for refuge was clearly great.

The Pahl's made a distinction between supportive wives, independent wives and domestic wives. But for the majority of them, marriage was the most important thing in their lives, providing them with emotional as well as financial security. Oakley (1974) concluded from her research that men's and women's roles in the family, their attitudes to marriage and their beliefs about equal opportunities are not changing as quickly as it is often suggested. None of the women Oakley interviewed questioned the assumption that a woman's first and most important duty is to be a wife and mother.

It could be finally argued, as with research in domestic violence, that evidence presented in the above studies is based on rather small samples which may well be untypical. But the findings seem to confirm arguments presented earlier about the popularity of marriage despite increase in the divorce rate, and the efficiency with which the family system as a social institution complements the requirements of a capitalist economy by separating wage labour from domestic labour. Some of the implications for women as unpaid workers whose 'caring services' inside the home bolster the provisions of the welfare state in times of stringency will be revisited in order to provide the kind of help to rescue women from torture and domestic violence.

## **6.7 CONCLUSION**

This chapter indicated that the social organisation in which we exist not only propagates the dominant male principle informally, but actually institutionalises it, so that it becomes a part of the social realm, featuring in legislature, religious codes and educational practices. The dominance of the male principle has caused the female principle to be weakened or silenced. The researcher has also indicated that this negative silence has given birth to cultural silence, subservience on the part of women.

Finally, the researcher has shown that patriarchy makes men the reference point or the standard measure by which society fixes a woman's worth. Hence women become defined as an extension of an appendage to men. A woman is not seen as a complete entity in her own right, but is given an identity based on her role and character in relation to the dominant male.

## **CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

### **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

While some female characters still display clear signs of subservience, a growing number of them assume more assertive roles, refusing to be relegated to a position of inferiority. Acculturation and socialisation are blamed for women's subservience. During the process of socialisation, young children should be taught to see one another as equals than to see men as more important than women.

### **7.2 SPECIFIC FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

There are specific research findings noted in this study on the basis of data collected. The researcher has mentioned some of these findings. Those that are not mentioned are not necessarily unimportant, but for the sake of space, the main research findings are discussed below.

#### **7.2.1 All cultures have accorded gender a central place in explanations of how the world is and should be**

Kramer (1991) writes: "Most significantly, every culture of which we know has been patriarchal to some degree". Although there are numerous instances of groups in which a particular woman is in a position of authority, such an arrangement has never been culturally preferred. Typically, men retake authority when their availability makes it possible for them to do so. For example, in royalty, the mother can hold a position of authority when her son is still young. When he reaches maturity, he takes over his position of authority. This is a clear indication that authority is vested in the hands of men.

#### **7.2.2 Language is the primary vehicle for the transmission of culture**

Being normally old women, storytellers are entrusted with the work of moulding the young ones in the language that they understand better. It is very unfortunate that they stress exemplary conduct and self-sacrifice in the case of girls than in boys. The situation calls for a change by contextualising the message so that girls do not always

fail to display certain basic attributes such as kindness, humility and self-sacrifice. Young girls in particular should be equipped with the education that will make it easier for them to face the challenges of life.

### **7.2.3 Women's identity is determined by the structure in which they exist**

In traditional society, it was important that girls and women be subjected to training in survival strategies as they were the future custodians of the revered social values. In this way, storytellers drove the point home that whereas males often depend on brutal force to achieve the more difficult objectives, females use tact and self-sacrifice. In so doing, they attained the same goals at no personal risk to life, honour and integrity. This, especially in the eyes of young listeners, should be changed to accommodate both sexes. Women's identity cannot be determined by the structures in which they find themselves. They should be encouraged to stand on their two feet in all walks of life. They should not depend on their husbands or anyone else to make their lives successful. Parental skills can be taught to girls, mothers and teachers so that they see life in different ways.

### **7.2.4 Racism is a component of the overall system of oppression**

One of the most controversial and contradictory passages concern's Woolf's feminist manifesto of the experience of black women (Walker, 2007), who have scrutinised this sentence in particular (Marcus, 1987). In seeking to distance women from imperialist and colonial practices, Woolf disturbingly excludes black women from the very category of women.

