

**THE THEME OF PROTEST AND ITS EXPRESSION
IN SF MOTLHAKE'S POETRY**

by

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Rre Seleki Feke Motlhake

S. F. Motlhake

DEDICATION

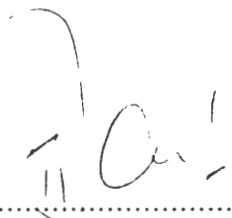
I dedicate this work to

My mother Daisy Stompie Mokgatle

*Most especially my grandmother
the late Alice Nozikhangu "Toto" Mboni,
who despite her sacrifice and support to see me through this venture,
is not here to share in the joy of my success.*

DECLARATION

I declare that *THE THEME OF PROTEST AND ITS EXPRESSION IN S.F. MOTLHAKE'S POETRY* is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.


.....
MRS T.L. TSAMBO

JUNE 1999
.....

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SUMMARY

In the Apartheid South Africa, repression and the heightening of the Blacks' struggle for political emancipation, prompted artists to challenge the system through their music, oral poetry and writing. Most produced works of protest in English to reach a wider audience. This led to the general misconception that literatures in the indigenous languages of South Africa were insensitive to the issues of those times.

This study seeks firstly to put to rest such misconception by proving that there is commitment in these literatures as exemplified in the poetry of S.F. Motlhake. Motlhake not only expresses protest against the political system of the time, but also questions some religious and socio-cultural practices and institutions among his people. The study also examines his selected works as genuine poetry, which does not sacrifice art on the altar of propaganda.

KEY WORDS:

Setswana Poetry; Motlhake; Protest Poetry; Socio-cultural protest; Religious protest; Political protest; Evolutionary protest; Mild protest; Militant protest; Threnody stylistics; Satire; Linguistic format; Acquiescence; Censorship; Repetitive devices; Prolepsis; Praise denunciation; Contrast; Sarcasm; Dramatic monologue; Expression; Malope; Thobega; Theme; African Marxism; Sexual harassment.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 PREAMBLE

The primary aim of this study is to explore the protest theme and its expression in the poetry of S.F. Motlhake. In so doing it hopes, as its secondary aim, to comment on the occurrences of protest poetry in African languages in general and in Setswana in particular. Not only will we illustrate the different areas of protest in writing thereby demonstrating that there is commitment in African languages literature. Most importantly we will also give the aspect of protest in Motlhake's poetry the scholarly exposition it has long deserved.

This study comprises six chapters divided as follows:

- In this the introductory **Chapter 1**, the aim and scope of the study are discussed. The method of presentation as well as the theoretical framework within which the research is carried out are also highlighted.
- **Chapter 2** discusses the nature and forms of protest literature with specific reference to poetry so as to give a general survey of protest writing. The latter part of this chapter concentrates on protest literature in the African languages with special focus on Setswana literature.
- **Chapter 3** discusses political protest in the selected texts and comments on different aspects of political protest like racial discrimination, economic exploitation, oppression and repression.

- **Chapter 4** evaluates socio-cultural and religious protest in the relevant texts.
- **Chapter 5** comments on style and Motlhake's expression of protest theme.
- The final **Chapter 6** provides the main conclusion.



1.2 THEME AND EXPRESSION IN POETRY

The function of literature as a whole and poetry in particular, as a powerful vehicle of expressing thoughts cannot be over emphasized. Poetry is a means through which the writer expresses his general attitude towards life as well as provides an account of the world in the circumstances of its time.

Chiwome, (1991:55-60) states that poetry is the expression of the life experiences and the impact thereof on the poet and on the community. These life experiences are unfolded or expressed in a variety of themes like love, death, morality, heroism and protest to the reader. In this study we will evaluate how the theme of protest in Motlhake's poetry relates to life experiences.

Theme refers to the central idea or a perception which is embodied in the work of art. Murfin & Ray (1997:400) clarify this further by stating that theme:

is not simply the subject of literary work, but rather a statement that the text seems to be making about the subject.

The quotation above indicates that theme cannot only be identified by means of the subject of literary work. It is what the whole text says about the subject that

exemplifies the main theme. This means that the theme is arrived at by extracting the essential idea from the work of art. The central idea on the other hand depends on the “content” (subject) and how it is expressed (form by the author. Without oversimplifying its meaning, “**theme**” in this study will be regarded as “the essential meaning or main concept in a literary work” (BROOKS & WARREN, 1976:268).

Expression refers to the mode or form in which language is used to communicate the theme. In literary terms, the scientific analysis of the content with reference to the form in which it is presented is referred to as stylistics (ABRAMS, 1988:245).

Art, according to Ngara (1982:26):

is a combination of two forces in a dialectical interaction namely the communicative force and the expressive force.

The communicative force of a work of art refers to its ability to communicate the message that the artist wishes to convey to the audience. The expressive force on the other hand refers to the manner or the form in which the message is used in order to evoke certain kinds of feelings in the audience. By this Ngara implies that the subject-matter of poetry reaches the audience through the manner or form in which the poet articulates it.

On the basis of the above, the content or meaning of literature, and poetry in particular, cannot be appreciated without an appreciation of its aesthetic or artistic aspects. In other words, poetry cannot be appreciated on the basis of its theme or subject-matter only without equal attention to its form or manner of expression. The two, namely theme and expression are complementary. Therefore, in investigating

the poetry of S.F. Motlhake, the study will not only consider the protest content or the thematics, but it will also analyse the stylistic elements used by the poet to express the content.

1.3 S.F. MOTLHAKE'S POETRY

S.F. Motlhake's poetry has been selected as a subject for this study firstly because he has made a laudable contribution to Setswana literature. To date, he has produced nine volumes of poetry, three of which he co-authored with B.D. Magoleng:-

<i>Maboko a Setswana</i>	(1969) with Magoleng.
<i>Boka Fela</i>	(1978)
<i>Metsweding ya Poko</i>	(1979)
<i>Mahube a Masa</i>	(1982)
<i>Molodi wa puo</i>	(1983)
<i>Lošalaba lwa bomme</i>	(1983) with Magoleng
<i>Kgola ya Borwa</i>	(1987) with Magoleng
<i>Mapalamo</i>	(1991)
<i>Makgaolakgang</i>	(1997)

Secondly and more importantly, Motlhake's peculiar and indirect style has enabled him, more than any of his contemporaries, to make powerful statements without being propagandistic. He has written on a wide variety of themes including controversial social, political and religious issues. A significant amount of these are protest poems which form the basis of this study.

And lastly, much of his poetry was written during the years 1976 - 1997, a period between the Soweto uprisings and the birth of democracy in South Africa, a period in which there was general atmosphere of protest and revolution from the verbal artists and political activists; and a struggle for liberation from the system of apartheid. Despite measures by rulers intended to curb such activities, poets like Motlhake could not be wholly silenced. They continued to attack the system by using serious and sometimes obscure language to escape censorship.

A short study such as this cannot do justice to all of Motlhake's poems of protest. Therefore it will only limit itself to the following selected poems for a more intense analysis:-

“Molao” (*The law*)

The poem comments about the repressive laws and their effect on the ordinary person. (1979:4)

“Letlalo” (*The skin*)

The subject of protest here is the issue of colour-bar (1979:22)

“Dipolaseng” (*Life on the farms*)

The poem protests against physical abuse and the exploitation of farm labourers by white farm owners. (1982:1).

“Boruti” (*Priesthood*) and **“Moreri”** (*The Preacher*)

Both poems express an objection to the insincerity, hypocrisy, opportunism and exploitative practices by preachers and ministers in institutions of religion (1982:15 & 30 respectively).

“Tlhabologo ya Bophirima” (*Western Civilisation*)

The poem objects to the invasion of Africa by the missionaries and other Western forces. It also laments the decline of the indigenous African culture because of European influences (1982:36).

“A re tla gola?” (*Will we ever grow up?*)

The poem protests about the systematic obliteration of the black man’s dignity and identity, his emasculation as a result of being treated as a child in the world of adults, as well as the degradation of his status in the form of the inferior education offered the blacks (1982:39).

“Montsho” (*A Blackman*)

The poem is about the fate of a black person in a white man’s hostile world (1983:52)

“Moepong” (*At the mines*)

Protest here is about unfair labour practices in the mines as well as the decline of morality among the blacks as a result of industrialisation (1983:34)

“Goreng ke sa nyale?” (*Why don’t I marry?*)

Protest here is directed at the institution of marriage and comments about issues such as the exorbitant **“bogadi”** (*bride price*) and the infidelity of a partner in a marriage (1987:3).

“Bomatlw’adibona” (*Those who are for ever victimised*)

The poem voices the plight of women against the stereotypes that their status is inferior to that of men (1987:17).

Full texts of all these poems are provided in the Addendum.

1.4 METHOD OF ANALYSIS

The poems will not be discussed individually, but will be grouped together according to the protest form to which they belong, namely political protest in **Chapter 3** and socio-cultural and religious protest in **Chapter 4**. Where there are more than one poems that comment on a similar or related aspect, such poems will be evaluated together. In the event of one poem being relevant to a particular aspect, that poem will be evaluated entirely on its own. In **Chapter 5**, examples of stylistic features discussed will be drawn from all the poems.

1.5 APPROACH

In this study, the theory of African Marxism as well as stylistic criticism will be employed as analytical tools. African Marxism, the most recent theory in African studies, was developed from the Western Marxist critical tradition to suit the dialectic assessment of African literature whose existence has been shaped by ideological imperatives peculiar to the African situation. Marxists, among other things, believe that:-

human consciousness in any era is constituted by an ideology - that is, a set of concepts, beliefs, values and ways of thinking and feeling (ABRAMS, 1988:219).

Ideology turns a work of art into a reflection of reality or of the society in that era. Marxists are concerned mostly with the relation between literature and the society. Their approach:-

takes into account, social and historical factors in the assessment of a work of art, and consider the conditions of production and consumption - that is, it examines its function within the social structure as a social practice, and not as a thing apart from everyday world of social reality. (WATTS, 1989:48)

They also postulate a complementary relation between ideology and art/form. A prevailing ideology dictates or determine the nature of art, and art in turn reflects the ideological stances of a society. According to Ngugi (1981:72), art is:-

a reflection of society; its political and cultural struggles; its structure of values - the conflict and tensions arising from antagonism between those which are dying and those which are pointing to the future.

According to Owomoyela (1991:24) not only art but also criticism of art:-

must engage in the struggle on the side of the revolutionary masses and their allies; it must be socialized and historicized and join in the anti-imperialist struggle.

Amuta (1989:7), who developed African Marxism, maintains that this theory is effective because it addresses a complex set of struggles such as:-

the struggle against psychological timidity foisted by

centuries of dehumanizing denigration, against the entrenchment of colonialist economic structures as roadblocks to genuine development; against tyranny and endless buffoonery of an insensitive ruling class presiding over societies riven by class inequalities; against the hegemony of irrelevant alien ideas; and against the growing sophistication of the ideological tentacles of global imperialism.

Protest writing among the black South African writers, was produced during the period of the struggle against the apartheid hegemony and class inequalities and also within constraints imposed by censorship laws. Their works therefore, whose intention was to sharpen the consciousness of the readers in pursuit of justice or change, can only be meaningfully evaluated using African Marxism. This theory is relevant because it addresses the analysis of not only one form, but a variety of struggles in an African life.

Another factor which adds to the relevance of this theory is its effective features which Selepe (1993:24) summarised as follows:-

- (i) it is realist, in that it concerns itself with the social reality;
- (ii) it is identificatory in that it identifies the nature of writing as well as the targeted group of readers; and
- (iii) it is didactic in that it raises consciousness which activates something within the targeted group of readers.

By applying the African Marxist approach for instance, we will be able to demonstrate that Motlhake's protest poetry is a realistic reflection of social reality

and of the historical situation of the apartheid South Africa. We will not only be looking at this poetry as a reflection of social reality, but we will also be establishing its relevance within the social structure.

In the evaluation of the mode of expression in poetry, this study will confine itself to stylistics criticism as recommended by Ngara (1982:14) for the evaluation of all art-forms. Poetry as an art, is a form of communication that is, it is a communicative utterance which is produced by the writer and received by the reader. From another view, it can be said that the reader's response, depends on what the writer says and how he says it. Stylistics therefore is concerned with the combination of what (theme) the author says and how (expression) he says it that will cause the reader to respond in a particular way.

The evaluation of protest poetry as a work of art that uses indirect and obscure language, calls for an approach that will be able to analyse the constituents of its linguistic format like the lexical items, grammatical structures and symbols, so that its communicative function can be realised. In this regard, it is Stylistics that is more relevant because, states Ngara (1982: 15):-

it gives an analysis of the various components of
the communicative utterance which combine to produce
the meaning and aesthetic effect of a work of art.

By using African marxism and stylistics in this study, we will not only be making Motlhake's poetry part of social reality, but we will also be presenting Motlhake as a poet of lyrical power who does not compromise poetry in order to produce propaganda.

1.6 PROTEST AS THEME

Writing on the African situation in particular, Mulokozi (1982:27) clarifies two levels of social action which he claims determines or gives birth to protest literature in their respective milieus. The first one is regarded as the principal one because it entails the anti-colonial struggle that has to do with the liberation of one nation from the other. The second one involves the struggle among classes of people where one class challenges the *status quo* protected by the other. These classes of people are formed because:-

men operate in a given socio-economic formation, and enact out their lives in a perpetual interaction with one another, on the basis of the places they occupy in the production process (MULOKOZI, *ibid*).

Conflicts and protest from such social classes more often find expression in literature. In this study, Motlhak's protest poetry will be evaluated regardless of whether it relates to the struggle for national liberation or to the class struggle. Selepe (1993:36) differentiates between three types of protest which he terms the variables of protest. The first one is the **mild protest** whose aim is only to trigger awareness of an undesirable situation with an intention of restraining the offender. Finn (1990:104) refers to this type of protest as "a critical observation of undesirable conditions". The second type is the **evolutionary** protest that does not only proclaim the prevailing conditions as undesirable, but also suggests alternatives. Finally, there is the **militant** type of protest which insists on a change or total replacement of the prevailing social structure. In this study, Motlhake's protest poetry will be evaluated without categorising which variable or type they subscribe to.

CHAPTER 2

PROTEST LITERATURE AND PROTEST WRITING IN SETSWANA

2.1 PREAMBLE

This chapter aims to establish the existence of the protest component as a recognisable feature of African languages literatures in general and Setswana literature in particular. To achieve this, views of different scholars on protest literature and protest poetry will be evaluated with an intention of determining a definition which will direct the course of this study. In the process of evaluating the protest element, we will also refer to factors which gave rise to protest writing in other African languages beyond the borders of South Africa so as to place Setswana protest writing within the broader field of African protest literature. Different forms or categories of protest will also be highlighted to indicate that there are different targets or institutions against which protest can be levelled.

Protest poetry and any other protest writing is not like any creative work of art where the author writes freely about anything. He writes within certain limits, constrained by laws. Despite this situation, a significant amount of protest writing has been produced by various writers. This chapter will in this regard give a cursory account on what impeded the growth of protest writing in South Africa as well as outline the techniques which the writers of protest poetry uses to evade censorship laws. At the end of this chapter, we will examine the element of protest in both the traditional and modern Setswana literatures.

2.2 THE NATURE AND FORMS OF PROTEST LITERATURE WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO POETRY

Protest writing has been defined differently by various scholars and critics. Cornwell (1982:184) maintains that the most appropriate way to define protest literature is by its function in the society. From his point of view, the dominant function of protest writing:-

is that of conscientization; of alerting its readers to certain states-of-affairs, and trying to inculcate a particular attitude toward those state-of-affairs, with a view to changing them.

Viewing protest writing from its conative or social function places the demand on the writer as well. It means that he must show commitment and involvement in the plight and the predicament of the people whom he represents because the conscientising function of his work or product is twofold: It is directed firstly at the victim, the protester who is alerted of the injustices done to him. Secondly, it is directed at the perpetrator of injustices.

Richard Rive (CORNWELL, 1982:184) expresses the following view which refers mainly to the aim of a particular protest poetry in South Africa. According to him, protest writing is:-

a writing that is addressed to a white conscience inside and outside South Africa on the moral responsibility towards oppressed Blacks.

Rive's view is based on the historical background of white dominance as experienced by many African states in the colonial era. It is therefore relevant only in its reference to the White Power and the Black Subordination situation as experienced during the apartheid era in South Africa. Considering the different forms and avenues in which the protest element can manifest itself, we find Rive's view falling short in the sense that it fails to consider firstly, the perspective of black-on-black power struggle, and secondly the nature of protest poetry in general.

Jane Watts (1989:29) regards the source of the protest element as being the imposition of unacceptable laws on the blacks by some white authority, and the result thereof being:-

a protest writing which voices the indignation and resentment of the majority of blacks towards unjust laws.

Not only does this writing speak for the oppressed majority of the blacks but, Jane Watts further adds that:-

it is also directed to the whites in an attempt to force them into recognition of the injustices and humiliation suffered by blacks... and once the powerful minority becomes aware of the situation, they would do something to improve matters.

Mbulelo Mzamane (1990:23) defines protest as follows:

a writing by the oppressed, to the readers from the ruling class in an attempt to solicit their sympathy and support against discriminatory laws and practices.

Rive, Watts and Mzamane refer to the literature of political struggle expressing a plight of an oppressed nation (Black) against the oppressing other (White). The references to “unjust laws”, “injustices”, “oppressed blacks” and “the white ruling class” all suggest the dominance-subjugation ideology which prevailed in the colonial era. They all raise the people’s quest for political emancipation from an oppressive white government. Considering Africa’s political history which has been shaped mostly by the Western invasion of Africa, it is not surprising that the issue of political protest dominate the definition of protest writing. This is further emphasised by Louis James (1969:109) who postulates that:-

in a situation as explosive as that of Africa today, there can be no creative literature that is not in some way political, in some way protest.

The “explosive situation” therefore leads to a general outbreak of protest literature against the effects of colonialism and related aspects of capitalistic exploitation. This state of affairs inspired writers to expose the African dilemma, and to express their aspirations for liberation. For example, in Eastern Africa, political protest against the occupation by the Portuguese and later by the Oman Arabs is heard in the Swahili protest of *Muyaka wa Haji* (NYAIGOTTI-CHACHA, 1987:51-52). In Western Africa, protest against the French invasion took the form of Negritude, a movement which aimed at restoring the dignity of the black race and culture, and which finds expression in the works of one of the best Negritude poets, Leopold Senghor (ELIMIMIAN, 1994:22). In South Africa, political protest is against the

system of apartheid brought by the Dutch-Afrikaners who took over the control of the republic. The rejection of the practice of apartheid is heard in the works of many black poets who use either English (CHAPMAN, 1982) and Afrikaans (LETSHOLO, 1993) as the most convenient way of reaching the intended audience namely the whites.

Ngg wa Thiong'o (1981:77) accounts for the dominance of the theme of political protest in African literature as follows:-

The situation, especially in the colonial era, compelled writers into a progressive ideological stance: they were swept off their feet as it were by the dynamic force and division of a total national liberation. Hence much of African literature was anti-colonialist.

From the historical references above, it is understandable why the theme of protest is assumed to refer only to the political aspect of the colonial era. While the assumption stated here is true, it would at the same time be improper not to perceive other forms of protest outside the political spheres. There are other institutions besides the government or political institutions, such as the church, the school and the society, at which protest can be levelled.

For the purpose of our discussion, Cornwell's (1982:184) view of protest writing in relation to its conative function is more appropriate in two ways: Firstly, it refers to all areas or forms of protest in general and not only the political area. Secondly, it helps to invalidate the general view similar to the one implied by some analysts like Albie Sachs (BRUTUS, 1993:101). At the conference entitled **"Making Literature: Reconstruction in South Africa", December 1-6, 1991,**

Sachs postulated that the passing of the Apartheid era presupposes the end of “resistance literature as broadly understood,” now that political salvation has come. Protest writing will continue to exist as long as man has an urge to write and express thoughts of dissatisfaction.

The following can be deduced from the definitions above with regard to the nature of protest writing in general:-

- the element of protest results from some form of imposition of some sort.
- protest is not only political
- protest is directed at an institution or a course, and
- because of its conscientising function, protest writing agitates for a change of disquieting issues.

2.3 FORMS OR AREAS OF PROTEST

The following is a brief discussion of the three areas of protest which will be evaluated in this study:-

2.3.1 Political Protest

Political protest voices the plight of the politically powerless people who aspire for liberation from the unjust demands and commands of an institution of political power. The imbalance of power yields tension and conflicts between the powerful and the powerless, the ruling class and the subordinate class.