This has become the crux of much contemporary feminist debates concerning the politics of identity. The category of white middle-class, it has been shown, cannot speak for the experience of all women. The difference remains the key issue: women are not united until today. The concluding remark is that all women need to be united in order to have a common goal so that the world can listen to their interests. Being white, black, brown or any other colour does not cause division. The colour of the skin means nothing; what matters most is that women are one.

### 7.2.5 Inactive participation of women in the decision-making bodies

There is general acknowledgement that women are not actively participating in decision-making processes on issues and projects affecting their lives. Data available indicates that folktales in general portray men as heads of the families. Their role is mainly to protect their wives and children. Mokgoatšana in Makgamatha (2000) confirms the above idea by asserting: "Men are portrayed not only as the thinkers, but also as the vanguard of development, information and societal advancement". This exclusive privilege is given to men and as a result women are not represented in the traditional "*pitšo*" or "*kgoro*" assembly, where serious decisions are taken concerning lives of people in the community. The emphasis on women's maternal role has led to a universal oppression between 'the domestic' and 'public' roles. Because women are confined to the domestic sphere, they do not have access to the sorts of authority, prestige and privileges given to men their counterparts. Given this imbalance, women's characters in folktales therefore are portrayed as being weak, passive, inferior and evil.

The fundamental principle in this analysis is that since the text is a signifier, there must be an underlying system giving rise to meaning. This gendered division of labour and space as exposed in the tales entrenches each gender in its domain, and enhances the power and authority to men because labour division is primarily based on a clearly gendered relationship for what is presumed in a patriarchal sense.

Voices of women are needed today to reconstruct the political as well as the economic situation of their communities. Women's participation is crucial to close gaps and imbalances between the sexes.

The girl child must be encouraged to plan for economic and social success. She must be taught to persist until success is attained. They must as well be encouraged to apply problem-solving approaches to life when they encounter difficult situations. Girls need to reinforce the idea that femininity and intelligence can go together, for they need not sacrifice one for the other.

Finally, girls and women should have access to great role models. Everyone benefits from positive role models in order to contribute to society.

### **7.2.6 The identity of unmarried woman**

A close look at the folktales has so far not yielded any evidence of an unmarried mature woman. Women are always depicted in marital statuses. The folktales thus uphold the ideal situation as envisaged by the patriarchal structure. For example, when a woman or a girl is socialised, as Soshane (1975) observes, she is socialised to take up her designated role in marriage, and she must accept the behavioural norms of her sex. These attitudes and beliefs are expressed through choice of language. In getting married, the woman or girl, it is said, “has gone to cook”. This expression defines her domestic domain. There is nowhere in which the unmarried woman is mentioned because in terms of Sepedi tradition, all women are supposed to be married. It is no wonder that the folktales depict parental role as a role designated for mothers as an ideal practice.

Society has a common assertion that female characters must be married. All women fall victim to the same principle of literary texts written by male writers. According to these texts, all single parents are depicted as weak and dependent characters. Traditionally, they reside in their parental homes. They are helpless female characters that need to be rescued by brave and bonding adventurous male characters. The parents of single parents are despised by the community because they have failed to make choices for their daughters to be married to their relatives. Today, all women and girls have to choose what is good for them. They can choose to be married or not, that is a personal issue.

### **7.2.7 Polygamous marriage**

The practice of polygamy works in subtle ways to contribute to the outcome in which women are in control of certain resources or production. While polygamy is not a perfect marital arrangement, it is well suited to the agrarian lifestyle, and contains several in-built mechanisms that allow women to cope with the burden of lifestyle. Pool (1972) has noted that polygamy allowed co-wives, for example, to form a power-



block within the family. This power block is notoriously effective in coercing an otherwise stubborn husband to behave in ways congenial to his wives.

In many cultures, including Sepedi culture, polygamous marriage is disparate. Each wife has her own independent status, and wives in a compound family are not equal in rank. This is the root cause of spreading jealousy amongst the wives. The love of their husband is always shown in the youngest wife. The inequality of the wives does not end there, it is continued in the children who do not inherit their father's property on the same par. Some children are left poor, whereas others gain property from their parents.

The situation of a polygamous marriage today encourages greed, conflict and even that families kill one another or end up causing divisions in the family. Therefore, this is not a good marital system because it divides people. The more the people are divided, the more conflicts are created which end up in killing the morality of society. Finally, men and women are shown to be ultimately unhappy in the polygamous marriage; a fertile arena for discord in the family.

#### **7.2.8 The silent woman is an accepted ideal woman**

The role of women as defined by patriarchy can have a profound impact on children when they align themselves with other cultural influences. Children, according to Hartmann (1995), identify themselves with heroic characters, and hardly with suffering heroes. The silent character that is much preferred by patriarchy can have a negative impact on girls and grown up children because children believe in expressing their views and imitating their heroes, and therefore their divergence from actual patterns of living can lead them to powerful disorientation. Children who do not see any reflections of themselves, or who see only distorted or comical types of information come to understand that they have little value in society in general. Literature, as part of social and scholastic context, can contribute to the development of self-esteem by holding up to its reader's images of themselves.

The silent character of women reduces them to inferior status. They are doomed because of their low financial statuses. First and foremost, women have little property and they have to depend on their husbands for a living. This kind of dependence forces them to take marriage as their career. Their character must be a silent one because their husbands will do everything for them. They should not raise their voices. If she married a rich man, the rest of her life is secured and she need not worry about food and clothes. At the same time, her social status is asserted to a higher level that economic disparity leads to social inequality between men and women, and to some extent, money represents new status and power. Believing in this, many women chose to be married to property instead of a man. However, women had little freedom to do what they like after marriage, and finally their hobbies mean nothing but needlework, gardening and gossiping, which reduce them to low self-esteem.

Women need not be satisfied with this attitude of being silent observers. Their views, wisdom, courage and strength are important in the rebuilding of our societies. Their participation in decision making bodies is crucial to strike a balance in society.

### **7.2.9 Emphasis on beauty promotes jealousy among women and girls**

Lieberman (1972) argues that patriarchal stories singled out beautiful girls among other girls and identified them with goodness and heroic deeds, while ugly girls are associated with evil and witchcraft. These beautiful girls earn rewards by being married, while the ugly ones fail in life. Doll (2000) supports the above view by asserting that a good girl is everything already noted (docile, beautiful, passive and rewarded with marriage). As is noticed in the tale of Cinderella, a bad girl is not a true member of the family romance. As Doll points out, she performs “the meanest works of her house”. “This representation of one female as the villain versus another female as the heroine leaves only two roles for women-good or bad”. This rivalry of good girls versus bad girls in folktales may lead to distrust among girls who grow up hearing these stories.

Many women in a patriarchal society, according to Oates (1997), are privileged as valuable possessions of men, or branded as worthless and contemptible. Inevitably, this leads women to perceive other women as dangerous rivals. Oates has further

commented that in the patriarchal realm of folktales, female bonding is extraordinarily difficult. In patriarchy, women almost inevitably turn against other women because the voice of the looking glass sets them against each other. The rival aspect of the portrayal of women in folktales frequently focuses on women as agents of suffering. This ends up making women to be each other's worst enemies.

The element of beauty also adds to the stereotypical characters of women. It is not the beauty of the person that is valuable. Other qualities in women can also define who they are: qualities such as hardwork, intelligence, powerful leadership qualities and financial stability can also be found among women. Beauty only divides women to the point of hatred of one another. Society should come together to encourage one another to know their needs as well as to develop themselves.

#### **7.2.10 Women are doubly affected by the narrative point of view**

Women are taught to despise themselves, and to collude in the construction of their own inferiority rather than to rebel against being so labelled. Dundes (1980) also discusses the representation or lack thereof, of African Americans in fairy tales. He writes, "A terse bit of Afro-American folklore conveys a unique indictment of the use of white folklore in classrooms containing black students where the values come from white folklore". These kind of values can hardly help to develop black students since there is not much potential for a positive self-image for black students. In an educational system and society, black is always associated with evil and white with good values.

Another finding from this study is that girls are socialised through various demeaning images aimed at producing the ideal woman who conforms to the patriarchal gender ideology. Trousdale (1995) asserts, "Many cultural factors are involved in socialisation, such as the media, the influence of parents to socialise girls. Christian traditions according to Trousdale also promote certain characters in women for example the virtues of silence, obedience and discretion to demean the female character".