In the case of South Africa, political protest emerged as a result of the apartheid policy whose application or practice by the whites dehumanised, oppressed,

discriminated, exploited and enslaved the blacks (EGUDU, 1978:46). The collective grief of the oppressed South African blacks is articulated in the works of committed political poets (CHAPMAN, 1986), like Oswald Mtshali, Mafika Gwala, Mongane Serote and many others who wrote in English.

2.3.2 Socio-cultural Protest

It is a challenge against unacceptable social and cultural practices within a community which are imposed on the people. Socio-cultural protest is an expression of a view of escaping from the cultural practices which deny the people a right to normal social life. The usual theme in which this form of protest manifests itself is one of traditionalism versus modernity or vice versa. The following are examples of socio-cultural protest in literature:

“A song of Protest” (MARGARET ORBELL, 1987:440-442) in which a young woman Tatai, defies her father and her tribe by refusing to marry the man they chose for her according to traditional customs.

Bessie Head’s character Dikeledi in the story *“The collector of treasures,”* challenges the social order of a community which has assigned its women a subordinate position under the control of their male partners (HARLOW, 1987:90). Protest against the upliftment of Western cultures by the elite black communities is one other form of protest as exemplified by Okot P’Bitek’s *“Song of Lawino.”* (NGARA, 1990:61) In this song, Lawino objects to the negative effects of neo-colonial education on the traditional African.

2.3.3 Religious Protest

Targeting institutions of religion, protest of this nature can be defined as a rejection of any religious doctrine imposed on the people who have been having their own traditional religion to live by. In South Africa and elsewhere in Africa, religious protest stems from the imposition of Christianity on the indigenous people while their traditional ancestral beliefs and deity are suppressed. Protest against Christianity does not only advocate a return to ancestral worship, but it also pleads for those who choose to remain atheistic. The main objection to religious institutions is ecclesiastical hypocrisy and deceit, as well as the use of Christianity as an instrument of oppression by the ruling class.

2.4 PROTEST POETRY

Protest poetry as a division of protest literature defined above, will also be viewed in this study as a work of art which expresses certain irregularities alerting the readers to such unaccepted situations so that a state of disquietude that leads to some kind of reform can be aroused in them (NTULI, 1984:134). While there are different channels through which protest can be expressed, the probing questions now becomes: Why protest in poetry or through poetry? The answer lies in Christopher Van Wyk's (COOVADIA, 1988:13) statement which views poetry as:

a weapon that can pierce and get to the bone quickly rather than a blunt instrument that bludgeons and leaves a mess - a bloody mess. And to write with a sharp instrument means writing articulately, employing all the skills of poetry.

What makes protest poetry to 'pierce deeper' than other genres is its cryptic and loaded mode of expression. Prose and drama unfold the themes openly in a straight forward manner while in poetry, words and expressions form a network of associations which communicate implicit information. It is the explicit manner of prose and drama which led generations of writers into bannings and exile for protesting against the South African government, or for violating laws which control the production of literature. Therefore, the implicit manner of poetry is the means of expression that would be least accessible to the arbitrariness of the censorship boards.

The cryptic mode of expression in poetry is not a new tradition in South African literature. Gordimer (1973:52) asserts that:

it has been resorted to in times and countries where religious persecution or political oppression drives creativity back into itself, and forces it to become its own hiding place, from which a voice that cannot be identified, speaks the truth in riddles and parables not easily defined as subversive.

In order to highlight the implicit communication of poetry, brief evaluations of the devices which help to render poetry less vulnerable and also powerful than prose will be outlined below:-

2.4.1 Techniques of expressing protest in poetry

The following techniques (some stylistic and some semantic) are cited here not as the only ones employed to convey the indirect and implicit message of poetry, but as examples to illustrate their effectiveness in expressing the theme of protest. They may not be employed in every poem of protest, but where they appear in poetry, they enhance its communicative impact.

(a) *Praising the defiant*

The protest element may be disguised by means of praising the heroic deeds of those who struggled for or with the downtrodden and the dispossessed. According to Mbele (1989:101), it is a technique of praising the outlaw, the one who defies authority. J.R. Ratshinga's (1988:49) poem "A Dirge to the Gods" is a typical example in which the living and the fallen heroes of the political struggle like Chief Albert Luthuli and Steve Biko as well as the martyrs of Sharpville and Soweto are praised. The praising of these heroes who defied the apartheid system, is an indirect attack of the system.

(b) *The praise denunciation technique*

The term 'praise-denunciation' is popularised by Mazisi Kunene (MBELE, 1989:101) and it involves the praising of a thing or a person against whom protest is directed. Derived from the oral poetry of the Qadi clan of the Zulus, this technique of praising a tyrant to survive tyranny has been employed even in written poetry.

(c) *Free form (projective verse)*

Protest poems written in unrhymed patterns and sometimes with an erratic typography are said to be free forms or projective verses. The artists do not indulge in too much poetic frills because the need to express or convey the message far surpasses the luxury of conventions. According to Olson (KELLMAN, 1990:45), the projective verses are also opposed to the traditionally inherited forms of lines, stanza and meter from the west. The use of a free form with loose structures is perceived as a calling for social liberation because a projective verse declares a linguistic protest against poetic convention, against established modes of poetic form and expression. (KELLMAN, 1990:45).

(d) *Repetitive devices*

Adopted from the African oral literature, this technique occurs repeatedly in protest poetry to reinforce a particular mood or an idea. The other function of repetitions is that of expanding and elaborating meanings and thereby enlarging the scope of ideas they are representing. In some poetry, these repetitive devices create a rhythmic beat which symbolise the stamping of the feet as it usually occurs with the dances to oral protest elements.

(e) *Tone*

Being one characteristic of discourse through which the writer reveal a range of attitudes (MURFIN & RAY, 1997:403), tone may be serious, sarcastic, mocking, threnodic or angry, and is often used in protest poetry to strengthen the speaker-poet's attitude towards the reader or the subject matter. For example, in poems with the *ubi sunct motif* that is, bemoaning "what used to be good and now gone or lost",

the tone of lamentation can be used effectively to express the poet's protest against "the present that is found to be abhorrent". Lamentation as Mulokozi (1982:36) asserts, has an element of protest because the poet-speaker expresses a "lack of the necessary power to influence or reverse the trend of events."

(f) Prolepsis or Anticipation

The technique is employed by protest writers to escape from the prevailing oppressive environment by creating a positive reality of the future. It is a dramatic and futurological leap into the future whereby:-

an event or action that is anticipated is treated as
if it has already occurred or is presently occurring,
even though this is temporarily impossible
(MURFIN & RAY, 1997:308).

This means that prophecy or anticipation is a skill that is used to depict the positive ultimate state of affairs after the present oppressive order or authority has been defeated or transformed. The effective use of this skill in protest writing strengthens the attitude of hopefulness in the mind of the oppressed by shifting their focus on oppression to focus on victory.

(g) Obscurity

In protest writing, language is the tool of attack against an authority which can retaliate more often with an action very detrimental or tragic to the author. There are also censorship regulations which can be employed to clamp down literature with a protest slant even before it reaches the desired audience. Obscurity, which

involves the use of abstract and indirect language, private imagery, unusual word ordering or neologism, is used by the authors of protest poetry to turn their poems into “hiding places as well as megaphones” (GORDIMER, 1973:52). This means that the poet hides behind words so as to evade the comprehension of censors.

(h) *Double entendre*

It is a skill whereby an author uses ambiguous expressions or phrases which carry two different meanings. Although it could be regarded as a flaw in ordinary writing, in protest poetry it is virtue. The poet, like in the case of obscurity, skilfully uses this technique, sometimes termed *ambiguity* (FOWLER, 1987:7) to convey a piercing protest message to the oppressor, and evade intimidation or victimisation by pretending to mean otherwise.

The above techniques are some of those that are usually employed in protest poetry. The effective use of some will be dealt with in Chapter 5 where Motlhake’s mode of expression is evaluated.

2.5 PROTEST WRITING IN AFRICAN LANGUAGES

Writing in indigenous African languages is still received with an air of condescension because there has been numerous assertions by various critics that literatures in such languages lack the element of protest that is experienced in literature by African writers in European languages. The idea that is common as Ruth Finnegan (1970:47) has observed is that African literatures consists mainly of childish stories and simple plots. It is true that the issues of a fundamentally political nature, as well as political protest have always occupied a dominant position in most works of committed African writers in foreign languages.

Nevertheless, it is a misrepresentation to regard the writings in African languages as “puerile, emasculated, inconsequential and irrelevant” (MTUZE, 1994:131) to the era of suppression and capitalism in which they existed as it has been commonly perceived.

The view that African languages literature is escapist has been spread by different popular yet untrue convictions of various critics who have often scorned it as being oblivious of issues of political nature; and that the authors thereof have isolated themselves from the pressing political problems of the times. The result of their isolation according to one of Kiswahili literary critics Kelizahabi (MULOKOZI, 1982:30), is literature that is only “characterised by a general obedience towards the ruler and the state institutions.”

Leshoai (MILUBI, 1988:199), concludes that writers of African languages literature write for schools and therefore produce peripheral literature which deals with trivial and non-controversial issues which are intended to place them safely on the right side of the law. In her interview with Granquist and Stotesbury (1987:78), Miriam Tladi dismisses writing in South African black languages for two reasons: Firstly, it is the issue of language itself. She maintains that protest writing in an indigenous language would not reach the cosmopolitan audience of the city township. Dwellers of city townships are mostly multilingual therefore we find this reason incompatible with the real situation at hand. The second reason is that writing in black languages is only meant to serve the demands of the government which also controls its production; and to prop up the system of Bantu Education. This reason is too facile a way out because the theme of protest in these languages has long been expressed before and even during the era of Bantu Education. Tladi's sentiments are shared by Lewis Nkosi (WESTLY, 1992:163) who has also written off vernacular writing as follows:-

It is a government controlled childish spinoff of the despised 'Bantu Education' literature for the inferiority.

This means that vernacular writings are considered void of the protest element and are of an inferior quality. Another view that scorns vernacular writing for failing to resonate the agonies of the political order and sticking only to the metaphysical issues is that of Ezekiel Mphahlele (KUNENE, 1991:44) who has dismissed it as "anaemic writing that is meant for juveniles".

It is a fact that an oppressive government controls the production of literature to safeguard its commercial and ideological interests. The control is made possible because the very government assumes the middle position between the artist and his audience namely, the readers thereby monitoring even the content of the finished product. But this does not mean that the state, in the case of South Africa, did succeed in its endeavours to force African writers to adhere to 'harmless' plots of obedience to authority and those of the "urban-nightmare and retreat-to-homeland" also despised by Ezekiel Mphahlele (WESTLY, 1992:163) in indigenous languages writing. Despite all the stringent conditions which the writers have been subjected to, despite all the censorship regulations which have been established to emasculate their writing, authors have gone far beyond the peripheral issues they are being ridiculed for writing about.

In re-evaluating the entire issues of the state's demand that the authors write on non-controversial themes and plots, the questions to be posed now become: Does the author's writing on non-controversial issues, and their failure to write truthfully in pursuit of justice for the oppressed masses or negation of the existing unrealistic order, not reveal anything controversial about the state or government that controls the production of literature? Has writing in indigenous languages of South African

in particular not given out more and sharper insights into the moving spirit of the apartheid era?

The answer to these questions lies in the statement by Jane Watts (1989:39) concerning criticism of art for being non-political:-

The criticism that sees literature as innocent and natural, is in fact making a political statement; its refusal to meddle in the political arena or to consider the social and historical implications of a work of art is actually tacitly condoning the *status quo*... a lack of political concern is also a political statement.

According to this statement, the failure of the artists to expose burning issues of their times is a form of protest, a silent protest whereby the urge to speak out the grief is suppressed for fear of victimisation and not for pleasing the oppressors. Usually, it is the political conditions and not the authors, that normally dictate the content of literature to some extent. In the case of South Africa, the involvement of the government in the production of literature has contributed negatively to political protest writing. What vernacular writers can be commended for is that despite the restrictive and stringent laws of publications, they have managed to address the crucial issues that concerned the liberation of the masses both politically and morally. Therefore, instead of criticising vernacular literatures for being emasculated and irrelevant, the critics could be more concerned about why there is little protest writing among African writers.

One of the major factors which threatened the survival of protest literature during the apartheid system was institutionalised censorship. This not only meant the

banning and banishment of protest writers by rule of law, but it also meant that their works as Barnett (1983:8) laments, were not going to be read or distributed, and they would not be quoted. To avoid victimisation by censorship laws, many writers resorted to self-censorship that is, the use of obscure techniques of writing that will enable them to protest without being restrained. Two of the skills used commonly to evade censorship board are “aesopic writing” and “acquiescence”. Engaging in aesopic writing means to “write within one set of category, knowing that the readers will realise that he is referring to another” (GORDIMER, 1973:52). Acquiescence on the other hand means that an author operates from “an invidious position of cooperating with a system which he abhors” (BARNETT, 1983:8).

On the basis of the above, we would like to argue that the theme of protest does exist in African writing. This can be illustrated by the following examples of protest writing in languages (other than Setswana) of Southern Africa: In Lesotho, Mrs N.M. Khaketla has written many protest poems cited by Kunene (1991:45) such as “**Molelekeng**” (*chase-him-away*) which was composed after her husband was expelled from his teaching post for political reasons, and which objects to his harassment at that time. In Xhosa, Siyongwana’s novel (MTUZE, 1994:130) namely “**Ubulumko bezinja**” (*the cunning of the dogs*) is said to reflect on ‘the iniquities of inequality, injustice and deprivation in the current socio-political order’. In Venda, Ratshitanga and poets belonging to a group of artists called Guyo (MILUBI, 1988:207) such as Nthambeleni Phalanndwa and Gundo Lidovho are said to have made strides in composing poems of protest.

2.6 PROTEST IN SETSWANA LITERATURE

In the case of Setswana, instances of the protest theme has been explored in both traditional and modern literature.

2.6.1 The theme of protest in traditional literature

(a) *Proverbs*

Proverbs are described in Reader's Digest Great Illustrated Dictionary (1984:1363) as follows:

a short pithy sayings in frequent and widespread use, expressing a well-known truth or fact.

Not only do proverbs express the facts truthfully, but they are also used to summarise or defend an idea that would otherwise be expressed in many words. Used in certain circumstances, these traditional maxims also serve as foundations on which protest is based. For example:-

Pelo e ja serati, sebatlelwa ga e se je
(*A heart only takes what it loves*)

This proverb is a premise on which the theme of social protest to unjust cultural practices is based. It is an expression of rejection by a targeted party towards what it is forced to take and to abandon what is desired.

Phokojwe ya tshela molatswana, ntšwana
(*A jackal, once it crosses the river this way, it becomes a dog*).

The proverb carries political undertones of rejection of foreign self-imposed authority by indigenous people. The message here is that those who are in control in their territories, cannot necessarily be in control in others. This means that any

invasion of the local structures of leadership by foreign authority would be met with protest as it presupposes subjugation of the invaded party.

(b) Folktales

Among the various functions of oral narratives as they occur in traditional societies, according to Neethling (1996:49), protesting is one other function which is manifested in folktales. He further states that:-

Protest is usually expressed by “the younger, the weaker, the insignificant and the slower against the more illustrious adversaries proving to be powerful and victorious.”

An example of a tale depicting an element of protest is “**Mosadi a iphetola tshwene**” (*A woman turned herself into a baboon*) in Pitso and Sepeng's “**ADitlhangwa tsa Segaetsho**” (1989:31-33). This tale represents a feminist outcry against polygamy and against the way men treat women as inferior. In this tale, a married woman objects to her husband marrying other women. The husband, with his authoritarian and superior status, disregards his wife's plea and marries again. In protest, the wife leaves him and stays in the forest where she turns herself into a baboon, an animal which depicts the ignorance which her husband sees in her. The cause for her protest is in the piece of song she sings for her daughter Mosibudi:

Haai! haai! haa-i! Mosibudi, Mosibudi! x2
Ke reile rraago, Mosibudi, Mosibudi
Ka re a se nyale lefufa, Mosibudi, Mosibudi

Lefufa le thata Mosibudi, Mosibudi
 Rraago a re ga ke itse sepe, Mosibudi, Mosibudi
 Ke fa ke tla go ngwega, Mosibudi, Mosibudi
 Ke bo ke aga le ditshwene, Mosibudi, Mosibudi.
(Hey! Hey! Hey! Mosibudi, Mosibudi! x2
I told your father, Mosibudi, Mosibudi!
He must not marry two women, Mosibudi, Mosibudi
Polygamy is hard, Mosibudi, Mosibudi
Your father says I know nothing, Mosibudi, Mosibudi
That's when I ran away, Mosibudi, Mosibudi
And settled with the baboons, Mosibudi, Mosibudi.)

In this song, the blame is placed on the husband who was adamant on polygamy and refused to listen to his wife's view. Therefore, this tale, and many of its kind, represent "a distinct protest against male dominance and authority, or conversely, a protest against the lack of status and power in society" (NEETHLING, 1996:52).

(c) Songs and lullabies

Traditionally, songs are sung for various reasons like entertainment, easing a labourious work, whiling away time and soothing aching emotions. But they can be used to vent complaints about unacceptable socio-cultural practices. The function of such protest songs is stated by Ruth Finnegan (1970:275) thus:

They communicate with someone in
 power in a way by which they hope to
 influence, while at the same time

avoiding the open danger of speaking directly.

What is further indicated by Finnegan is that these songs make it possible for a singer to speak out publicly that which cannot be said directly to a perpetrator or a violator of the singer's rights. 'Someone in power' referred to in the quotation may mean a chief, spouse or any order or institution of authority against whom protest can be levelled. The traditional worksong by Batswana women, "**Mampe mpelegele ngwana**" (*Mampe please carry this child for me*) is a typical example of a protest song remonstrating against the migratory labour system and its effects on the destitute and helpless wives remaining at home.

♪Mampe mpelegele ngwana yo ke a lema
Ke lema ke le nosi
O a mpona ke a lema
Ke lema ke le nosi
Monna o ile dikomponeng
Ke lema ke le nosi
Ke tlhoka le monna go ntemisa
Ke lema ke le nosi. ♪
(*Mampe carry this child for me I'm ploughing
I am ploughing alone
As you can see me, I am ploughing
I am ploughing alone
My husband is gone to the mining compounds
I am ploughing alone
I have no man to help me plough
I am ploughing alone.*)

This is a traditional song popular among the people of Phokeng, a village in the North West Province of South Africa. In this song, although protest is implicitly against her husband's stay at the mine compounds without coming home to help plough the fields, deep beneath the song, there is also a strong sense of determination to survive regardless of the constraints.

The lullabies too can be outlets of expressing social injustices by traditional child-minders. In addition to serving as means to lull children to sleep, these songs are also used to complain about the employer's inhumanity, exploitation, poor administration and other unacceptable attitudes with the hope that once heard by the relevant audience, the unfortunate position of the singer would be improved. A protest element is evident in the following lines of a lullaby (MOGAPI, 1991:117)

Antuntulele, kgaotsa nnaka
O tla belegwa ke mang, kgaotsa nnaka
Mmaago o a timana, kgaotsa nnaka
O tima babelegi, kgaotsa nnaka
Babelegi koma, kgaotsa nnaka

Antuntulele, kgaotsa nnaka
O tla belegwa ke mang, kgaotsa nnaka
Mmelegi o a rekwa, kgaotsa nnaka
O rekwa ka serope, kgaotsa nnaka
Serope sa namane, kgaotsa nnaka
(Sleep baby sleep, be still young one
Who will take care of you, be still young one
Your mother is very stingy, be still young one
She gives child-minders nothing, be still young one

Child-minders are invaluable, be still young one
Sleep baby sleep, be still young one
Who will take care of you, be still young one
A child-minder needs to be paid, be still young one with
be paid with a thigh, be still young one
With a thigh of a calf, be still young one.)

Instead of singing for the child to be quiet, the child-minder is pouring out her complaints about the mother who in terms of the content does not pay well and lets the child-minder starve.

2.6.2 The theme of protest in modern literature

(a) Prose

As far as the socio-political protest in Setswana novels is concerned, R.M. Malope's (1980) *Matlhoko, Matlhoko* (*The agony of agonies*) and G. Mokae's (1997) novel *Masego* (name of titular character), are examples *par excellence*. The fact that the former got banned by the then Department of Education and Training as per correspondence of the Setswana Language Board (MATHULE, 1983) further attests to its success in portraying the abhorred practices of apartheid in various spheres where it occurred. (*A copy of the Mathule correspondence appears at the end of this chapter*). In this tragic novel, Malope portrays the ugliness of apartheid through Mpotseng's experiences of urban life. In the latter, Mokae also depicts the struggle of Black people against apartheid. The story centres around a Black woman who is a victim of both social and political oppression.