The application of theories of dislocating masculinity by the use of Western gender categories to address people's expression of inequality puts women of non-Western cultural contexts at a disadvantage because within the African context, women are governed by certain norms which are relevant to their upbringing and development. In this respect, the behaviour, attitudes, roles and statuses that societies assign to govern relationships among the sexes are given socio-cultural settings to avoid conflict.

### 7.2.11 Recent feminist analysis

The liberation of women with expanding civil and political rights to include women on the same terms in all the structures has started although at a small scale that a person cannot see. According to Dr Smith (1990), professional or specialised careers are categorised by gender as follows:

<b>Professional/specialised careers</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>
Lawyers	90%	9.1%
Judges	95%	5%
Doctors	85.2%	14.8%
Professors	94.1%	5.9%
Journalists	59.8%	40.1%
Sports figures	95.9%	4.1%
Clergy	94.9%	5.1%

The dream will come true in years to come. Rome was not built in one day.

### 7.2.12 The vast difference between men and women

Before thinking about what needs to be done about the problem of the difference between men and women, it is worth clearing up the distinction between "sex" and "gender" at any rate as Loades (1990) employs them. Sex has to do with basic biological differences such as that men ejaculate; women ovulate, gestate and lactate. 'Gender' refers to what a particular society makes of the relationships between males and females. It can be argued that the dominant patriarchal gender construction of

culture for men has been that they are active, independent, intelligent, brave, strong, good and godlike while women are sanctioned as being passive, dependent, bodily, emotional, weak, and peculiarly responsible for evil and sin. This assumption has been worked into all the institutions. According to Loades (1990), there are no connections whatsoever between the perception of differences and the construction of the analogies or the hierarchies.

It is simple, but painful, to acknowledge that in so far as we have ordered our traditions and societies explicitly by means of such constructs and whatever function they may possibly once usefully have served, now we are increasingly becoming conscious of the damage they do, and of our responsibility to do something about it. Feminist writers are of the opinion that old stories can be retold and new ones invented to 'verbalise' folktales in an inclusively human manner, which takes into account both men and women. The languages that the folktales were told have been biased to women and can be rectified to include women.

### **7.2.13 History has ignored the stories of ordinary people**

The history of ordinary people and their experiences should be included in the adoption of oral evidence as another source and method to be applied to interpret and analyse data. Although such records need to be supplemented, the history from below can also help reconstruct the attitudes of the heretics and rebels.

Our development as a human species in space and time is shaped by stories told around us. These stories, according to Mokgoatšana in Makgamatha (2000), constitute the myths we create about ourselves, and those that we create about others. If we look carefully at what we today consider to be history, we realise how men have throughout the ages created myths around themselves, and they are described as the paragons of virtue and knowledge. History is then viewed as pursuit and commitment to the whole truth. In Von Ronke's words, history is to tell "how it actually happened" (Oosthuizen, 1981). In terms of this view, history was to be objective and verifiable from documents.

Unfortunately, traditional historians failed to learn from the private soldier, William Wheeler, who gave an account of the Battle of Waterloo to his wife. His account indicated that the war was not only of the Wellingtons and Bonapartes, but that even the most insignificant soldier also had a tale to tell as well. It is this 'History from below,' according to Mokgoatšana in Makgamatha (2000), which will receive attention in this study. History from below implies an expression of the views of ordinary people and their experiences of social change. This view refutes the insistence on documentation as the sole source of history. Instead, it calls for the adoption of oral evidence as another source and method to be applied to interpret and analyse data. Burker (1991) in Makgamatha (2000) rightly points out that official documents express the official point of view, and to reconstruct the attitudes of the heretics and rebels, such records need to be supplemented. It is evident that the so-called official view is a biased position which needs to be balanced against other existing views in society.

### **7.3 CONCLUSION**

On the basis of the data collected from the document review (study), it is evident that women need participatory democracy to afford their right to express their views on the running of their own affairs and the development in their respective communities. Men and women co-exist to strengthen each other. A careful balancing act was needed to resolve the problem of exclusion in presenting the findings of the study. The researcher has outlined the main research findings which are more critical to this study. Finally, the researcher was careful not to fall into the temptation to report every finding which was not in line with the purpose of this study.

## CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

### 8.1 GENERAL CONCLUSION

The culture of people is usually reflected in its folklore. As important constituents of folklore, folktales are consequently expressive of the worldview of a society at some point in time; they convey indicators of the prevailing ideology in a society. Thus, they are suitable sources for an inquiry into gender relations at work in a given social formation, especially when folktales of women are considered. The ritual space is a visual and aural environment where women demand to be seen and heard. It is a space that mirrors truth and untruth, reality and fantasy, thus challenging traditional knowledge and power that has constructed their existing feminine condition.

It appears that the process of characterisation in the women's folktale is governed by a gender ideology. Every relationship, action and motif are gendered. Like fairytales in many other cultures, folktales in Bapedi culture are not only reflective of the deepest aspects of culture, but also of major formative influences on it. However, a central and often overlooked feature of these stories is the role played by women as narrators and performers, and the related centrality of women figures within the narrative. In most of the popular stories, the heroine is the pretty, intelligent and self-sufficient girl who is rewarded with the handsome prince as her prize.

Whereas boys and men are cast as brave, courageous, hardworking and adventurous, girls and women are consistently presented as vulnerable, weak, stupid, jealous and unreliable. These images therefore determine their gender roles. It is also clear that natural features, for example, forests, rivers and lakes are gendered for they represent the male domain. Equally significant are the animals and birds, which represent patriarchal hegemony. As noted from this research, women performers have a way of subverting patriarchy by creating sub-texts in which they exalt female attributes.

Looking at the women's tales through a purely feminist lens, it may be emphasised that a woman's experience is determined by the fact that she is treated as a commodity to be acted upon. She exists as something to be marketed or manipulated, as an object whose value is conferred upon her by others, and who is thus forced to consider herself to a large extent as an object. She is thus, by virtue of the male social forces

around her, fundamentally alienated, turned into an object for others and compelled to think of herself as inferior.

The researcher's experience is that these stories are some which millions of children throughout our culture have to share throughout the centuries in the intimate context of the home; a whole world of fantasy and dreams created by mothers and grandmothers. It is a world in sharp contrast with the prevailing order of the patriarchal society. It does not deny nor negate it, but it aims to subvert it and navigate its way through it. While in the real world men control everything, in the dream world of stories women reign supreme. In this regard, this reflects one strategy for dealing with the social context.

It may be said that women's consciousness have been colonised and hence the struggle for liberation. Their conscious and subconscious attempts are aimed at subverting patriarchy. These sub-texts are crucial for the survival of the female voice. Women are not the same as men. They differ in terms of their positions, status and behaviour and they need to be treated with respect in order to participate in the public sphere, which at the moment is regarded as a limited space for them.

## **8.2 SUMMARY OF THE KEY ISSUES THE RESEARCHER DISCUSSED**

In this study, texts have been perused to emphasise that women characters are portrayed as inferior, weak, evil and passive. Patriarchy shows that men have social power in every important structure of society and that women do not have any real access in such structures. Women are traditionally linked to traits such as dependence, emotion, nurturing and pre-occupation with their physical appearance. These preconceptions give men the power to dominate them.

Feminism is a theory that has been used to reveal the fact that men and women are not treated equally by society. It seeks to re-organise the world into which men and women live better lives. It seeks to change society's mind-set so that women can participate in the public sphere without fear.



### **8.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 8.3.1** Literature is a crucial part of culture because it is the embodiment of heritage. It needs to be re-written or adapted to the needs of everyone in society.
- 8.3.2** The diversity of women's lives and experiences, and their contributions in all areas of public and private life need to be reflected in society in a positive, active and life-affirming manner. Negative and injurious portrayals of women and narrowly defined roles must be challenged. The dignity of women should be preserved and promoted by society.
- 8.3.3** The full participation of women and girls in economic decision-making, social and political organisations should be facilitated.
- 8.3.4** Women and girls should be protected from sexual harassment and violence at all levels of society.
- 8.3.5** Women's struggle for equal opportunities needs to be promoted to ensure fairness and justice for all.
- 8.3.6** The diversity of family types must be recognised and treated fairly.

### **8.4 POINTERS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

- 8.4.1** Racism among women should be discouraged among rural, black and white women so that equality can be achieved.
- 8.4.2** Society should be reorganised, and its institutions be restructured to take cognisance of all women, in particular, who should have full opportunity and access to leadership positions and decision-making at all levels and in all sectors of society.

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