(b) *Drama*

Gaetsewe's (1965) drama "*Botsang Rre*" (*Ask my father*) a translation of W. Thamsanqa's "*Buzani kubawo*", is a reflection of a silent protest and resistance against certain socio-cultural practices in a society torn between tradition and modernity. In this tragedy, Boikobo expresses his protest by ultimately killing the woman he was forced by his father to marry, because his father disapproved of the woman he loved to marry. A similar theme of protest is also evident in J.M. Ntsime's (1969) drama "*Pelo e ja Serati*" (*A heart only takes what it loves*).

(c) *Poetry*

Protest against exploitation of black farm labourers and mine workers by farm owners and the capitalists respectively, is depicted in N.G. Mokone's (1943:59) poem "*Selelo sa Motsadi*" (*A mother's lament*). Written long before the birth of the Republic of South Africa in 1961, this poem appeared in the children's reader *Montsamaisa bosigo* (*My escort through the night*), which is why it escaped the notice of censorship boards and screeners of the past.

"*Boikuelo jwa bosadi*" (*A plea from women*) by Kitchin (1949:121), articulates protest of women against sexism. J.S. Shole's (1979:24) "*Thulamotse-Selelo sa Khuduga*" (*The bulldozer: the grief of forced removal*) poignantly portrays the painful experiences of the victims of forced removal from their land of birth. In "*Masaikategang a Sharpeville*" (*The naked truth about Sharpeville*) a poem by C.L. Thobega (1984:112), the speaker comments on the brutal killing of the people at a peaceful protest march in Sharpeville against the carrying of passbooks.

The above examples clearly indicate that Setswana literature, like any other African language literature, has not divorced itself from the realities of its times. The only injustice done by critics of African literatures is to evaluate them by standards set down by Western critics. To this, Selepe (1993:60) warns:

to try and look at African literature in terms of how it fails to meet the imposed standards of Western literary traditions ... and to specifically emphasize that failure, will be to miss the point.

For a proper evaluation of the protest theme in African languages, literature must be looked at from the point of view of what it is, and not how it differs from the other protest writings in European languages.

2.7 CONCLUSION

After an attempt was made to define and to delineate the characteristic of protest writing, attention was also given to the main specific areas of protest which are to be evaluated in this study namely: *Political protest, Socio-cultural protest and Religious protest*. This was done in order to determine the extent to which the theme of protest has manifested itself in African languages. Examples were also drawn from both the oral and modern literature in an attempt to assess and confirm the existence of protest writing in Setswana amidst numerous assertions on the contrary. From the definition of the protest literature, it has been deduced that the role of an artist in an oppressive place is to sensitize and to sharpen the response of his audience. In the ensuing chapters, Motlhake's role in conscientising his audience through his poetry will be evaluated.

6/2/2

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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- 7 MAR 1983

The Secretary
Department of Education
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SUBMISSIONS ON NOVEL MATLHOKO, MATLHOKO BY R.M. MALOPE :
REJECTION BY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING :

1. The abovementioned book was reviewed by the Setswana Language Board during its meeting of 3-6 February 1981, held in the In-Service Training Hall of the Department of Education, Imperial Reserve, Mafikeng, and was recommended for school use for Standards 9 and 10, Junior Secondary Teachers' Course and Senior Secondary Teachers' Course.
2. During the 1-4 September 1981 meeting, the Setswana Language Board prescribed the said book for Standard 8 for 1984, and during its 14-16 September 1982 meeting prescribed it for P.T.D. I Courses for 1985.
3. In his letter No. 22/1/5/6 dated 26 October 1982 to the Secretary for Education, Bophuthatswana, the Director-General, Department of Education and Training, RSA, said the book MATLHOKO, MATLHOKO "is unsuitable for prescription due to the treatment of:

2/...

black and white relations, e.g. p. 29;
labour relations, e.g. p. 17;
housing, e.g. pp. 9 and 10;
police, e.g. p. 13 and
education, e.g. p. 36, etc."

4. On the strength of paragraph 3 above, the Director-General, therefore, substituted the book MATLHOKO, MATLHOKO by Mokoma-ditlhare by L.D. Raditladi, Educum, for Standard 6 in 1984 and by Molema, Ngaka Modiri by M.O.M. Seboni, Better Books, for the P.T.D. I courses in 1985.
5. In a Memorandum No. 6/2/2 dated 9 February 1983 to the Setswana Language Board, the Secretary for Education, Bophuthatswana, informed the said Board that the book MATLHOKO, MATLHOKO will stand prescribed for the Standard 8 Examination of 1984.
6. After a very long discussion on this issue, the Setswana Language Board, in its meeting of the 22-24 February 1983, instructed me to lay its case before you, Sir, so that you plead with the Director-General, Department of Education and Training, on its behalf, for the re-consideration of the rejection of the book MATLHOKO, MATLHOKO by R.N. Malope, and its ultimate prescription for the said Standards.
7. Attached hereto please find two copies of ANNEXURE A and ANNEXURE B as submissions from the Setswana Language Board.

R. Mathule
.....

SECRETARY : SETSWANA LANGUAGE BOARD
/RMT

CHAPTER 3

POLITICAL PROTEST

3.1 PREAMBLE

Political protest refers to an expression of an objection to, or a condemnation of any idea, law or policy that has been put into effect by institutions of authority, which result in a violation of the civil rights of some people. It is an outcry of those who are held in subjugation, those who aspire for political emancipation. An environment of political emancipation according to Miliband (1977:10) refers to a situation free of oppression where all enjoy civil rights equally, where there is extension of suffrage; and where the arbitrary state power does not exist. In an oppressive type of rule or government, the basic civil rights are enjoyed only by the ruling class or a class of authority. It is not surprising therefore that verbal activists like poets express the anguish of the politically powerless sector through their poetry. By sounding a cry of anguish, this poetry firstly intends to appeal to those in power to heed the plight of the oppressed with the hope that the oppressive system can be transformed. Secondly, it is intended to awaken and to conscientise the victims of such oppressive conditions, thus instilling in them a determination to resist oppression.

As stated in the introductory chapter, political protest poetry in South Africa has manifested itself as a response to white oppression in the form of the apartheid policies. Instituted by the white rule to extend its hegemony, apartheid enforced separation of Blacks and Whites in every sphere of their existence. Not only were these two races separated, but they were also placed in unequal compartments. The White race which is in the minority, enjoyed all the privileges while the blacks, who

are in the majority, were regarded as inferior and deprived of all the benefits. Integration of the Blacks and Whites was prohibited by rule of law to ensure the continued inferiority status of the Blacks. Various other prohibitive laws, according to Mehta and Narang (1990: 8-12), were also promulgated under the apartheid regime and these include among others: *the Bantu Education Act* which restricted the “Bantu” as Blacks were called then, from pursuing certain qualifications which were meant to be acquired by Whites. The syllabi of the Bantu Education system were also narrow in the sense that they only were intended to channel blacks into jobs of servitude or of inferior quality; *the Group Areas Act* which provided for the grouping of the Blacks into ethnic groups and to remove them from rich environments to remote places in order to make land available for whites. The Blacks had no power or representation to contest their forceful removal from their land of birth as there was also the *Prohibition of Interdict Act* which denied them to file any protest against the state in any court of law in case they resisted their illegal removal from their places of settlement. Apart from prohibiting the blacks to fight for their rights, the act was used as another means of disempowering them. Because they had no powers, their removal from the place they call home to strange and remote places, was not regarded as a violation of any of their rights by the all-white government, but an act of strengthening and preserving its hegemony. There was also the *Separate Amenities Act* which ensured that Blacks do not share amenities with the Whites: they were to attend separate schools, have separate places of worship, eating and playing. They even had to be buried in separate cemeteries. *The Immorality Act* prohibited love or marriage between Blacks and Whites and outlawed it as immoral and as an act of miscegenation.

In the following clear impression about the white-dominated South African government, Paton (EGUDU, 1978: 46) describes some of the mental and physical pain suffered by the Blacks under apartheid:-

the whites appropriate all the mines and force the blacks to do the mining work, in the law court the blacks are made to sit separately from the whites, and to enter and leave the court by a door different from that through which the whites enter and leave ... Above all, the government is made up only of white people, with the result that the blacks are kept in perpetual bondage in their own fatherland.

The quotation above sums up the fate of the blacks who are helpless before an unrelenting system of apartheid. Their land is expropriated, their own indigenous culture undermined, they are subjected to hard labour and are discriminated against. Here, the painful reality of the situation is that the landowners, the natural inhabitants are turned into strangers, and the strangers in South Africa have become landlords. It is because of these act of inhumanity that verbal artists like poets, novelists and dramatists have used their work of art to give realistic and factual impressions about the ills of apartheid. One real aspect about apartheid is that it was not experienced as a monolithic phenomenon, in other words, it was not just a single block of one concrete element. It was a multi-faceted system of the colonial movement.

comprehending in one breath, oppression, discrimination exploitation, enslavement and estrangement. (EGUDU, 1978: 46)

A closer analysis of the facets stated by Egudu leads to the conclusion that "enslavement" and "estrangement" are included under "oppression/ exploitation" and under "discrimination" respectively. A slave is a helpless victim of some dominating influence, who has to drudge with limited or no leisure. On the other hand, because of discriminatory policies which not only discriminated the blacks from the whites but also segregated the blacks into their various ethnic groups,

estrangement resulted. Therefore, instead of the five facets of apartheid observed by Egudu, we have come to a conclusion that the main features of apartheid are three namely, *discrimination, economic exploitation and political oppression or repression*.

Motlhake is one of the few writers in Setswana who have responded to these political issues in the form of protest poetry. The poems which explore the theme of protest in this chapter are:

Letlalo	<i>(The skin)</i>
Moepong	<i>(At the mines)</i>
Dipolaseng	<i>(On the farms)</i>
Boruti	<i>(Priesthood)</i>
A re tla gola?	<i>(Will we ever grow up?)</i>
Moreri	<i>(The preacher);</i>
Montsho	<i>(A Blackman)</i>
Molao	<i>(The law)</i>

Only the relevant parts and not the whole poems will be analysed to emphasise a particular aspect of the theme. This is in exception of the poem “**Molao**” (*The Law*), which will be analysed in its entirety under 3.4. The poem, which is an attack on draconian laws, is short enough to be given full analysis.

3.2 DISCRIMINATION OR RACIAL SEGREGATION

As outlined above, discrimination refers to a statutory or social division of people according to race. Apart from its meaning of institutionalised division of races, discrimination also refers to the unfair treatment of people as a result of colour

prejudice. In South Africa, the division of white and black races mean that the blacks were all regarded as inferior to the white population in all respect and that included education, job efficiency or material possession. Further to that, blacks would always be discriminated against and remain inferior irrespective of educational qualification, social status or religion. They were all denied opportunities and privileges not because they are incapable or inefficient, but because of the colour of their skin. The above situation is depicted in the poem “**Letlalo**” (*The skin*):-

Nna ke bolawa ke mala
Fa ke akanya ka mmala
Letlalo mogatsa mmala -
Ra bolawa ntle go kgala.
*[(As for) Me, I experience stomach pains
Whenever I think of the colour issue
To which the skin is regarded the spouse. -
When we got killed with utter callousness.]*

Had the word “**Nna**” (*I*) at the beginning of the stanza been left out, the sentence would still have been complete and the meaning still be clear. But by adding this personal reference, the speaker intensifies the situation by personalising the experiences of discrimination. He is not only expressing the collective feeling of the voiceless people he is representing, but he presents himself as one of the victims who have had bitter experiences of racial discrimination. For this reason, the use of “**Nna**” (*I*) further emphasises the experience by bringing in another dimension namely, as if to say: “If to some people this is nothing to complain about, to me it is quite painful.”

The expression “**ke bolawa ke mala**” (*I experience stomach pains*) which is the resultant reaction whenever the thought of the association of skin and colour occurs to the speaker, carries the connotation of undesirability and agony. Just like in the normal digestive system where discomfort and displeasure are caused by unacceptable elements ingested, so is racial discrimination depicted as something that ruins the normal human system of existence. This alludes to the fact that whenever a thought of skin-and-colour comes to the speaker, the reaction is that of pain and agony.

The pain and the agony expressed are further captured by the last two lines of the stanza which decry the system of colour-bar. The colour at issue is not specified but considering the South African political situation under which this poem was written, it no doubt refers to the blackness of the skin that will make the life of a black person very cheap at the hands of the white person:

Letlalo mogatsa mmala -

Ra bolawa ntle go kgala.

(The skin to which the colour is regarded the spouse -

We got killed with utter callousness.)

There are only two colours to which the skin can be classified in terms of the apartheid system and that is black and white, the skin colours of the oppressed and of the oppressor respectively. Therefore, the image of stomach pains (**go bolawa ke mala**) is the indictment of the authority for the institution of colour-bar.

Displeasure with the colour issue is further voiced in other poems like “**Moepong**” (*At the mines*) “**Dipolaseng**” (*At the farms*); “**Boruti**” (*Priesthood*) and “**A re tla gola?**” (*Will we ever grow up?*) where the domineering white people are constantly

called by terms of colour like “**Tshweu**” (*whities*) and “**Mosetlhe**” (*Mr Paleface*). These are not terms of praise, but of contempt and disparagement which are directed at the white race who perpetrate this evil of colour-bar. In “**Moepong**” (*At the mines*), the opening lines of the fourth stanza reads:

Tshweu di re baa selekanyong
Re latlhegetswe tlhe ke moko
(*Whities put us on scales*
Oh, we have lost our being)

These lines condemn the whites for destroying the morale of Black mine workers as a result of weighing their worth. The idiom “**go baa selekanyong**” (*to put one on a scale*) does not only mean to evaluate a person’s suitability for a job aspired, but also to look down upon a person and to regard him as being worthless. In this regard, it is the black mine workers who are degraded by the whites. They are depicted as helpless and powerless at the hands of the provider of jobs, namely the whiteman. It is the voice of despair sounding off an outcry about the colour-bar in a working environment especially the mines.

In the farming situation, the issue of colour is expressed in the following lines of “**Dipolaseng**” (*At the farms*)

Kgomo e **tshweu** mongaba
Batho ba tshela ka legaba
(*The **white** milk cow won’t let its milk*
So the people live in starvation.)

In these lines, a white farmer is not only referred to as “**kgomo e tshweu**” (*a white milkcow*), but a milkcow which is also “**mongaba**”, meaning a cow that holds back its milk. The descriptive noun “**mongaba**” is derived from the verb “**ngaba**” which means to hold back something from the people, with full knowledge of how valuable that thing is to them. Milk cows are usually tended very well in order that they reward the tenders with milk. It is ‘evil’ of the cow not to let its milk because in the end, “**batho ba tshela ka legaba**” (*people starve*). Therefore, the metaphor of “*the cow which wilfully holds back its milk*” refers to the white farmer who would not give a living wages to the black farm labourers who work very hard for him. It is a scathing attack on the issue of the exploitation of the blacks by the whites.

Motlhake’s poetry also comments on the issue of colour in the religious and the socio-cultural aspects of the Blackman’s existence during the colonial movement in South Africa. In the poem “**Boruti**” (*Priesthood*), the fifth stanza condemns the cunning nature of the white missionaries who brought “**Lefoko**” (*the Word/ Bible*) supposedly to convert blacks whereas in fact they used it for their own material enrichment and political dominance.

Lefoko thipa ya magagane
 Letlhale le betlola ka yona
Mosetlhe, o kgotse o re jele
 Leba gae sebefa, o jakile
(The Word, a double-edged knife
The cunning one reaves with it
Mr Paleface, you’re gluttoned for feasting on us
Revert home ugly one, you have amassed your riches)

In this stanza, the speaker remonstrates against the use of the Word/Bible by the whites, not only as an instrument to devastate (**betlola**) the blacks, but as a device of defrauding them for personal gain (**go jaka**). To defraud the blacks here does not necessarily mean to dispossess them materially, it also means to strip them of their whole self, and to perpetuate their inferiority to the whites even in religious circles. The direct command for the white man to go in "**Leba gae sebefa o jakile**", (*Revert home you ugly one, you have amassed riches*) depicts the deeper aspiration of the victim of discrimination to have a transformed social and political order. The connotation is that once the white man goes, there would be no exploitation or discrimination of people by their colour.

The poem "**A re tla gola**" (*Will we ever grow up?*) objects to the invasion of the black man's cultural life by **mosetlhe** (*Mr Paleface*):

Ga go senyege ting fela
Batho ruri ba a senyega
Dilo di tlišwa ke mosetlhe
Botshelo bo ntshwa makgethe
*(Tis' not only the sour-porridge paste that ferments
Humanity really does ferment too
Bad things are brought by Mr Paleface
The true values of life degenerate.)*

This stanza bewails the degeneration of the Blackman's cultural values after he absorbs *'the things brought by the whites'* (**dilo di tlišwa ke mosetlhe**). The image of "things being brought by the Whiteman to the blacks" does not refer to the ordinary giving-and-receiving activity, but in reality carries the connotation that the whites were imposing those things on the powerless recipients. Therefore, as a

result of the imposition of the Whiteman's values on the blacks, their reaction is that of rejection because their humanity as well as traditional norms are devaluated. The stanza is an attack on the superiority of the western cultures above the indigenous ones and at the same time, a call to the blacks to reclaim their lost dignity and to ensure that valuable African life is restored and kept alive.

These excerpts from Motlhake's poetry as analysed above highlight the collective reaction of the blacks to institutionalised discrimination in general. The underlying feeling depicted in all the examples is that of the black man's aspiration for political emancipation and the curbing of the division of skin colour into black and white.

As racial discrimination has been entrenched in different ways, the following discussion will evaluate those specific areas to which Motlhake's poetry has responded, such as the issue of job reservation, the inferior status of education, political disempowerment, physical abuse, and seizure of land and its resources.

3.2.1 On job reservation

Brandford (1987:154) in the *Dictionary of South African English* defines job reservation in general terms as follows:

to impose restrictions against employment of blacks in
wide range of better-paid jobs.

Kavanagh (1985:34) on the other hand is more specific and describes it as a system which is applied.

the restriction of certain kinds of employment to

particular racial groups: especially that of the skilled trades to members of the white groups.

Kavanagh's definition in particular points to the fact that it is the black racial group of South Africa that has been discriminated against when skilled jobs are allocated. What is meant is that in the economic world, good occupations are secured for the whites while the blacks on the other hand are "placed in vast categories of cheap labour" (KAVANAGH, 1985:33). The poem "Moepong" (*At the mines*) is a response to such practices in the mines:

Motho o newa selekanyo,
Bathapi ba ila letlhale -
Tiro di ajwa ka mmala
Fatsheng la Fanakaloo -
Go tshelwatshelwa mašwi tlhoa.
*(A person is given limits,
The employers hate the clever one -
Jobs are allocated by skin colour
In the land of the Fanakaloo pidgin -
Where milk is sprinkled with whey.)*

In this stanza, the voice representing the black mine workers objects to the unfair labour practices in the working field. By "tiro di ajwa ka mmala", it is meant that in giving out jobs, the colour of the skin and not the competence of a person, is the deciding factor. Apart from discrediting a job seeker on the basis of colour, there is also a white employer's attitude of hate towards an enlightened clever black worker as indicated by the line "bathapi ba ila letlhale". This leads to a conclusion that an enlightened, educated or probing mine labourer poses a threat to the

discriminative industrial situation there. The amount of threats which such a labourer may pose are not mentioned, but their number is suggested by the note sign (-) at the end of the second line which signal the speaker's reluctance to elaborate on them for fear of censure. One of such threats would probably be that such a labourer would influence the less enlightened fellow workers to challenge the mining/ corporate establishment.

The expression "go newa selekanyo" means that the black person is restricted to lower forms of labour and excluded from jobs of higher level which are reserved for the privileged white race. It also means that a worker is subjected to such difficult working conditions that he would not be able to assert himself. These restrictions may vary from barring them to demand better working conditions to the restriction to complain or to strike for parity as regards salaries between the black and white workers. In the context of what has been explained above, it becomes clear that this poem opposes the system of job reservation and job restriction practised by the whites at the mines, a place called by a derogatory name of "fatsheng la Fanakaloo" (*The land of Fanakaloo*). Fanakaloo is a despised pidgin language which was used in the mines of South Africa to facilitate communication between different nationalities. To the blacks, Fanakaloo is an abhorrence because when it was designed, the heterogeneity of the ethnic groups of Africans was ignored. It is detested because it was made by people who maintained the purity of their languages, and on the other hand encouraged the death of the indigenous African languages. To the speaker, the mine is nothing but an abhorred place where the spirit of Africanism is buried. The last line of the stanza namely "go tshelwatshelwa maši tlhoa" (milk is being sprinkled with whey) further emphasises that mines are places where goodness is destroyed.

3.2.2 On the inferior system of education

Motlhake's protest poetry also respond with despair, anger and rejection to the discriminatory and inferior nature of *Bantu Education*. Enacted in 1953 by the all-white Nationalist government, Bantu Education is a system of education which has been designed only for the blacks with an intention of producing them for a wide range of unskilled and low-paying jobs. Because of its dehumanising evil intentions and the shortsightedness of its content, this system did not equip the black child with any knowledge that would grant him economic independence. This is endorsed by the oft-quoted statement of Dr HF Verwoerd (KAVANAGH, 1985:33) who was once the Minister of Bantu Education to the effect that:

... there is no place for him (the Bantu) in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour.

The statement above supports the policy of Bantu Education, a policy whose intention was to provide an inferior education that would "stand and have its roots in the spirit and being of the Bantu society" (KAVANAGH, op.cit.)

The poem "**A re tla gola?**" (*will we ever grow up?*) not only comments on the destruction of African custom by the whites, but it also criticises the inferior educational fed to the black children:

Fa dithuto di tlhela
Bana ba rutwa matlakala
Go jalwa mokolonyane
Thutokgolo ya majakana
(*When proper lessons are not available*)

*Our children are being taught trash
Ranking cassias are being sown
Which is the main education offered by white gold diggers.)*

The main thought bewailed in this stanza is that black children are being deprived of good quality education. “**Matlakala**” (*trash/rubbish*) here refers to the worthless teaching the children received from the White missionaries whom Motlhake “**Majakane**”. The speaker further equates their teachings with the act of sowing stinking-bush weeds (*go jalwa mokolonyane*). Like “**mokolonyane**”, this education is repugnant, and its products are characterised by depending on others. As the name indicates, this bushy-weed stinks, and once mature, its seeds cling on to anything that passes nearer it. This implies that the inferior education ‘stinks’ because its graduates are not known for self development and economic independence, but remain in low-paid jobs which they have been produced for. The missionaries as Christian agents architects of this valueless system of education are given the derogatory name of “**majakana**” (*golddigger*) because their aim is to enrich themselves at the expense of the black nation which they keep unskilled.

3.2.3 Land dispossession

The term “dispossession” already presupposes a situation of dominance - subjection, a situation where one class has power to dispossess the other. By land dispossession in this sub-section we refer to an action whereby the white authorities take land owned by the blacks with very little or no form of compensation. When this happens, the powerless and dispossessed people are sometimes removed to remote places where they are to start life afresh, sometimes under testing conditions. Whether the land is seized for reasons of industrial development, or for consolidating one race in an area to be vacated by another race, the pain of

dispossession remains devastating. The pain mainly derives from the victim's powerlessness to reverse the decision of the authority, or to claim what has been 'stolen' from them. The poem "**Moreri**" (*The Preacher*), which attacks the white missionaries for coming to the blacks (Africa) with an economic rather than a religious motive, also comments about the issue of land 'stealing':

Magodu a rona ke a magolo!
Moutswilefatshe, o nonofile.
Bangwe ga ba lekanwe ke manno,
Mongwasa o rothile madi;
Bareri ba tl'a retolosa matlho.
(Those who steal from us are of great standing!
You stealer-of-land, you are powerful.
Some of them become restless,
When the cat is let out of the bag;
To this, the preachers would turn a blind eye.)

The stanza illustrates the cruelty with which land is being seized by those in power from the owners, as well as reveals the pain of the powerless victim. Although "**moutswilefatshe**" (*the stealer-of-land*) is presented as powerful, he is also ridiculed for conducting his action in a cunning manner, that is, above the suspicion of the victims. With the tone of despair, the speaker agonises about the preachers who are on the side of the thieves of land in that when their evil actions are exposed, they (preachers) protect them by turning a blind eye ("**ba retolosa matlho**"). Another dimension of the speaker's pain is the fact that the missionaries are also the allies of the colonial regime.

3.2.4 Physical abuse

In a situation where there is inequality of power, one superior class tend to entrench superiority by applying cruel and inhuman practices to put down the inferior class and to keep it there. One of such practices is physical abuse which means a purposeful infliction of bodily pain to someone else, while the perpetrator is protected by a system of policies which prohibit the victim from instituting any claim against such an act.

In the South African situation, physical abuse of black people refers to an action where they were brutalised and cruelly treated at the hands of the minority white government. In Motlhake's poetry, the victims of physical abuse are mostly the members of the unskilled labour sector namely mine workers, farm labourers and domestic workers. There, the white masters subject them to hard labour accompanied by severe beatings and brutal assaults which are at times fatal. These acts of brutality are performed by the whites without showing any remorse or sympathy, because to them a black person is sub-human.

The last line of the opening stanza of “Letlalo”, exposes the atrociousness of the whites:

Nna ke bolawa ke mala
Fa ke akanya ka mmala
Letlalo mogatsa mmala -
Ra bolawa ntle go kgala
*(I experience pains in my stomach
Whenever I think of the colour issue
To which the skin is regarded the spouse -
When we got killed with utter callousness.)*

In the last line, the voice laments a life of a black person which, to the whites, has become so cheap that it is destroyed without any fear of doing evil. Semantically, the term “go bolawa” has two meanings namely the “termination of life”, and “subjection to extreme physical torture or strenuous labour”. In “ra bolawa ntle go kgala” (*we got killed without feelings of shame*), whichever meaning is attached to “go bolawa” the statement points to the fact that in the whites-only government, such acts of killing a black person are done with utter impunity and callousness.

The poem “**Montsho**” (*A black person*) comments about the callousness of the whites when killing a black person.

Bangwe ba bolaile matswalo
Go peela mongwe a nyelela.
O gasamololwa ka magasane
Sethunya se tsokoletswa legano.
*(Some bury their own consciences
So they dance as someone dies
He is blown by a hail of bullets
An excuse being that this was merely cleansing the gun mouth.)*

These lines above indicate that a black person's life is indeed cheap to the whites. The idiom “go peela” does not only mean to dance, but it refers to a dance of negative victory, a dance performed where evil has conquered good. Dancing when someone has died therefore implies that life of the dead is worthless to the dancer. This is made clear by the last two lines where the shooting of a black man is explained with flippancy as a way to clear the breech of a gun of excess bullets!

The expression “go tsokotsa legano” means to rinse the mouth cavity by swashing water therein and spitting it out thereafter. Where the water that has to be spitted about lands does not matter, what is important is that the function of cleansing has been performed. The metaphor of “rinsing the mouth cavity of a gun” therefore, exonerates the killer with a flimsy reason that the victim was on the way of the excess bullets when the gun was being cleaned out. The truth about these brutal killings of the blacks is that they would have no visible effect on the humane sentiment of any authority because the government too was all white.

Of all of Motlhake's political poems, none captures the evils of the apartheid system and its inherent acts of brutality experienced by the blacks more than “Montsho”. The immediate effect of the repeated rhetoric question:

O itseng ka go nna Montsho?

(What do you know about being black?)

is to strengthen the certainty and the authority with which the speaker knows and shares the sufferings of the black people to his interlocutor. His (speaker) reassuring responses after every rhetoric question being “Ke tla go bolelela o botsa” (*I will tell you if you ask*), are also used effectively to bridge the gap between the speaker's life and the actual experiences of the blacks. In this poem, the speaker has presented himself as one of the victims whom he represents.

The whole poem is the speaker's indignant response provoked by what seems to have been a prior statement, probably by a white man proclaiming knowledge about being blacks. It is a dramatic monologue in which the speaker, who is black, pours out his inner emotions about the plight of the black man, to the tongue-tied white listener implied by “go” (*you*) in “Ke tla go bolelela fa o mpotsa” (*I'll tell you if*

you ask me). The “silence” of the speaker helps to build up the mood of anger and to accelerate the movement of a poem to a climax. The build up towards a climax is also intensified by the effective manner in which the line “**Ke tla go bolelela fa o botsa**” (*I’ll tell you if you ask me*) has been varied after every repetition of the rhetoric question “**o itseng ka go nna montsho?** (*what do you know about being black?*). In its first position, the line sets to unfold by way of introduction, what being black actually entails. In the second variation, emotions are raised as more anguish of the blackman is exposed:

O botsa, ke tla go bolelela ...
(*as you are asking, I’ll tell you*)

The attend sequence of the words in the line now intensifies the speaker’s emotions in exposing even more atrocities experienced by the blacks because the line suggests that there is much more that can and will be exposed. The climax is reached with the last variation:

Ke go boleletse o botsa
(*I told you, as you asked me*)

This line is effective in that it leads to an anti-climax where the emotions are returning to normal and the outbursts are kept under control. This is evident after the last but one rhetoric question where anger has given way to despair, and the truth is summarised in two separate lines expressed with pathos:

Montsho sekai sa bolala ...
(*A blackman, a symbol of servitude*)
and

Montsho sekai sa tlala -

(A blackman, a symbol of hunger.)

“**Montsho**” can be called an exposé of the apartheid system. It is about the fate of a black person in a white man's hostile world in general, and about his life of terror as a farm labourer in particular.

Voicing the plight of the labourers, the poem delineates types of physical abuse in the following lines:

O tshameka ntšwanyana bosigo

mong a ile ka dikgotshane

O tšhematšhema pele a pitse

Rotwe a kokoretse godimo

O rafa semane le re tsee!

Bagoma ba tlhabile mangole.

(A black man plays puppy at night

While its owner is sleeping in peace

He trots briskly to lead a leashed horse

While the baboon bull is perched on its back

He fetches honey in the scorching sun

while the despots relax on their backs.)

The acts of physical abuse are outlined in the first, the third and the fifth lines where the black labourer has to guard his master like a dog at night, to hold a leash and lead a horse mounted by his master; and to charge bees' nest in search of honey for the masters. What makes the situation more heartrending is the fact that while the labourers carry out such chores which also put their lives in danger, the masters are

either sleeping, sitting or lying on their backs. The metaphor of “**rotwe a kokoretse godimo**” (*a big male baboon perched on the back of a horse*), is the speaker’s expression of anger towards the master who is also perceived as being uncultured and as ugly as a big male baboon.

The same mood of complaint is noticeable in the following lines which outline some humiliating jobs that deny the black man adequate rest of the body:

O thimotsa ntsi ka seditse
Kobo e hunolotswe segole
*(He wards off the flies with a whisk
When it is time for relaxation.)*

Because of this subjugation, the black labourer is made to do inhuman jobs such as to whisk pestering flies from the master. The idiom “**go hunolola kobo segole**” (*to untire the girdles knot*), which is said to be done by the whites means more than ordinary relaxation. In this instance, it refers to a relaxation where the white folks freely indulge in easy talk and laughter as they also strengthen their social relationships, and all this happens while the servant is not allowed any rest. In these lines, the speaker paints a picture of South Africa’s policy of racial inequality whereby a member of an inferior race lives close to humans, that is, people of the superior race, yet he is regarded subhuman; he lives close to food, yet he dies of starvation.

Another act of brutality which outrages the speaker in this very poem is that of chastising a parent in front of the children as indicated below:

O tsubulwa ka sankotwana

Barwadio ba go bogetse.
*(You are snatched by your legs and
thrown to the ground to be trashed
In full view of your own daughters.)*

Here the emphasis is not only on the thrashing, but on the manner in which the action is performed namely “**go tsubulwa ka sankotwana**” . The idiom actually means assaulting someone, overpowering and throwing them face down on the ground so that they are severely lashed on the backside. The manner of assault already presupposes the severity of the physical punishment that the victim is to be given, considering his powerlessness against the master's position of power. Lashing a family man, culturally the head of the family the provider and the protectors, in front of his daughters is humiliating and disdainful to him.

The same debasement of an adult's image and dignity is voiced in the third stanza of “**Dipolaseng**”. Here, a mother, a domestic worker, together with her daughter are flogged for the mistake as minimal as burn bread by leaving it too long in a kiln.

Motsadi o dira mo kitseng
O koname le morwadie
Ba otlwaotlwa ka thobane
Senkgwe se šwetse mo song.
*(A mother is working in the kitchen
Toiling strenuously alongside her daughter
They are repeatedly flogged with a rod
For leaving bread to burn in the kiln.)*

Apart from exposing the white man's ingratitude to the people who have spent all their lives exerting their physical strength (**ba koname**) for his comfort, the punishment of a mother, a woman old enough to be having a working daughter, indicates the long periods of physical abuse which the black domestic workers have endured at the hands of the white masters. For a woman to work on the farm and to raise a daughter who ultimately works alongside her on the same farm, signifies those long periods of torturous enslavement of the blacks by the whites under an unrelenting demon called Apartheid.

In the two examples from “**Montsho**” and “**Dipolaseng**” above, both the physical and the mental pains suffered by the blacks are brought together in order to intensify their anguish. The somatic or bodily pains have been suffered from the beatings and the assaults while the mental pains are the ones which have been inflicted in their spirit by acts such as humiliating and devaluating a parent in front of his/her children.

3.2.5 On disempowerment

According to the *Reader's Digest Great Illustrated Dictionary* (1984:554), to empower means “*to invest with legal powers*”. This means to bestow legal powers upon an individual so that they can make decisions and take actions which are acknowledgeable before the law. Conversely, to disempower an individual would therefore mean to restrain or to divest them of any power, be it the natural power endowed in them to control their own destiny, or the legal power bestowed upon them by a rule of law.

As it has been mentioned elsewhere in this study, most basic rights of the black South Africans were subverted after the Nationalists took power. This happened

because a series of laws were enacted to force the blacks into a subordinate class, a class in which they were to live under systems of intimidation and terror. They were terrorised because the rigid and prohibitive laws denied them basic human freedoms, and that includes the fact that they had no power to lodge a complaint against a white person or the state; power in the legislature; and the power to own property. The worst aberrations of all is that the blacks, especially those of the unskilled labour sector, possessed no power over their own selves; they were owned by the white masters. On the other hand, these whites unleashed their fiendish cruelty on to them that only terror and intimidation reigned in them. It is against this background that the last lines of “Montsho” laments that loss of power:

O pakang ka bana ba thari?

Ba tshositswe bogologolo

Tshogo la agela maleng.

(What testimony can you give of children of the black race?

They have been intimidated from a long time ago

And terror settled for long in their stomachs.)

On the surface, these lines express despair as a result of the black man's power that has been curtailed by the onset of the apartheid system. Underneath lies a feeling of rage and fury which brings forth a yearning to regain the power which the whites have taken for so long and were unwilling to share it.

Imagery and symbols are combined to convey a feeling of anger towards disempowerment and dispossession of the blacks in the following lines of “Montsho”:

Ditsagago ke ditsababangwe

O tswa katse, gare ga dinkwe
*(Your belongings are somebody else's
You become a cat among the leopards.)*

These lines sound the plight of black farm labourers who after drudging for the farm-owners, are depicted as impoverished, not only in spirit, but materially as well. The situation is that they virtually own nothing because everything they work hard for, is taken from them. No image is more potent for what it can tell the reader of the evils of political disempowerment than the image of “**katse**” (*cat*) and “**nkwe**” (*leopard*) in the second line. These two animals are members of the feline family just like the blacks and the whites belong to the human race. But, a cat is inferior when compared to a leopard because even in African tradition, a leopard (“**nkwe**”) is associated with kingship or chieftainship. A leopard skin is donned as a symbol of superiority by chiefs at different traditional ceremonies as well as in the ritual of the enthronement of chiefs. On the other hand, a leopard is bigger and stronger than a cat. Therefore, the idiom “**go tswa katse gare ga dinkwe**” (*to become a cat among the leopards*) paints a better picture of that lost power lamented by the blacks. A leopard, with its power symbolises the whites and the emasculated black people are symbolised by a cat.

In the following lines of the same poem “**Montsho**”, the speaker portrays another dimension of disempowerment where a black labourer's mental capacity is regarded as being so inferior and inadequate that when it comes to serious discussions and reasoning, his level of intelligence is equated to that of a dog:

Thero di tsewa, o romilwe
Montsho, ntšwa ga a na maele.
(When negotiations are entered into, he is sent away -

*A black person is a dog,
there is nothing substantial he can contribute.)*

In the lines above, the speaker is full of anger, an anger which stems from outrage. He is angered by the barrier which has been erected by the South African political system between the black and the white races - the barrier which renders the black race less intelligent and less capable to participate in serious talks than the white fellow countryman.

The blackman is not only depicted as being physically imprisoned in the white man's world, but as being also mentally imprisoned because he possesses no power to rule his own life. He can neither choose to enter into negotiations held by the masters, nor disobey the degrading instruction given him like "go tsoma kgokong" (*hunting a wildebeest*) when talks are to take place. The following lines of the same poem repeat the same frustration and anger expressed above:

Banna ba tsena mafokong
O rongwa go tsoma kgokong
*(When men are about to commence with serious talks
He is sent away on a wildebeest hunt)*

Just as in the case where the disempowerment of the blacks is indicated by the animal images of "the weakness of a cat as against the might or the power of a leopard" above, the speaker paints another picture of disempowerment by means of the term "banna" (*men*) which is used here to refer only to the whites. The fact that white males are called "banna" (*men*), suggests that the black males are some insignificant beings with less power and intelligence than men, meaning that they are boys. To be sent on an errand as tedious as hunting a wildebeest does not only

ensure the black man's non-participation in the talks, but it also ensures his exclusion physically from the talks. Under the prevailing circumstances, this exclusion is made for the purpose of maintaining subjugation.

During the apartheid era, the blacks were not empowered to own houses. The situation was appalling in places of employments like the mines and the farms where they were housed by their job providers either in mine compounds or the master's backyards respectively. The poem "**Montsho**" portrays this situation as follows:

O nna ntlo ka kwa morago
Jaaka koloi ya molelo
*(He stays at the back of the house
Just like a motor vehicle)*

"**Ntlo**" (*the house*) here refers only to the white man's house. The simile of "**jaaka koloi ya molelo**" (*just like a motor vehicle*) is effectively used to indicate the political and economical imbalance of power between the blacks and whites. The speaker's power in expressing protest is not only on the emotional intensity with which he conveys the realities, but also on the sincerity in which these truths or realities are recorded. The historical fact about the black people's degraded existence in the master's yard has also been supported by Mehta and Narang (1990:12) who also claim that during apartheid, the blacks "were even expected to approach a whiteman's house from the back door." Blacks own nothing materially, and like vehicles kept at the back of houses, they are owned by the whites and kept in the back yard. In general, this is an attack of a system that has denied the blacks to own property, ironically in South Africa, a country where property was valued by the whites above all else. It is also a criticism on the white society as it is clear

that they did not function by morality and compassion but by power and their love of money. Keeping a labourer in a place as easily accessible as the master's backyard is not for his comfort. He is there as an economic necessity that is, to be readily available to toil and sweat for him (master).

3.3 ECONOMIC EXPLOITATION

In this subsection, exploitation of man by man refers to “the utilisation of a person for one's own ends” (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 1929:366) This means the utilisation of one person by the other, for selfish and unethical purposes of self enrichment. In other words, it is a situation in which someone from a position of power or control, makes his/her subordinates to perform for him, work that would benefit them more than the workers. In South Africa, after the founding of the Union of South Africa in 1910, the indigenous people had lost all their pre-colonial rights like the right to own land or to land occupancy as well as other powers mentioned in the preceding sub-section. Among a myriad of apartheid laws which fostered the subordination of the blacks, were those that prescribed that:-

The non-white population would remain a source of labour, as cheap as possible, as mobile as possible in any ways. (PIETERSE, 1973:2)

This means that the policy of exploitation was proclaimed and endorsed by the ruling white government. The whites occupied the upper ranks of the economic ladder while the blacks, from the position of sub-ordination, laboured to produce surplus value for the capital. In Pieterse's quotation above, to render work 'as cheap as possible' means to work very hard for very less income, while working 'as mobile as possible' means that the exploiting capitalist is granted a right to move the

labourers to any place where they can be utilised to his advantage. Places where the exploitation of the blacks reign supreme are the farms, the mines and white residences.

Works of art containing protest against exploitation therefore are those which indicate the wage-earners' complaint about the capitalists who demand more work but offer earnings which are at the lowest ends of the income scale.

3.3.1 Exploitation of farm labourers

The poem “**Montsho**” (*A Blackman*) exposes that exploitation of the black farm labourers by the farm owners thus:

Mašwi ke tlhoa le kgatsele
Go phimola sethitho sa beke
*(For milk, he gets whey and beatings
To wipe off the sweat of the whole week.)*

These lines satirically comments on the issue of economic exploitation. “**Sethitho sa beke**” (*sweat of the whole week*) is a parody of “the sweat of the brow” as it appears in the book of Genesis 3:19 when God pronounced judgement on Adam and Eve. Here it is figuratively used to refer to the salary for a week-long drudgery of a farm labourer.

The severity of the situation becomes deeper when what is being earned, namely, “**tlhoa**” (*whey*) and “**kgatsele**” (*beatings*), is compared to the period (which is a whole week) of drudgery spend to deserve that. Being rewarded with whey and beatings instead of real milk after a strenuous exhausting labour that causes sweat

to be exuded, indicates that the labourers are not receiving the wages that correspond with the much effort they exert. The image of “tlhoa” (*whey*) is symbolic of the leanness of the wages since whey is void of nutritious substances which can be obtained in whole milk.

The abhorrent system of exploitation is again articulated in the following line which satirises the lack of parity as regards the earnings for the proletarians and those who own and control the means of production. The line is from “Montsho” and the complaint is that:-

O tsiroleletswe, batho ba fiwa
(*He is given a pinch while the people are given plenty.*)

The tone of anger and frustration in this line is intensified by the effective use of contrasting idioms namely “go tsirolela” and “go fiwa”. Both idioms mean “to give”, but the contrast in them lies in the manner and the spirit in which the act of giving is performed. “Go tsirolela” is to give out something so small that its quantity cannot be measured, and with an evil intention that the thing given can hardly satisfy the needs of the receiver. The fact that the blacks are given a little while the whites get anything in abundance, says a lot about the issue of exploitation and the distribution of wealth. The gravity of the matter is clarified in the use of the term “batho” (*the people*) here, and in the whole poem to refer to the whites, as though the blacks are things less than humans.

In the poem “Dipolaseng”, the speaker rejects exploitation because it is tantamount to penal labour or penal servitude, “go kweba” which means working as if it is a compulsory labour done to serve some form of punishment. This is true because farm workers are made to do labourious tasks which include “go pura mebofu” (*to*

milk the cows), “go bolola natso” (*to drive them to grazing fields*) and “go dira mo kitseng” (*to work in the master’s kitchen*), yet these are all done “ntle go tefa” (*for no wages at all*). The third stanza commends as follows about exploitation of many by another:

Rre o pura mebofu
Modisa o bolola natso
Ke kweba ntle go tefa
Dimense tsa ga oubase
[My father milks the cows
The herd boy drives them to grazing fields
I toil for no wages at all
The “mense” (people) of the “oubaas” (old boss)]

This stanza gives another despicable dimension of exploitation in the farms and that is: regardless of the peoples’ ages, they all suffer the same fate at the hands of the farm owners. “Rre” (*my father or any elderly man*) is a term of respect in the African culture, but to the exploiting capitalist, a black person is nothing else but a source of labour and a producer of wealth. There is no regard for his age or his status as the head of a family. He and all the other members of his family are the master’s possessions as it is indicated satirically in “**Dimense tsa ga oubase**” (*The people owned by the old boss*).

The devastating nature of unfair labour practice is again ridiculed in the fourth stanza of the same poem:

Kgomo e tshweu mongaba
Batho ba tshela ka legaba
Bana ba tshwarwa ke bololo
Ba ngaela ka mefokolo

*(The white cow holds back its milk
The people are left starving
Children develop itchy sores
and whine painfully after contracting diseases.)*

Here, the attack is directed at the selfishness of the farm owners who expect and receive good service from the labourers, but give them nothing to survive by. The metaphor in the first line is very effective because just as the milk cow holds back its milk, so does the farm owner who overwork the labourers and holds back the good wages which they deserve. Anger is not only sparked by the exploitation of the adult labourers, but by the effects of such an inhuman practice on their offsprings. Because of the lack of enough wages for a good living, children of the exploited develop painful sores called “**bololo**” which is a disease of the skin caused by the insufficient intake of nutritious food.

The contempt with which the speaker views the more-job-for-less-pay practice upheld by the farm owners is reflected in the last stanza of “**Dipolaseng**”:

Re letse re sule bokidi
Motsadi a tla ka mabifi
Rre a bega setlhabi
Le khuduga mafelo a kgwedi
*(We were benumbed by shock yesterday
When mother returned home cursing and swearing
My father reporting about the ache he feels
and our eviction by the end of the month.)*

The stanza condemns the cheap labour system practised for prescribing good health as a prerequisite for continued stay and labouring on the farm. Ageing workers like a woman who now works with her daughter in the kitchen, and those suffering ill-health like a father who has been milking the cows and leading them to graze, are dismissed from the farm. The fact that the father reports two painful subjects simultaneously namely, an aching body and an order to move from the farm, indicate that the former led to the latter. Notwithstanding the fact that these families have lived for years on the farm, as soon as they are rendered unproductive due to age or disability, they are evicted to make room for stronger and healthier ones. The eviction of labourers at will by their employers or farm owners alludes to the fact that property rights of the poor is more overlooked and more trampled upon. Because the labourers have no property of their own, they only stay on the farms for as long as they are economically productive. Their existence on the farm depends entirely on the farm owner. On this painful situation, Sachs (1992:69) too portrays the labourer's uncertainty about his place of stay because they can even be evicted by "any person who happens to buy the land on which they are living." Not only does this statement attack the system of exploitation of labourers *per se*, but it is also an appeal for the granting of property rights to all citizens equally.

3.3.2 In the mines

In the poem "**Moepong**", the voice is that of a partisan, speaking on behalf of the anguished mine workers.

Tshweu di re ba'a selekanyong
Re latlhegetswe tlhe ke moko
Tumoga tsa go jara thoto.
Motsing re tla bo re tlha

Batho ba tla lela ditlhaa.

(The whites put us on scales

Oh, we have lost our essential being

We male donkeys, beasts of burden

The day we get our independence

People will cry very bitterly.)

The animal metaphor of “**tumoga**” (*male donkeys*), and not ordinary male donkeys but those that are beasts of burden and draught, expresses more strongly, the speaker’s indignation about the inhuman system which presents the blacks as being reared for the purpose of producing wealth for the whites. On the surface, the direct comparison of man and an animal reared to transport heavy loads and effects, lashes out at the corrupt system of using political power to gain substantial wealth. The deeper meaning expressed by the image of an animal like a donkey is insulting and disparaging. Using a male donkey has three connotations: Firstly, it reveals the black man’s pain of being viewed as having a low level of intelligence since a donkey is figuratively associated with stupidity and ignorance. The agonising fact implied is that the “whities” (Tshweu) are aware of what they are doing and that they would continue doing it because the image created of the blacks is that they are naive, docile and stupid to be aware of the injustices done to them. Secondly, it reveals the long period of silent protest which could not be voiced out because the victims have been muted by law of man, just as donkeys have no speech by law of nature. Lastly, the sex of a donkey being male, symbolically depicts the mine as a place of men only who because of the migratory labour system, have left wives at home (**Batho ba tlogetse basadi**) referred to in the third stanza.

The tone of disenchantment discerned from the stanza above does not only indicate the yearning of the mine workers to free themselves from exploitation, but it also

conveys a deep feeling of anger filled with a determination for a revenge once political emancipation is attained. The vengeful ire is expressed in the last two lines which warn that:

Motsing re tla bo re tlha

Batho ba tla lela ditlhaa

(The day we clutch (get hold of) power

These people will cry till their jaws ache.)

“**Batho**” (*the people*) is used here sarcastically to refer to the perpetrators of justice because they have relegated the victims to the status of a beast of burden and draught. Whether the article “**bo**” (*it*) in the lines above stands for “**bogosi**” (*supremacy*) or “**boipuso**” (*self-rule*), it refers to power, whose attainment is awaited with resolve and vengeance. On attaining victory, the Blacks intend to mete out the severest of retributions to the white oppressors.

3.4 REPRESSION AND POLITICAL OPPRESSION

By repression we refer to a system where an authority formulates and uses ill-intended legislation to restrain or suppress the freedom of some individuals in order to protect the status quo. To control, limit or suppress a person’s democratic freedom is in itself, a gross violation of human rights since the very system forces them to accept without protest, the deprived status they are prescribed to hold, as well as the inhumanities unleashed at them.

It has been said earlier in this chapter that in the case of South Africa of old, various restrictive laws were made in order to regulate and to monitor every aspect of the black people’s existence. These laws restricted the people they were made for in

that they denied them the rights to secure homes as well as the rights to live in conditions of basic decency. To deny the black people the basic rights of human existence, and to prohibit them from asserting themselves, can be viewed as the white government's intention to weaken black opposition and to silence the suppressed majority. In a situation like this, poems of protest become the voice of the voiceless as it is confirmed in the evaluation of “**Molao**” (*The law*) below.

The poem “**Molao**” is a direct result of the black man's rebellion against a rule of law. The poem is very short, only four couplets, but the impact of its aggressiveness far outweighs the form in which those strong emotions of aggression are conveyed. Although it is very short, there is much that it suggests because even though it is written in singular, that is “**molao**” (*a law*) and not “**melao**” (*the laws*), it displays a wide sense of plurality. It is one of the poems which are classified as having a virtue of occupying more space in the mind than on the page. From the first stanza of this poem to the last, protest is evidenced in the speaker's tone of anger which spells his refusal to succumb to a law that is imposed on them:

Molao ke phologolo ya kae
Go ntlama o sa dirwa gae

Gantsi molao ke matlakala
O tlhaga le phefo kgakala

Melao e e tletseng lehufa
E roba nong diphofa

Molao ga o direlwe batho
Batho ba itirela molao

*(Whence comes this beast called law
That it binds me and yet it's not home made?)*

*More often law is a lot of trash
Being blown hither by a wind from far/
When it is blown hither by a wind from far*

*Laws borne of jealousy and ill-feeling
Clip the wings of a vulture*

*Laws should not be made for people
People should make their own laws).*

The attitude with which the speaker unmasks the irrationality and the inhumanity of a law is that of anger and bitterness. His resentment for a law that is formulated for ill-intentions is clarified by words of enragement namely “**phologolo**” (*beast*) and “**matlakala**” (*trash*) which are used to refer to a law in the first and second stanzas respectively. Apart from using metaphors which denote anger, the speaker further confirms his bitterness by the repetitive use of the word “**molao**” (*a law*) in every stanza including the title. This repetition serves to emphasise to the reader or listener, the extent to which the phenomenon called *law* is loathed. It is by this anger that the movement of the poem is kept alive, and the theme of protest accentuated. After a general attitude towards a rule of law has been portrayed, a thematic analysis of individual stanzas would be appropriate.

The first stanza comments about the inhuman nature of a law imposed upon the people. The speaker defies and ridicules a law by using an image of “**phologolo**” (*a beast*). The metaphor of not only a beast but “**phologolo ya kae**” (*a beast of an unknown origin*) is used effectively for two purposes: Firstly, it establishes the

distance between two different things namely, man and animal, and between humanity on one side and the inhuman practices of an imposed law on the other. It is used as if to proclaim that 'a rule of law belongs with animals and not with humans'. Secondly, it is used by extension, to convey emotions of anger and humiliation: Anger because a law is made somewhere there, and humiliation because such a foreign law is now brought here to bind and to dictate, (*"go tlama"*), the innocent victims. The juxtaposition of contrasting words *"kae"* (*whence*) and *"gae"* (*home*) further sentences the objection inferred above because naturally, that which is strange, foreign and unknown is inclined to be rejected as compared to that which is from home, because home means acceptability, familiarity, security and value.

The whole stanza is a rhetoric question posed not to solicit response, but laid to caution the victims and the law-imposers that an ill-intended law made by some party of authority for a subordinate party, is a violation of human rights. This means that the right of the subordinate class which include the right to be heard, to make submissions and to contribute in the law-making process was disregarded. There is a call to defy draconian laws.

The indignation of the speaker portrayed in the first stanza, is continued in the second. Here, the rejection of a law is conveyed through images of *"matlakala"* (*trash and rubbish*) and *"phefo"* (*wind*) which both suggest destruction. Rubbish destroys the beauty of the environment, and the wind destroys harmony and stability. While the expression of "trash being blown hither by a wind" seems superficial and very ordinary, deeper beneath it is an expression of anger that discredits a law for its irrational nature, and also exposes the inhuman nature of the legislators. The blowing of rubbish unto the people by an ill-wind, is a referent of those lawmakers who impose ill-intended laws on the people of less power.

Read from another point of view, with the accentuation of “ó tlhágá” (*when blown hither*), the meaning embodied in the second stanza changes from that of being general to being more specific:

Gantsi molao ke matlakala
Ó tlhágá le phefo kgakala
*(More often law is a lot of trash
When blown hither by wind from afar)*

These lines indicate that even though an imposed law may be as repugnant as rubbish is to human, not all imposed laws fall within this description. Paternalistic laws imposed some people may not be rejected like it would be with ill-intended laws. It therefore becomes clear that protest in this poem is directed at those laws that are made for the sole purpose of repression like those referred to in the third stanza as “melao e e tletseng lefufa” (*laws born of jealousy*). The expression “laws born of jealousy” is all-embracing and refers to laws made in order to banish, to oppress, to invalidate, to mute, to destroy or to limit the freedom of someone innocent simply because the lawmaker resents them for being free, powerful or prosperous.

The third stanza clarified the speaker's resentment of an ill-intended law by stating the unpleasant effects of such a law on the powerless subjects:

Melao e e tletseng lehufa
E robaka nong diphofa
*(Laws born of jealousy
Clip wings/feathers of a big bird)*

The complaint is that prohibitive laws “**e robaka nong diphofa**” (*clip the wings of a big bird*). To a bird, wings are used to fly and to escape from danger, to immigrate to the land of plenty or to please of suitable climate, to protect itself and its sound, to soar to limitless heights and sometimes to flap them to warn others about danger.

This stanza constitutes the climax of the speaker’s protest against an ill-intended law because it stipulates all that is destroyed when such laws are enforced, and that is “clipping the wings of a big bird”. On the other hand, flying is associated with freedom and liberation. Therefore the clipping of the wings is the speaker’s analogy of “suppressing a person’s freedom” or preventing him from pursuing his ambitions.

Another dimension from which the third stanza can be viewed is that the expression “**go robaka nong diphofa**” means to deplume a bird or “to strip it of its feathers”. Used figuratively, this expression means to strip an individual of their honour and dignity. Therefore, the concern in this stanza is not only the suppression of freedom of the powerless, but their degradation as well.

The use of “**roba**” (*clip*) in its extensive form “**robaka**”, which means that an action is performed roughly and carelessly, is sufficient to reveal the speaker’s resentment. The word “**robaka**” contains the harsh proposition that the clipping is done repeatedly and mercilessly without displaying any sympathy to the victims.

In the final stanza, the speaker releases his emotions by strongly proclaiming that

Molao ga o direlwe batho
Batho ba itirela molao
(*Laws should not be made for people
People should make their own laws.*)

The viewpoint gathered from the speaker is that people cannot have a moral obligation to obey a law that they did not participate in its formulation. In order for them to accept and obey a law, they should be allowed to make their own laws or to contribute in the law-making process, instead of laws being imposed on them. The truth about the matter is emphasised by the use of the antithesis that is, the contrasting of ideas expressed in both poetic lines of the stanza. The first line starts with “**molao**” (*law*) and ends with “**batho**” (*people*) while the second reverses the sequence by starting with “**Batho**” (*people*) and ending with “**molao**” (*law*). The juxtaposing of these seemingly incompatible words “**Batho**” (*people*) and “**molao**” (*law*) forces the reader to focus more on the gravity of meaning created by their exchanged positions. The meaning expressed here is that law is not made for people but by people. This may be seen as an appeal to those in power to transform the system of a unilateral formulation of laws, into a democratic system where all the people participate. “Government must be of the people, by the people, for the people”.

3.5 CONCLUSION

From the comments made in this chapter, it can be deduced that the theme of political protest whose presence has been confirmed in Motlhake’s poetry is a very broad subject. Although an attempt has been made to cover various avenues of political protest in Motlhake’s poetry, this chapter is in no way an exhaustive treatment of the subject. What can be confirmed with the above analysis is that Motlhake’s poetry is relevant and significant in the context of the apartheid era, and its relevance as an expression of protest, is not diminished by the passing of that era. It serves as a record and a reflection of the experiences of that period, and it remains to be a contribution to the universal campaign against the global evils similar to those suffered under the old South African government, which still occur in varying forms and degrees in other parts of the world.

CHAPTER 4

SOCIO-CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS PROTEST

4.1 PREAMBLE

This chapter aims at evaluating the theme of protest in the cultural and religious aspects of man's social life, and to examine how the said themes have found expression in S.F. Motlhake's poetry. From the evaluation in the previous chapter it should be clear that political protest has enjoyed more prominence above any other theme in African literature. This is so because it addresses a national struggle, that is, it expresses a major outcry of one people against subjugation by another, while the other forms of protest mostly address issues within one particular society. But the fact that one form of protest is viewed from the national level and the others from the societal level does not diminish the essence of protest in the latter form. In fact, it does happen sometimes that the political situation influences or is brought to bear on instances that form subjects of socio-cultural and religious protest. The fact that missionaries mostly happen to be white and sympathetic to white oppressors, exacerbates protest against religion from the west.

Protest in the socio-cultural and religious fields is about the conflicts and frictions between two cultures, two moral positions or two religious convictions as a result of the one party refusing to conform to the values endorsed or imposed by the other. These categories of protest are not particularly new notions as they have always been characteristic of African writings. Their occurrence can be confirmed in the three themes mentioned below, which according to Gordimer (1973: 8) are some of the main themes she identified in African literatures. These themes are not only confined to prose and drama, but also feature in poetry:

- (i) in the theme concerning the black man's contact with the white man's culture, the conformists of traditional African values may protest against acculturation. Examples of this type of protest may be found in poems where there is an attack on European social and cultural values which go against the African traditional codes of behaviour like the poems **"Moepong"** (*At the mines*) and **"Goreng ke sa nyale?"** (*Why don't I get married?*).
- (ii) in the Return-of- the-been to theme which focuses on the return of a character who has been exposed to and has assimilated foreign or European culture a social protest may be from the foreign culture converts who challenge the African traditional way of operation. In the illustration of this theme in poetry, the poem **"Bomatlhw'adibona"** (*victims for ever*) is an example *par excellence*.
- (iii) in the Ancestors-versus-Missionaries theme, religious protest is prompted by the African traditionalists' resistance to the imposition of Christian religion on them. Poems which illustrate this form of protest are **"Boruti"** (*Priesthood*), **"Moreri"** (*The Preacher*) and **"Tlhabologo ya Bophirima"** (*Western Civilisation*).

In this chapter, the two categories of protest namely the Socio-cultural and the Religious protest will be discussed separately in the different sub-sections. Every sub-section will begin with a brief general background on the nature of the subject, followed by the analysis of the relevant texts from Motlhake's poetry.

4.2 SOCIO-CULTURAL PROTEST

As mentioned earlier, socio-cultural protest expresses an objection to any social order or practice, whether such an order is an ancestral bequest honoured by the society itself or is a foreign practice adopted through contact with other cultures. Selepe's (1993:48) explanation on the nature of cultural conflict and protest is very enlightening. According to him, cultural protest comes to exist when:

one culture tries to maintain its dominance
over the other, while the other tries to rid itself
of such combination and to re-establish itself.

As a matter of fact, the origin of cultural struggle in African literature can be traced back to the era of colonisation. After their occupation of the African continent, the colonisers embarked on the campaign of superimposing their western culture on the indigenous ones which were branded inferior and barbaric. As a result, many indigenous people were influenced to adopt the western culture, while some remained attached to traditional values and resisted the foreign influence. Those who held on to traditional norms were therefore "stigmatised as inadequate, their institution incoherent and their habits perverse" (OWOMOYELA, 1979:29). It is from the viewpoint of the cultural conservatives who strived to reaffirm the traditional values, that cultural protest in literature evolved.

On the other hand, the constitution of African societies is also a source of socio-cultural conflicts. Marx (MILIBAND, 1977:17) postulates that a society is not made up of individuals, but by the sum total of interrelated structures or groups of individuals. These groups are constituted by members who are related to one another in terms of an ideology, that is, a set of concepts, beliefs, values, thoughts

and feelings. As one particular group of conformity endeavours to defend and maintain its ideology, it is bound to meet with dissent which challenges that protected ideology.

Perhaps a brief comparison between the socio-cultural protest and the political protest will shed more light on the nature of the former. In the case of political protest, there exists a constant and concrete antagonism between the two sectors of conflicting political ideologies to an extent that a peaceful co-existence between the two is impracticable. On the contrary, socio-cultural conflict exists within a society, and it displays a feature of modernity standing in opposition with traditionalism, or of conservatives rightly protesting against cultural shocks brought about by "modern" practices. Therefore, the two conflicting sectors in this situation are able to co-exist in mutual toleration.

The following are subjects of protest explored in Motlhake's poetry:

4.2.1 Protest by women against sexism

Although the battle for equality of sexes and against domination of women by men waged by various women organisations and other allied movements has recently gained popularity and received attention in the new South Africa, Motlhake's poetry as the evaluation below will indicate, has long called for the liberation of women by exposing practices that are in violation of their (women) human rights.

Investigations reveal that the culture of female-inferiority emanates from one of, or all of the following circumstances which the African woman has no control over. Firstly, the practical system long practised in African communities, declares a man a ruler of his family. In other words, females (wives, mothers, sisters, daughters)

are regarded as inferior to men: powerless, dependant and feeble-minded. The patrilineal line of decent is also regarded as superior to the matrilineal line of decent because even after the death of a father, the son and not the mother, is the one who has to be the provider and the protector of the household. The inferior status of a women is also entrenched in some Setswana traditional sayings like:

Tsa etelelwa ke e namagadi pele,
tsa wela ka lemena
*A female cow never leads a herd of
bulls for they would all fall into a ditch.*

This proverb suggests that men, (referred to as “bulls”), are better leaders than women (“cows”), who are generally regarded as lacking in direction.

The second factor is attributed to the religious doctrines of the white missionaries or the churches which were and still are intended for the spiritual organisation of the communities. Among the many texts which advocate the superiority of a man above a woman is the following from the Holy Bible (1991:214)

But I want you to understand that
Christ is supreme over every man,
*and a husband is supreme over his
wife, (emphasis mine)* and God is
supreme over Christ.

(1 Corinthians 11: 3)

The supremacy of a man mentioned in the religious text above somehow corroborates a Biblical fact that a woman (Eve) was created from a man (Adam) and

that makes him her superior. On this basis, the protagonists of male-superiority, who may not necessarily be believers but fakes who only use the Bible for their purpose, argue that the inferior status of a woman is sacrosanct. This notion has also been expressed by Simone de Beauvoir (SELDEN, 1985:135) when establishing the fundamental question of modern feminism. She states that the imbalance between the terms “masculine” and “feminine” present, goes back to the Old Testament. From that time, a woman has been riveted into a lop-sided relationship with man where he is seen as the one, and she is the other.

Thirdly, the legal system of apartheid South Africa on cultural affairs also supported the cultural religious standpoints regarding the superior status of the male species. Qunta (1987:83) cites the Natal Code as an example of a legislation which decreed that:

a woman is deemed a perpetual minor
in law, and has no independent powers
save as her own person and as specially
provided in this code.

This quotation means that when an African woman gets married, she becomes a legal dependant or a minor of her husband. Matters such as contract and property rights are only handled by her husband.

In view of the background outlined above, a culture that stereotypes women as subordinates of men is engendered and becomes a norm in various structures of the society. The point of focus now is no longer on the subordination of a married woman to her husband only, but is shifted to generalise all females as inferior to males. Therefore, protest by women against sexism seeks “to change the society’s

stereotypes of women as passive, weak and dependent individuals who are less rational and more emotional than men" (ENCYCLOPAEDIA BRITANNICA 12, 1992:735). The evaluation of the poem "**Bomatlw'adibona**" below will indicate how Motlhake's poetry responds to the issue of female subordination and the vindication of women rights.

The poem "**Bomatlw'adibona**" generally challenges the various practices that tend to confine women to their traditional roles of being mere mothers, wives and homemakers. The speaker in the poem is a feminist whom Motlhake has given the power of expression to voice out the grief of the voiceless women and at the same time admonishing them to come forward and to fight against those socio-cultural practices which advocate male dominance. The title "**Bomatlw'adibona**" (*those who are victims all the time*) is about women and their complaint against their ill-treatment by "**makau**" (*young men*), "**borre**" (*husbands*) and "**bannana**" (*little men*) mentioned in the first, second and third stanzas respectively.

The opening stanza is a direct attack on what is known as "deadening domesticity". According to *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1992:735), deadening domesticity means "the conditioning of women to accept their passive roles, and depend on male dominance". Because of being conditioned to subservience, they have no other way but to yield to abuse by men. Women are being exhorted to break the silence and expose the evils of deadening domesticity.

Bomme re senya go tshepa modidi
Go swela legapeng re se dikhudu
A motho ga a tsalwe le digole?
Kgalemang makau re lebelwa tlase
Motlapele a re ga go gole di melala.

*(We women folk, spoil our case by banking on silence
By suffering inwardly and dying in our shells like tortoises
Aren't we all born among cripples/ weaklings?
Reprimand ye the younger men, they look down on us
A sage has observed that respect is not
gained by one's physical stature only.)*

Because the cultural practices have conditioned the women to accept their inferior status to that of men, and to believe that they deserved any form of mental or physical ill-treatment they received from them, they (women) kept quiet about their suffering. The two opening lines, raise an awareness about the plight of women. With a tone that spells anger towards the cultural practice of women subservience, the speaker in **“Bomme re senya go tshepa modidi”** (*we women spoil our case by banking on silence*) urges women not to keep their suffering to themselves but to speak them out. The ingenuous use of the idiom **“go swela legapeng re se dikhudu”** (*to suffer inwardly and privately*), is very appropriate in that it equates the concealment of the pain suffered with a tortoise that dies encased in its shell. This indicates that the cultural norms which by implication are as strong as the shell of a tortoise, have encapsulated the pain of abuse suffered by women, to a point that their cry of anguish is muted. The anger and the impatience with which the speaker urges the victims of abuse by men not to keep their pain secret, indicate that the abuse has been experienced for too long, and that nothing is being done about it. The statement **“re senya go tshepa modidi”** urges women to speak out against such conduct by men. The women's struggle for equal status with men is made clear by the following acts of inhumanity which the speaker objects to;

(a) Against disrespect from men

Disrespect is an act of showing rudeness, impoliteness, discourtesy or disregard towards an individual, or of violating their integrity as human beings. Because of the notion of male superiority which is decried by various feminists, women have been turned into men's objects of disrespect. The speaker in the last three lines of the first stanza above, appeals on behalf of mature women both in age and life experiences:

Kgalemang makau re lebelwa tlase
*(Reprimand ye the young men, for
they look down upon us.)*

Here, the women object by men who are even younger than themselves. They regard this as an insult because a woman is able to carry out men's responsibilities in case "**o tsalwa le digole**" (*she is born among male siblings with weaknesses*). The rhetoric question "**a motho ga a tsalwe le digole**" carries the connotation of "is a woman not fit enough to perform a man's duties if he is crippled?" In these lines, the women demand that they be respected and that their abilities recognised because as the proverb in the last line confirms, "**ga go gole di melala**" (*respect is not gained by one's strong physical stature*). This proverb is used here effectively as an expression of a yearning for the abandoning of the customary practice of discrediting women's capabilities in the false belief that they are relatively weaker than men.

It is a desperate plea for unconditional recognition of women as human beings with strengths equal to those of men.

(b) *Against victimisation by men*

According to the *Readers' Digest Great Illustrated Dictionary* (1984:1831), to victimise is 'to single out unfairly for punishment, or abuse, discrimination against and to bully'. In a society that advocates male superiority, the women are susceptible to victimisation because the traditional practices have made them men's subjects. The following stanza from "**Bomatlhwa'adibona**" attacks the cultural system which has enforced the superior status of a man and which condones the victimisation of women.

Rona basadi re a nyadiwa
Re ntshitswe matano go tlhatlosa batho
Borre ka bontsi bo re tsaya Setswana
Re gogwa fela ka tsebe re se dinku
Motho a goga fela a hulere
*(We women are being despised
We are turned into stepping stones which
elevate people higher up
Our menfolk most often marry us in the
traditional Setswana fashion
We are dragged by ears as if we are sheep
The dragger dragging without even looking/ with disregard.)*

There is bitterness towards a social order which seems to have given men the right to victimise women, and which also expects women to yield and resign themselves to the situation. In this stanza, the complaint is not only on the fact that women are being despised, "**re a nyadiwa**", but also on the fact that they are degraded and equated with instruments as alluded in "**Re ntshitswe matano go tlhatlhosa batho**"

(we are turned into stepping stones to elevate others higher up). The word “**matano**” is effectively used to evoke a deeper feeling of anger because among other, it refers to an instrument that leads to success like a stepper, an elevator, a springboard or an escalator. The deeper feeling of embitterment is strengthened by the fact that “**matano**” (*a stepper*), has to be trampled or climbed on in order for the climber to achieve their desires. How poignant! The fact that the opening line laments the despised status of women, “**batho**” (*people*) who trample on women to achieve their goals, refers to men.

The manner in which women are being married is also despicable. This is portrayed in the last three lines in which the unacceptable traditional marriage is dramatised. The expression “**borre ka bontsi bo re tsaya Setswana**” here means much more than in its ordinary use which refers to being married according to the Setswana custom (and all the cultural rites that go with it). Another dimension of the idiom “**go tsaya Setswana**” (*to marry in the Setswana fashion*) is that it in fact refers to an indecent marriage in which cultural rites were not performed, and which has been forced to exist because a woman was dragged by a man into it “**jaaka nku e gogwa ka tsebe**” (*like a sheep being dragged by its ear*). The image of a sheep which is symbolically associated with quietness, being dragged cruelly by its ear is very effective in depicting the submissiveness protest of women.

The dramatic dragging of a woman into marriage without proper betrothal procedures implied by:-

Re gogwa fela ka tsebe re se dinku

motho a goga fela a hulere

(We are dragged by ears as if we are sheep

A person dragging carelessly and facing the other way,)

also sheds light on the feeling of women about victimisation and forced cohabitation. The action of “goga” (*to drag*) already implies an unwilling less or an objection of the one being dragged. But “go goga fela motho a hulere” which means to drag to an opposite direction without even looking at that which is being dragged, indicates the helplessness of a woman in a society that conforms to the practice of male superiority. Therefore, criticism in this stanza is directed at the traditional stereotype which emphasise that a woman is nothing but “an object of gratifying a man’s lusts” (MULOKOZI, 1982:42).

(c) Against sexual harassment

Another violation of the rights of women which Motlhake’s poetry comments about is the issue of sexual harassment. According to Moela’s (1999:21), sexual harassment was first defined by Catherine Mackinnon in 1979 as:-

the unwanted imposition of sexual
requirements in the context of a
relationship of unequal power.

This generally means that both males and females can suffer sexual harassment depending on who has power above whom. Ryder’s (1998:28) definition is more specific in that it presents sexual harassment as:-

the unwanted conduct of a sexual
nature or other conduct based on
sex affecting the dignity of
women and men.

Although sexual harassment can be committed to both females and males, the situation in a society that practices male superiority is different. Victims will be predominantly women because they lack the power equal to the one bestowed upon the men by traditional norms. In the next stanza, the third line “**motho o feta o bokwa dikhularo**” (*And as one passes by, one's behind is viewed with desire and praises*) expresses an objection towards sexual harassment because a woman's right to integrity of body and personality is violated. Here, a woman refuses to be seen as an object of satisfying a man's lusts, but a human being in her own right.

Bontsi bo fela bo re kala botlhofo
Bo re tsaya melomong ya batho
Motho o feta a bokwa dikhularo
Lo ijesa dijo tsa ditoro
Noka ga e tshelwe ka matlho
(*Many keep on taking us very lightly,
They know us only by hearsay
obtained from the mouth of the people
And as one passes by, one's behind is
viewed with desire.
You're feeding on fantasies
A river is not crossed by merely looking at it.*)

There are four different forms of sexual harassment as indicated by Ryder (1998:28). The first are the verbal forms which among other include unwelcome enquiries about a person's sex life, telephone calls with sexual overtones, offensive and persistent rude or sexist jokes, graphic comments about an individual's body, and unwelcome request for dates or sexual request in exchange for a favour. The second are the *gestures and non-verbal forms* which among other include the public

display of sexually suggestive objects or pictures, or persistent and unwelcome flirting. The third are the *visual forms* in which pornographic pictures, films or slides are shown with the intention of leading an individual to yield to sexual request. The final are the *physical forms* which include unwelcome patting, fondling, kissing, rape and molestation.

The form of sexual harassment ridiculed by “**motho o feta a bokwa dikhularo**” (*And as one passes by, one’s behind is raved about*) is the first one because the comments made by men namely, the verbal form of sexual harassment about a woman’s back part of her body are unwelcome. It is clear that the women do not take kindly to the men wailing and howling at their bodies and making sexual overtures under the guise of praising them. The displeasure is intensified by the realisation that they (women) have no dignity and their personal feelings are disregarded because the harasser “**ba re tsaya botlhofo**” (*take us very lightly*). The line “**bontsi bo re tsaya melomong ya batho**” (*many know us only by information obtained from the mouths of the people*) further adds pain to the women by the realisation that men refer to as **batho** (*people*) here, would continue to relay the message of their inferiority and subordination to the others by word of mouth. In the following two lines men are being warned not to take women for granted..

Lo ijesa dijo tsa ditoro
Noka ga e tshwelwe ka matlho
*(You’re feasting on your fantasies
A river is not crossed by merely looking at it.)*

Men are being reprimanded for making graphic comments about the bodies of women who pass by because firstly, it is insulting to the women and secondly, it is an exercise that is as fruitless to them as “**go ijesa dijo tsa ditoro**” meaning that

they are filling their mouths with empty spoons. The expression “**noka ga e tshelwe ka matlho**” literally means that a river cannot be crossed by merely looking at it. For one to get to the other side, one needs to get into the water and swim across. The figurative meaning in this context is that a sexual desire can only be fulfilled by the actual sexual contact and not by fantasy. This openly means that raving about women’s bodies means nothing to them but humiliation.

The speaker in this stanza lashes against the traditional stereotypes that still regard women as being inferior (cf. **bontsi bo re tsaya bothofo**), and emphasise that they are objects of men’s sexual desire. They demand that women be treated with dignity.

(d) *Against exploitation by men*

By exploitation here we refer to a situation where women labour not for their own development but for the prosperity of the men. In a cultural system, a woman not a man has to display qualities of diligence and industriousness to prove that she can maintain her family and support her husband. The last three lines of the fifth stanza are an object to this practice.

Re kile ra wela re lebile
Motho go tse tshwene o jewa mabogo
Dikolobe di rekelwa mo kgetseng
*(We once fell in there with eyes open
Being made to believe that a woman is a baboon
whose hands matter more than her looks
And the pigs were bought in pokes.)*

The stanza refers to the traditional notions which prescribe a woman's industriousness as a prerequisite to gaining a married status. Hers is just to work hard for her family and her husband in particular. In general terms, the proverb “**mosadi tshwene o jewa mabogo**” (*a woman is a baboon whose hard work matters more than her looks*) is used to advise men that a woman is not married for her looks but for her hard work. On the contrary, there are no prerequisites set for a man who has to enter into marriage. While women are expected to work very hard, men are “**dikolobe di rekelwa mo kgetseng**” (*pigs bought in pokes*), that is, they end up being not as good as was expected. This discrimination of sexes in a marriage leads to one party (men) exploiting the other (women). Therefore, the speaker in the lines above campaigns for the liberation of women from such slavery by which toiling is seen as the mark of a good wife.

In the following lines men are chided for unabashedly exploiting women:

Selo se kgala ga se go botlhe
Se tshwana le go pherekana
Ke makaditswe ke daekopo
A iphetlhela setafonese
A itlhome a tshwere jekepoto
*(This quality called sense of shame is not in everybody
It is just like being insane
I was astounded by a male nitwit
Proposing love to a professional nurse
With the hope of hitting a jackpot).*

This stanza refers to the painful fact that in spite of the academic or educational qualification which a woman may attain like being “setafonese” (a staff nurse), she

is not spared from the traditional practice of being exploited of a man. The dramatic presentation of “**daekopo**” (*an illiterate male*) proposing love to a professional woman like “**setafonese**” (*a staff nurse*) is very effective because it exposes and at the same time attacks a social system which has turned women into sources of wealth for men. The fact that men regard their love affairs with women as “**go tshwara jekepoto**” (*to hit a jackpot fortune*) that is, as instruments of their own economic benefit, means that the women are being exploited by men.

Apart from exposing the evils of exploitation by men, the speaker in this same stanza criticises the traditional notions for refusing or having ailed to change with the modern times which also expect the living conditions of women to change. To the feminist speaker in the poem, it is an insult that the hard-earned dignity of “**setafonese**” (*a staff nurse*) could be affronted by an illiterate who does not recognise her efforts of self-development, but perceives her only as a traditional woman inferior to a man.

After demonstrating protest against the cultural system of male-superiority, the poem “**Bomatlh’wadibona**” is not without an attitude of hope that the cultural shackles that keep women under the control of men can be broken. Hope is another form of expressing the present objection to something, by anticipating a victorious future against that which is objected to. The following stanza comes as an inspiration to women to obtain better conditions for themselves and to escape men’s tyranny.

Monongwaga re bona dikgolo
Bomme ba intshitse lese dinaleng
Bontsi bo akga dipurapura
Bannana ba digile ditlhogo

Ba itiya ka go reka tse pedi.
*[This year we see great things
Women folks have shaken their sloth
Many strut in learned robes
Little men are now hanging their heads
Having wasted their lives buying two (cans of beer)]*

The whole stanza is the speaker's proleptic depiction of her aspirations and that is, the demise of the traditional male-dominance. The expression "**bontsi bo akga dipurapura**" (*many women strutting in learned robes*) contrasts with "**banna ba itiya ka go reka tse pedi**" (*men wasted their time by spending it on drinking*) and expresses hope that when the battle for the equality of sexes is won, women will take over from men.

4.2.2 Protest of men against the marriage institution

In this subsection we will give a brief perception of the institution of marriage according to the African culture, as well as evaluate the element of protest against marriage expressed in Motlhake's poetry.

Mönnig (1967:129) states that marriage in the Sepedi custom, and so in Setswana, is not an individual affair legalizing the relationship between a man and a woman, but a group concern legalizing a relationship between two groups of relatives.

This means that a marriage is not just a union between a man and his wife, but also serves to bring together the families of the groom and of the bride. The unity between these two families is strengthened by the exchange of marriage goods between them prior to the finalisation of the union of a man and a woman. With the

birth of children in a marriage, the handing down of this tradition is ensured and the nation as well as its values, is also guarded against extinction. This perception of marriage explains why being married has become an obligatory status among the Africans, in other words why according to Mönnig (1967:129), it is expected that every man of an appropriate age should find a mate and marry. Therefore marriage became not only an obligatory status, but a desirable status too because those who failed to achieve it, faced a life-long scorn of being called by terms of derogation like “**lefetwa**” (*a woman who has been overlooked by men*) and “**kgope**” (*a man who has failed to get a wife*).

With the Africans coming into contact with other foreign cultures and absorbing them, the values of marriage as a traditional rite diminish. Protest against the marriage institution therefore is an expression of unwillingness to accept or to participate in this traditional practice. In the ensuing evaluation of text, we will indicate how Matlhake’s poetry displays elements of protest against a marriage institution.

The poem “**Goreng ke sa nyale?**” (*Why don't I get married?*) whose title already denotes defiance, is a relevant example to illustrate the issue of protest against marriage. In this poem, the voice belonging to a man, openly defies the custom of marriage by exposing various unwelcomed aspects which render this traditional practice unacceptable. His stand point is clarified from the first stanza in which he declares that he can rather stay unmarried and alone, than to commit himself to marriage. The fact that he prefers “**botshelo ba ditsotsi**” (*a tsotsi lifestyle*) that is, a rough-and-ready life which is unstable, disorderly and unhealthy, to a married life which is associated with warmth, care and stability, indicates the contempt with which he views marriage.

Rona re tla ikakabatsa
 Botshelo re leka ba ditsotsi
 Motho a lwala a re go lokile
 Matlho a *menolwa** re ikidibatsa
 Tshwene tshimong e ntshiwa ke senya.
(We'll pretend that we see nothing
As for life, we'll live the one led by the 'tsotsis'
The life where one is ill but says all is fine
Eyes being rolled and fake fainting/ unconsciousness
Our conscience usually free us from the burden).

(*According to the poet S.F. Motlhake in an interview, “mendwa” in the published work is a typographical error. The correct word is “menolwa”).

In this stanza, the speaker implies that “**botshelo ba ditsotsi**” (*tsotsi lifestyle*) is better than a life in a marriage that is unwanted. The term ‘tsotsi’ does not only refer to a hoodlum, or a hooligan, but it also refers to an unfaithful sly or untrustworthy person. This is true because it is only a sly person who is able to pretend like in “**go ikakabatsa**” (*to pretend to see nothing wrong*) and “**go ikidibatsa**” (*to fake fainting*). The message here is that in marriage, the things objected to are not faked but real. While in the life of a “**tsotsi**”, the pains and sicknesses can be tolerated, in the case of marriage, the speaker displays his objection by showing no tolerance to the various aspects he finds abhorrent. The following are those aspects which reaffirms protest against marriage:

(a) Exorbitant “bogadi” (brideprice)

The speaker emphasises the demise of marriage by stating that “**lenyalo le ile go setse dithemporari**” (*Gone is the concept of marriage, only temporary unions remain*) in the second stanza. This state of affairs is blamed on the exorbitant “**bogadi**” (*brideprice*) which is expected to be paid by the groom:

Mosadi wa diketekete, sephaphathela
Morwalela, ga o tshetse
Ke lefatshe la go gatšwa legodimo
Letlase le setse le beng
(*A woman of thousands of rands ‘lobola’ is a torrent
She is a flood that offers no life
She is a piece of land owned on the surface
While its underground has been claimed by others*).

In this stanza, the speaker objects to the abuse of “**bogadi**” (*brideprice*) which has become a financially enriching exercise that involves “**diketekete**”, (*thousands of rands*). What started traditionally as a gesture of sealing a union between two families of the bride and of the groom, has become an exploitation of one family by the other.

“**Mosadi wa diketekete**” (*a woman who cost thousands of rands marry*) also implies that she is also a demanding and very expensive to maintain. The images of destructive natural phenomena namely “**sephaphathela**” (*a torrent*) and “**morwalela**” (*a flood*) aptly describe the destructive nature of a woman ‘costing’ thousands of rands. The expression “**morwalela ga o tshetse**” literally means that a flood sweeps away everything including life. Here, a woman is equated with a

flood to imply that such a costly woman will drain a man of everything, and he will remain as good as dead.

(b) *On women's infidelity*

Further vices and foibles in a marriage are exposed in satirical reference to a deceptive land ownership. Statutorily, ordinary land owners possess the visible part of the land that is the surface while the rich part underneath with minerals and gems belongs to some other power. A woman is being described as follows:-

Ke lefatshe la go gatšwa godimo

Letlase le setse le beng.

(She's a piece of land annexed on the surface

But the underground part still remains with the owners)

What is being criticised here is that in marriage, in spite of large amounts of money totalling thousands of rands (cf. “diketekete”) paid as “bogadi” (*brideprice*), a woman may never belong wholly to her husband. This image of part ownership, that is, a woman belonging partly to her husband and partly to some-one else is a direct attack on the infidelity of women. It is quite ironical that in issues concerning land, land invasion is compared to rape and here, there is the reversal of sexual image: a woman is being described in terms of land ownership!

The last two lines of the poem refer to a reversal of roles where modern women aspire to be men and treat men like women.

Betsi ba motsi b'a nyala

Banna re tloga re ntshetswa magadi.

*(Daughters-in-law nowadays initiate marriage
And we men will be the ones for whom “bogadi” is paid)*

“Betsi” are daughters-in-law and therefore women who are already married. If they are the ones who initiate marriage, it means that they do not respect the fact that they are married; they disrespect their family and that of the man because traditionally, it is his family that marries not a man as an individual. On the other hand, men who are supposed to be initiating a marriage, are the ones for whom “bogadi” must be paid for. This implies the reversal of traditional roles of men and women which the speaker also discourages.

Apart from criticising the women’s lack of loyalty in a marriage, the image of land ownership is also directed at the immoral practice of families of the brides who refuse to let go of their daughters in spite of the high brideprice they received. Therefore the lines may also mean that in a marriage, a woman belongs partly to her husband while the other part is owned by her family.

(c) Marriage and loss of freedom

The sworn bachelor who is the speaker in “Goreng ke sa nyale?” attacks marriage as a prisonhouse and forfeiture of freedom:

Mo tsee o latlhe kgololosego
Monna o sitwe ke go ya seema
Kgomo o disitswe motlhana
Mosadinyana, o senya sebaka
Dikgomo ga go disiwe maradu.
(Marry her, you throw away your freedom

*As a man, you hardly even answer to Nature's call
You're like a cow that has just calved and whose afterbirth
is patiently awaited
young woman, you are surely wasting your
time cows which have sucklings cannot be monitored).*

After marriage, a man loses his freedom to associate with other people and freedom of movement. This sad state of affairs is confirmed by the opening line which sounds more like a command of threat than an advice: “**Mo tsee o latlhe kgololosego**” (*Take her, and throw away your freedom*).

A man's movement is limited or constricted by marriage. His movements are being closely watched as expressed in “**o kgomo o disitswe motlhana**”. The duty of “**go disa motlhana**” is performed by herdboys who follow the cows very closely to watch and take care of the afterbirth from those which have just calved. This is done so that the cow does not end up eating its own afterbirth as this is regarded a taboo. Therefore, the equation of a man's monitored movements by his wife, with “**go disa motlhana**”, further clarifies why “**botshelo ba ditsotsi**” (*a life of roughs*) mentioned earlier is preferred to a married life. The deliberate exaggeration “**go sitwa ke go ya seema**” (*a person is not even allowed to answer to a call of nature*), justifies protest. The woman is also strongly warned:-

Mosadinyana o senya sebaka
Dikgomo ga go disiwe maradu
*(Young woman, you are wasting your time
That is not the way to tend cows which have sucklings).*

This means that men, like “**maradu**”, (*cows which have sucklings*) know their responsibilities to their families or dependents, so their movements need not be monitored. Just like the cows which would instinctively return on their own to nurse their young, so would men go and return on their own. This call to women to desist from restricting the men’s freedom is an indirect form of protest.

(d) Domineering and manipulative women

One of the things that puts off the man-speaker from marriage is the real and humiliating prospect of being bullied or manipulated by a wife. This is voiced in the following stanza which depicts the woman on the issue of disciplining children.

Lo sentse diso lo di ngwaa
Lore ga lo ojwe lo omile
Mmangwana o re fagisa dibese
Re sugetse kobo le lese
Go fetsa re tshaba matlho a batho.
*(You spoiled the sores by scratching them
A twig cannot be bent once it's dry
Mother-of-child has spoiled the cooking
Now we have to condone all things wrong
And as a result we shy away from public eyes)*

This stanza portrays a picture of a domineering woman who makes and implements decisions on her own including “**go senya diso lo di ngwaa**” which means to scratch the sores each time they itch. This refers to a woman’s lack of resistance and a dominant stance when it comes to meeting even the worst demands made by the children. On the other hand, the man is depicted as a helpless by-stander who

has to come in only when the wrongs of “spoiling the children” have to be corrected or reversed. In saying “**Lore ga lo ojwe lo omile**” which is a deflection of “**Lore lo ojwa lo sa le metsi**” (*catch them young/ young children respond better to discipline than older ones*), the man distances himself from the mess caused by the wife. (cf. “**go apeisa dibese**”) who disregarded his role as head of the family.

The different aspects discussed above clearly indicate the protest against marriage as expressed by Motlhake’s poem. It is a call for the restoration of marital values which according to the last line of the second stanza have been eroded.

Lenyalo le ile go setse **dithemporari**

(True marriage is gone, what is left is just temporary affairs).

4.2.3 Protest against the decline of traditional values

Protest of this nature expresses dissatisfaction on the part of traditionalists against the decline of the much cherished African values as a result of contact with other cultures. It is also protest against cultural shocks brought about by “modern” practices. The values which the traditionalists cherish, are those that have been handed down from generation to generation and they include among others self-respect, mutual respect and the upholding of customs. These values are considered sacrosanct because they are the heritage from the ancestors. To maintain their continued existence as Abrahams (SELEPE, 1993:37) postulates, there were poets or storytellers whose duty was to correct any form of deviant behaviour. Motlhake’s poetry also laments the decline of cultural and moral values as a result of “modern” practices.

(a) Industrialisation and the cultural tradition

The poem “**Moepong**” illustrates very well this objection to the negative effects of industrialisation and the resultant migratory labour system on the ethos of the African traditional society. From the speaker’s tone in the first two lines of the first stanza in “**Moepong**”, it is clear that mines are a cause of language degradation and a source of moral decay.

Lefatshe le a falafalwa
Mo ‘ineng ja tshwelelopele
Kwa matlhakanela thapong
Puo re tsoga e tlhapoga
Bontsi bo gapa tshenyego.
(The earth is being scratched (for gems)
All in the name of civilisation
At this melting-pot of races and characters
Comes the next morning our language is adulterated
And many follow corrupt ways)

(b) On the decadence of indigenous languages

Normally, the mines are welcomed as they contribute to the economy of a country. The use of the expression “**go falafalwa**” (*scratching here and there*). It means that mining is not welcomed because there, “**puo re tsoga e tlhapoga**” (*comes the next morning our language is adulterated*). This is a serious attack on the use of a debasing pidgin language called “Fanakaloo” at the mines. “Fanakaloo” is a language made up of different languages and invented by the mine authorities in

order to facilitate communication between mine labourers of different cultures. As “fanakaloo” is being used, the status of the indigenous African languages diminish.

(c) *On moral decadence*

In the last line, the speaker condemns the decay of morals in the mine compounds. “Go gapa tshenyego” is used with scorn to indicate that people went to the mines with good intention of self upliftment, but come back having acquired acts of low morals which are often displayed with pride. The following stanza paints a clearer picture of how good traditional values are being eroded:-

Batho ba tlogetse basadi
Tshadi e tlogetse banna
Merafo e tshotse botshelo
Teng e lala le mmaayo
E tsoge e sutlhaka mhiko.
*(People have left the wives behind
Women have left their husbands behind
The mines have seized control of their lives
There, a calf sleeps with its mother
The next morning it escapes through the barricades).*

The speaker comments about the issue of promiscuity which is one of the results of social displacement. The closely knit family structures that exist in traditional practices have disintegrated and are replaced by the “modern” mine compound community where married people disregard their traditional obligations and settle with other married parties. The speaker’s feelings of disgust and objection towards the issue of moral decadence are intensified by the piercing imagery of “Teng

(namane) e lala le mmaayo” (*There, (a calf) sleeps with its mother*). Literally it refers to a calf which sleeps with its mother in the same kraal where it sucks freely the whole night. This practice is not permitted by the herdsmen. After sucking, the calves are normally placed in a separate kraal for the night so that there would be enough milk for the family the following day.

This is a euphemistic reference to the disgusting acts of immorality where younger men at the mine settlements sleep with women old enough to be their mothers. As a result these men are unable to provide for their families back home because their earnings have been drained by their concubines in the mines. The improper manner in which a young man (*calf*) departs from the scene (*kraal*) namely, “go sutlhaka mhiko” (*breaking the barricades*), further indicates that his entry too was not morally right.

In the last stanza, the speaker criticises mine life for destroying the traditional culture of selfrespect and creating a sick society of women who engage in immoral love relations in order to get money.

Dikgaityadi di manne

Tsona nnete di ganne

Batho bao b'a golagola.

(Our sisters have grown very thin

Truly, they refuse to be reprimanded

They do so because there's some money they earn).

The message here is not explicitly stated but it implies that mine life has led young ladies to prostitution which is an abhorrent activity in the traditional custom.

4.3 RELIGIOUS PROTEST

Religious protest writing is characterised by works whose contents express the people's devotion to their own cherished religion and a resistance to a new form of religion imposed on them by some order or authority. In other words, religious protest results from the conflict of two religious ideologies: one which is subscribed to by the imposing party, and the other which is embraced by the targeted party. In African literatures, the common religion against which protest has been levelled is Christianity.

Without delving too deep in the history of religion in African in general and South Africa in particular, it is important to note that there are two significant waves of religion according to Owomonyela (1979:23) whose agents came to Africa. First, it was the agents of Islam who came in the eleventh century and soon, the religion was spread in the northern parts of Africa through "holy wars" and the conquest and defeat of the traditional rulers. Second was the Christian religion in the latter half of the nineteenth century, whose religion was spread from northern African to the south, not through "wars" but through the missionaries and their converts. Of importance is the fact that as early as the nineteenth century, Christianity was already being rejected because the missionaries were seen as allies of the colonial rule, and, contrary to Islam, Christianity proved to be an intolerant religion that could not accommodate traditional institutions of African humanism. After adopting the religion the masses were no longer free to live according to their culture because, as stated by Owomonyela (1979:28), the missionaries saw in everything African, godlessness and heathenism that must be wiped out. Not only did they seek to destroy shrines and belief in traditional religions; they also forbade their converts to participate in such traditional ceremonies as naming, initiation, marriage and burial.

The destruction of traditional culture by the missionaries in the name of civilising the native was not lamented in northern Africa only, it was also bewailed in the Southern parts of Africa including South Africa. To many critics, (SHELTON, 1968:13), the “civilisation mission” was but the Westerners’ ploy to take over control of the Africans, and this had to be done firstly by educating them that it was morally proper to obey the laws of the European rulers, secondly, by leading them into accepting that the missionaries and the colonialists have come to help the Africans, and lastly by convincing them that their culture is inferior to the Western culture.

In the case of South Africa where the policy of the ruling Nationalists Party was said to be anchored on Christianity, a religion whose traits are said to be love, brotherhood, and compassion, the blacks were seen not as humans but creatures destined to slavery and servitude. Commenting on the abhorred mutuality between the government policies and Christianity, Alan Paton (EGUDU, 1978: 450) states further clarifies the basis for the blacks’ objection to the whiteman’s religion:

We believe in the brotherhood of man, but we do
not want it in South Africa ... We believe in help for
the underdog, but we want him to remain under ...
We go so far as to credit Almighty God with having
created black men to ~~h~~ew wood and draw water for
white men. We go so far as to assume that He blesses
any action that is designed to prevent black men
from the full employment of the gifts He gave them ...

h/

Although some Africans were converted to Christian religion, there are those who refused to succumb to it. From Paton’s enlightening statement, it is clear that to

those who rejected or objected to Christianity, saw it as an inhuman practice that could not be embraced.

The issue about Christianity and its agents like the missionaries, priests and preachers, have been addressed in Motlhake's poetry. Contrary to the many Christian - inspired Setswana writers of his time, whose poems of religion are generally testimonies written to point the readers in the direction of reverence to the Christian God and His wonderful work, Motlhake wrote his poems of religion to represent the traditionalists' voice which expresses their standpoint to cling to the traditional religion of ancestral worship. By way of illustration general reference will be made to the poems "**Moreri**" (*The preacher*), "**Boruti**" (*Priesthood*) and "**Tlhabologo ya Bophirima**" (*Western civilisation*). All three poems display a similar content of 'secularism' which is characterised by the attack of the intolerable behaviour of hypocrisy, sycophancy, selfishness, opportunism as well as exploitative attributes displayed by the preachers of Christianity. Another common feature displayed is a yearning back to traditional beliefs because the new religion did not practise the love and brotherhood that it preached.

4.3.1 Hypocrisy, sycophancy and exploitation

The opening stanza of "**Boruti**" serves as a prelude to an attack on Christian practices which are firstly deceptive to ordinary people and secondly, are against the African traditional code of behaviour. The image of a chameleon ("**leobu**") is very relevant. Just as a chameleon skilfully escapes its predators by taking on the colour of its environment, so does the agent of Christianity whose evil intentions escape detection by the sceptics.

Phologolo e bolotsana leobu
 Lona le fela le tlhoka nnete .
 Leobu ruri tlhokammala,
 Go le tlhalosa o a balabala!
*(Oh darn that wily animal, chameleon,
 T's for ever without the truth.
 A chameleon indeed has no colour of its own
 Try to explain its nature, and you end up mumbling nonsense).*

This stanza summarizes the whole situation of deception with bitterness. The limitless number of environments into which a chameleon can change to avoid being spotted illustrate the limitless ways in which a priest can deceive his innocent followers. Nothing exposes the minister's abhorred sychophancy than the following stanza from “**Moreri**”:-

Moreri wa Lefoko la mafoko,
 Motshumi wa 'bone ja Aferika,
 A gorogela gareng ga batho -
 Sebefa a gakantsha bagaka,
 Nkwegadi e fitlhile dinala.
*(The preacher of the Word of words
 The lighter of the lamp of Africa
 He arrived and settled among the people -
 the ugly one deceived even the best of the wits
 A leopardess which has hidden her claws).*

From the speaker's tone, it is clear that the missionaries were not welcome. The stanza implies that the missionaries came to Africa not to bring light as indicated by

the sarcastic “**motshumi wa ‘bone la Afrika**” (*the lighter of the lamp of Africa*), they came with sinister motives. The image of “**nkwegadi e fitlhile dinala**” (*a leopardess hiding her claws*) means the missionaries operated under the cloak of being preachers of the Holy Word (“**morero wa Lefoko la mafoko**”) whereas they were perpetrators of an evil system. The fourth line ridicules the preacher for being so cunning that his evil tactics cannot be noted even by the best of the minds (“**bagaka**”). This is scorned because it deceived the innocent indigenous people of Africa into abandoning their own religions, and clinging onto a foreign one.

The portrait of the missionaries as selfish tricksters and hypocrites comes out forcefully in the following stanza which dramatises their arrival:-

O gorogile a bokabokile!
Mabogo a tshotse k'a mabedi.
Ka moja a tla a tshotse thipa
Buka yona e le njogotlhong.
La nja le oma go ripitla!
(He arrived with both hands full
With each of the hands holding things.
In the right he was holding a dagger
The Book was in the left hand.
Wielding with the right hand to destroy!)

Here, the vileness of the preacher is depicted as a man with a double agenda, bearing semblance of an angel and yet having a heart of a devil. He appears benignant with the Bible in the left hand and yet his heart is filled with evil and an urge to kill. The irony is that the missionaries came as the bearers of the light of

salvation, but their intentions tend to be more sinful than the 'sins' of traditional humanism from which they claim to redeem Dark Africa.

The speaker further makes a mockery of religious hypocrisy in “**Boruti**” as follows:-

Mokao mokaya masilwana;
Thuto tsa gagwe ga di mo reye!
Kobi e bonwe e iphotlhere fela,
Radigwe a kgaotse mogala.
*(A hopple that hobbles the idiots and the ignorant
His teachings are not applicable to him
A bird-snare (kobi) was seen empty
As the muscular partridge cock has broken free)*

The speaker further proclaims with anger and disillusionment his rejection of the foreign religion because it is not even practiced by those who brought it. This is expressed by “**thuto tsa gagwe ga di mo reye**” (*his teaching are not applicable to him*) which implies that the motive for imparting such teachings is only for the gain of the teacher and the pain of the learner, the ordinary people. The pain suffered is that of restricting and denying the people to be themselves. “**Mokao**” (*A hopple*), a traditional hobbling strap used to restrict the movement of an animal’s hindlegs for the safety of one attending it, is used here symbolically to expose the torments of the people incarcerated in religious institutions. The depiction of religion as a hopple presupposes that the imposed religion was rigid and restricting, hence the resistance. The speaker is annoyed by the fact that while the ignorant (“**masilwana**”) are being subjected to the edicts of this religion equated to a bird-snare (“**kobi**”), the advocates of the very religion disregard its tenets.

The exploitative tendencies of preachers and ministers intensify the feeling of rejection towards the practices of Christianity:-

Boruti bo dubakanya tlhogo!
Bo tshereantse ona majakana
Motho o phuntse moraba leroba;
Mamphorwana a ponketse
*(Priesthood confuses the minds of many
It has torpedied even the golddiggers/ missionaries
Someone has made a hole at the bottom of the
treasure bag to steal
While the bleary-eyed chickens are not able to see).*

The metaphor “**mamphorwana a ponketse**” (*the bleary-eyed chickens are not able to see*) refers to the ordinary people who are too blind to notice and helpless as the missionaries help themselves to their treasures and exploit them. The Western religion is therefore seen as a means of enriching its agents materially, and leaving the followers poorer both materially and spiritually (because their belief in traditional worship has also been destroyed). The exploitative attributes of religion are again exposed in the fifth stanza of “**Boruti**”.

Lefoko, thipa ya magagane;
Letlhale le betlola ka yona,
Mosetlhe, o kgotshe, o re jele!
Leba gae, sebefa o jakile
*(The word is a double-edged sword
The cunning one uses it to devastate
Mr Paleface, you're gluttoned, you preyed on us
Revert home, ugly one, you have amassed riches.*

The stanza articulates the corruption prevalent among religious sectors where the Bible is used as a tool of exploitation. Apart from the images of “mokao” and “kobi” which paint Christian religion as an instrument which restricts movement or flight, the Bible here, (“Lefoko”) is referred to as “thipa ya magagane” (*a double-edged sword*). The irony of a Book whose contents profess humility, humanity and respect of life, being equated to an instrument which terminates life, is relevant in portraying the calloousness of those who use it to their advantage.

The exploitative tendencies of agents of Christianity are further exemplified in the following stanza from “*Boruti*” (Priesthood) where any objections against them are meted with threats:

Batho ba tshwerwe ka lenaneo,
Ba tshoswa ka masaitseweng:
Nnakgolo e tshaba go nama;
Motetesetso sera sa motho!
*(Being terrified is man's worst enemy
People are systematically subdued
They are threatened with the unknown
The aged men (at large) are even afraid
to stay at ease).*

Generally, the stanza refers to the reaction of religious leaders towards counter-views of the sceptics “nnakgolo” (*the aged men at large*) about religious practices. The threaten and to terrify the people using the unknown (“go tshoswa ka masaitsiweng”) exposes the exploiting preacher's cunning tactics of silencing complainants so that his corruption is not revealed. This silencing approach employed by the preachers is compatible with Karl Marx's (MILIBAND, 1977:48)

famous phrase that “religion is the opium of the people”. This refers to the fact that religious teachings, like a drug, can be used to sedate the targeted persons and to prevent them from exposing corruption. In this stanza, it is the aged men at large who are threatened with what they do not even know that they are even afraid to question or to speak out their views freely (“go nama”). The same objection against the use or misuse of religion as a stupifying tool of the exploiter is also echoed in “**Moreri**” (*The Preacher*);

Molwetse yo o fapaanang tlhogo,
O tlhajwa ka lona lerumolegolo,
Sekgaetsa phologolo le motho:
Rumo lebe la majakolobe!
*(A person who is sick in the head,
Is stabbed by this great spear,
The same that stupifies both animals and humans:
The evil spear of the pig-eaters (Germans)!*

Here, Christian religion of the Germans who are angrily termed the pig-eaters (“majakolobe”) is rejected. An animal (“phologolo”) mentioned above does not refer to a four-legged creature but it refers to people with inhuman nature, boisterous people who are mindless of other people's feelings. At the same time, the idiom “go kgaetsa” means much more than to stupify. Therefore the hyperbole of religion (the spear) being able to dummify even people with inhuman character, is effectively used to berate the religion for exploiting the African. The first two lines of the stanza express the speaker's defiance of religion because he views it as something that can be imposed on “molwetse yo o fapaaneng tlhogo” (*A person sick in the head*). What he implies here is that he is ‘sane and conscious’ enough to

see the evil intentions of the preacher, therefore he shall not be converted to that religion.

Exploitation of women's frailty by the preacher is also criticised in the fourth stanza of the same poem "**Moreri**" (*The preacher*).

A bua dilo di gana go fela,
Mollo a o bua le pholoso -
Banna bona ba kgalwa segolo.
E rile tshadi e tlala kereke
Borre jwa ikgoga ka morago.
*(He spoke about things too numerous to name
About the fire and salvation -
And men were reproached greatly.
When women started to fill the church
The men began to withdraw).*

The resistance or protest of only men ("**banna**") and fathers or husbands ("**borre**") against the religion which threaten the people with unknown fires ("**mollo**") and salvation, reveals that the women are the ones most susceptible. They are the victims on whom the ministers prey because they are misled into believing that fire and destruction are applicable only to those who are being admonished namely men. This is made clear by the effective contrast of expression in: "**banna ba kgalwa segolo**" and "**basadi ba tlala kereke**".

The speaker (bemoans the fact) that the women are easy to attract to the religion which the men, fathers and husbands feel strongly against.

4.3.2 The missionaries as allies of the colonial regime

A close relationship between the missionaries and the agents of the Western powers existed because of their mutual interest in Africa. The agents of Western Christianity namely the missionaries, came to Africa to explore her potential for the spiritual exploitation. On the other hand, the Western powers invaded Africa to explore her potential for economical and commercial exploitation. The mutuality of interest which developed between these two agents is enlightened by Owomoyela (1979:26) as follows:

The traders did not feel safe in venturing into new areas or communities before the missionaries had softened them up with their preachings, thus preparing them for commerce with Europe. The commercial concerns were therefore happy to aid the missionaries with much - needed money and to extend to them the protection that their government made available to commercial agents. In effect, missionaries and agents of commercial exploitation became two different aspects of the same process: The European presence and its eventual undermining of African cultural institutions as well as colonial subjugation of the continent.

With the missionaries aiding the colonial rule in the subjugation of the continent as stated above, the reason for the rejection of the agents of Christian religion on the basis of being allies of the regime is clear. The poem “**Moreri**” (*The Preacher*) comments about this mutuality between the commercial exploiters and the religious exploiters as well as its effects on the life of an African.

Apart from sounding a rejection of Christianity as an “opium of the people” mentioned earlier, the first stanza of “**Moreri**” also refers to the rejection of the relationship between the missionaries and the colonial regime of the whites, the Germans (“**majakolobe**”). The fact that this religion is labelled “**lerumolegolo la majakolobe**” (*The great spear of the pig-eaters*) does not only mean that it is a tool brought by the white missionaries, but it also confirms the view that religion is a means to torpefy the people for the benefit of the ruling whites.

The criticism of the missionaries as allies of the regime is also evident in the seventh stanza of “**Moreri**” where the ministers are ridiculed for turning a blind eye to the white authorities who expropriate land owned by the blacks:

Magodu a rona ke a magolo!
Moutswilefatshe, o nonofile
Bangwe ga ba lekanwe ke manno
Mongwasa o rothile madi;
Bareri ba tl'a retolosa matlho.
(Our thieves are indeed very great!
The stealer-of-land is powerful
Some of them do become restless
But when the information about thier actions leaks
The preachers turn a blind eye and turn the other way).

The landowners are depicted as being powerless against the mighty land thieves (“**moutswilefatshe**”). The missionaries are accused of aiding the evil authorities to subjugate the landowners and taking away their land. In the following lines of the eighth stanza, the sinister relationship between the ministers and the state is satirised:

· Alogane tsa pusotlhaolele
Lo re go di ja, lo beye peo
Bontsi, ona mafalepense.
*(The products/ graduates of the apartheid regime
As you eat them, save some as seed for the future
Because many of them are grey-bellied boers).*

The reference of the ministers as the products (**“dialogane”**) of the apartheid regime, further emphasises their collaboration with the state in a mission to subjugate the black man. In other words, the speaker is expressing an objection to the unacceptable behaviour of the missionaries which belies their so-called philosophical Christian teachings that good begets good. In this case, the goodness which they preach, is despised because it supports the evil that the apartheid system unleashes at the people. The second line **“lo re go di ja lo beye peo”**, reflect the speaker’s deep feeling of anger and resistance. On the one hand, to keep a seed (**“go baya peo”**) may mean to put it safe in order to compare other seeds with it to confirm what it is for. The advice implies that these fake missionaries should not be forgotten but kept in the memory so that the future should judge them. On the other hand, to keep the seed (*go baya peo*) may be expressed with a feeling of rage and a determination to curtail the spread of an unwanted thing. The derogation with which the lowly white **“mafalepense”** acquired from the Afrikaans **“vaal pens”** (*grey belly*), indicates the speaker’s inner wish that the subjugation by the state and the missionaries sound stop.

4.3.3 Suppression of the African culture as against the upholding of the Western culture

It has been stated earlier that after their arrival in Africa, the missionaries embarked on the mission to dismiss as bad all that was African, including polygamy, initiation ceremonies, ancestral worship, divination and the payment of lobola (*bogadi*). All these, and many other aspects which have been rejected by the westerners, have been handed down from generation by the faithfuls of the ancestral spirits, and form the basis of their lives.

This means that ancestral religion is intricably intervoven with culture. It is for this reason that an objection is hurled at religious institutions for upholding western attitudes and values at the expensl of the indigenous or traditional ones. The following stanza from “**Tlhabologo ya Bophirima**” (*Western civilisation*) voices a yearning to restore the ancestral deity and worship:

Foko le taga badumedi,
Motsha o tshela ka medi.
Fa medi e abelwa tsatsi
Kala di orwa di le metsi.
*(The Word intoxicates the believers
A “Motsha” tree survives by its roots
When the roots are exposed to the sun
Supple branches will be used for fire wood).*

The wisdom behind the first two lines play an important role in conveying the speaker's message of detestation. While the first line is a campaign to reject Christianity because The Word (“**Lefoko**”) or the Bible is said to be intoxicating

or stupifying the believers (“**Lefoko le taga badumedi**”), the second line is a call to support the sustenance of traditional African beliefs symbolised by a tree called “**motsha**” (*Tree of genus Acacia*). The traditionalists are symbolised by “**medi**” (*the roots*). Therefore the expression “**Motsha o tshela ka medi**” (*An Acacia survives by its roots*) is intended to solicit the involvement and the commitment of the people towards the sustenance of ancestral deity. A tree is a symbol of life and a source of energy. Apart from its symbolic meaning, a tree is home to living creatures, it offers shade and shelter, it breaks the destructive winds and it is food to animals. Therefore, the image of a tree being uprooted and the roots being exposed to the sun effectively expresses the speaker's indignation should the missionaries succeed to obliterate ancestral beliefs.

A similar mood of concern is satirically expressed in the following stanza of the same poem “**Tlhabologo ya Bophirima**” (*Western civilisation*) in which Christianity is depicted as empty and unfulfilling like a wild goose chase:

Bodumedi bo a bogisa
 Selo kgama ya letsetse
 Baekobi ba swa la katse,
 Tshega e setswe ke badisa
*(Christian worship is tormenting
 It's like a hartebees with calf
 Whose pursuers end up dead like cats
 And herdboys picking up their fallen loinskins)*

The central idea expressed in this stanza is based on a Setswana idiom discouraging people from pursuing the unattainable namely: “**Go lelela kgama le magogoro**” (*to wail for a hartebees and for the lost skin-romper*). The idiom itself is based on the

story of a hunter who pursued a hartebees so hard that he lost his traditional romper along the way. At the end of a hard chase, he is tired, hungry, outrun by his prey and naked! Therefore, those who run after Christianity, may end up losing everything, including what they had.

The humour embedded in the third line namely “**Baekobi ba swa la katse**” (*The pursuers of Christianity die the death of a cat*) is used here to scorn at the sin-and-repent practice of many converts. Colloqually, the cat is said to have many lives which implies that it also has “many deaths”. Therefore, “**loso la katse**” (*the death of a cat*) is used to despise the many times that the Christians fall into sin (die) and repent only to sin again and again. This scorn of faltering Christians is the speaker's indirect praise of a cultural religion that is sacrosanct.

The speaker's rage toward the imposition of Christianity on them is prompted by the fact that while the traditional deities are downgraded by the whities, they, the architects of Christianity, still cling to their gods:

Nama e kaletse mosung -

Tshweu di e bitsa modimo

Rona re tshosetswa ka kung:

Beng ba rapela badimo

*(A valueless piece of meat hanging on a wild thorn bush
is what the Whities call a god.*

We are threatened with evil experiences:

While the owners (of Christiniaty) worship the gods.

The depiction of an African denied his religion because it is associated with bad luck in one hand, and of the bearer of an unwanted Christian religion lavishy

worshipping his own ancestors on the other, exposes the evil of the missionaries for destroying the African customs. It is clear that the destruction of the traditional beliefs among the indigenous people is done only to ensure the imposer's self-interest. By contrast, the gods worshipped by the Whites ("Tshweu") are as insignificant as "**nama e kaletse mosung**" (*A small piece of meat hanging higher up in a thorny tree*), as compared to the speaker's gods who are as perennial as a tree.

The speaker's agony and defiance of Christianity comes up clearly in the last stanza of "**Tlhabologo ya Bophirima**" (*Western civilisation*) where he angrily pours out his emotions about worshipping a foreign God:

Botshelo jo, bomenemene!
Modimo ga o tlhakanelwa -
Nka se rapele rr'ago
Go go phuthela masego
(*This life is treachery!*
God cannot be shared -
I won't worship your father
Thereby collecting blessings for you).

His defiance is captured in the second line where he strongly declares his stance of totally rejecting foreign worship.

The expression "**Modimo ga o tlhakanelwe**" (*God cannot be shared*) already denotes 'separateness' because it carries the connotation of "let everybody worship his own God as I intend doing". The speaker is speaking from a position of an experienced victim of a trickster who uses God to collect riches or blessings.

In the last two lines, the speaker's extreme anger is captured by the alliteration of the /r/ sound in **"Nka se rapele rr'ago"** (*I won't worship your father*) whose articulation already spells impatience and an unwillingness to keep up with the humiliation. For intensity of meaning, the word **"rr'ago"** (*your father*) is effectively used for two purposes: Firstly it shows disrespect to the imposer of an unacceptable religion, and to the god that he (the imposer) worships. Traditionally, in Setswana, **"rraago"** (*your father*) can be only uttered by an elder to a young person, and is regarded a taboo if the flow of communication can be reversed. Therefore, the free usage of the term indicates anger that is accompanied by disrespect. Secondly, **"R'rago"** (*your father*) is a parody of "Our Father" as it appears in the Lord's Prayer, whom the revolting speaker rejects, hence **"rr'ago"** (*your father*) and not **"Rraarona"** (*Our Father*).

The denunciation of the Bible (**"Lefoko"**) in the last stanza of **"Boruti"** (*Priesthood*) expresses a general protest against Christianity:

Banna ba epa motlhoboloko,
 Go latlha Lefoko hukuhuku!
 Mothwana o re tsile ditlhodi -
 Ra thanya mepe le le tsebeng.
*(Men are digging a bottomless pit,
 To throw the Bible in there!
 The despised person came to spy on us -
 By the time we realised, good things had gone).*

"Motlhoboloko" is a deep narrow hole which makes impossible the retrieval of anything thrown in it. Throwing away the Bible (**"Lefoko"**) in such a pit is a dramatic or militant display of protest against something abhorred. This anger is prompted by the exploitative attitude of the missionaries who did not only selfishly

divorce the people from their cherished culture, but also used their religion and values for self- enrichment.

4.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the theme of socio-cultural and religious protest have been evaluated. Not only the theme has been evaluated, but also the expressions which convey the said theme were briefly evaluated for clarity.

Contrary to most poems of protest by many which predominantly portray the theme of political protest, Motlhake's poetry evaluated in this chapter confirms the existence of other forms of protest which can be directed against other institutions like the cultural and religious institutions. Motlhake's display of the protest element in the field other than the much written about, renders him a writer who is not only observant but mostly critical of acts of injustices and inhumanity.

CHAPTER 5

EXPRESSION IN MOTLHAKE'S PROTEST POETRY

5.1 PREAMBLE

The aim of this chapter is to specifically examine and evaluate style in Motlhake's poetry, that is, the manner in which he uses language in order to express the theme of protest. The style of an author as viewed by Fowler (1987:236) is describable in linguistic terms, and it is also 'justifiable and valuable in respect of non-linguistic factors'. This means that in evaluating style, focus is mainly on how the use of language highlights the author's subject matter. In literary terms, the scientific analysis of the content with reference to the form (language) in which it is presented is referred to as stylistics (ABRAMS, 1988:245). In other words, it is the method whereby a work of art is analysed on the basis of the style employed. In this chapter therefore, attention will be paid on the aesthetic quality of Motlhake's protest poetry and how the reader emotionally reacts to the content presented.

Stylistic criticism as already mentioned, concerns the issue of language content as the realisation of the emotive or sense content in a written work of art. Poetry itself is a manner of speaking, a mode of communication, a way with language; therefore, the importance of language cannot be overlooked. Although language is used in all the different genres, there is a feature that will always distinguish poetry from the rest and that lies in the indirect mode of expression. When it comes to protest poetry, the mode of expression becomes more indirect and obscure because the author expresses himself within certain constraints. He has an urge to communicate with his audience certain disquieting issues, yet at the same time, he has to guard against being victimised by those whom protest is levelled against. He is expressing

himself against an order that he knows can be deeply offended and even react in a harmful manner against him. Therefore, in order to evade confrontation with power that can retaliate in a harsh or even tragic manner, the poet 'creates' a language that will be both an instrument of attack on, and a defence against those whom protest is directed. This is where stylistics becomes relevant in the evaluation of the author's created and sometimes obscure language characterised by unusual syntax, affective devices, sound effects, spatial and graphic characteristics in order to communicate the message intended. In this chapter, Motlhake's protest poetry will be evaluated in terms of the stylistic analysis adopted from Ngara (1982:12). The relevance of this criticism in this study is informed by Ngara's (1985:5) claims that it:-

- (i) uses general linguistic principles to single out the distinctive features of the different idiosyncrasies of an author;
- (ii) relates the analysis of linguistic features to considerations of content value and aesthetic quality in art;
- (iii) brings methods and insights of linguistics into literature; and it is
- (iv) more precise and more systematic.

We have already dealt with the analysis of themes in **Chapters 3 and 4**. Since themes are expressed in language, analyses in the preceding chapters could not avoid making references to the matter of expression. Likewise, this chapter on the evaluation of expression will unavoidably contain points hinted at in the previous chapters.

5.2 STYLISTIC ANALYSIS

This chapter is not going to engage in the analysis of style in isolation, but it will particularly analyse the functionality and effectiveness of style in communicating the theme. It does not intend using poems to illustrate stylistic features of poetry, but seeks rather to expose striking poetic devices which feature prominently in order to demonstrate how Motlhake makes statements of protest without either being propagandistic or compromising art. Towards the end of the chapter there will be a general overview of other features common to some poems, where manner of expression contributes to the effectiveness with which the themes are communicated.

5.2.1 “Montsho”

Voice in literature is a technique that authors of protest literature or literature of combat use to create an illusion that their criticism of the system is not expressed by themselves but by voices in a work of art. Motlhake's skill in the use of “voice” or “tone of voice” in expressing the theme of a poem is exemplified in the poem “**Montsho**” in which a fictional speaker describes the Black man's lot under the oppressive apartheid system to a fictional listener. The pervasive presence of the person or speaker throughout the whole poem is felt through the effective use of first - person narration “**ke**” (*I*) in:

Ke tla go bolelela o botsa
(I will tell you, should you ask)
O botsa ke tla go bolelela
(As you're asking, I will tell you)
Ke go boleletse o botsa
(I told you when you asked)

With heated emotions still under control, the statement carries the connotation of “*Shut up, you don’t know anything about being black.*” Although the speaker sounds bitter, the statement indicates that he is prepared to enlighten the white person, *should he ask.*

Stage 2 - Question: **“O itseng ka go nna montsho?”**
(What do you know about being black?)

Statement: **“O botsa, ke tla go bolelela”**
(Since you are asking, I'll tell you)

At this stage, emotions begin to rise as the statement suggests that the addressee indicated that he needs to know more than what he thinks he knows. It is after the statement that the speaker pours out his emotions by revealing more pains of humiliation, physical abuse and dehumanisation at the hands of the whites namely:

Go tshameka ntswanyana bosigo
Go tšhematšhema pele ga pitse
Go rafa semane le re tsee!
Go kobiwa fa dithero di tsewa
Go tsewa jaaka ntšwa e se na maele
Go thimotsa ntsi ka seditse
Go disa modipa a robetse
*(To play puppy at night
To trot briskly to lead a horse
To draw honey on the hottest day!
To be chased away when meetings are held
To be regarded like a dog which cannot contribute*

*To ward off the flies with a whisker
To guard the despot while he sleeps.)*

All the sufferings are expressed in an agitated tone that is developing towards the climax in the third stage of the supposed interaction of the speaker and the addressee, the mood works towards a rhetorical lapse, as the tense of the statement changes.

Stage 3 - Question: **“O itseng ka go nna montsho?”**
(What do you know about being black?)

Statement: “Ke go boletse o mpotsa”
(I told you as you wisely asked for knowledge)

After this stage, the speaker is still pouring out his anger, but he is about to stop. The end of his rage is prompted by the omission of a statement after the last rhetoric question which creates an impression of the addressee having moved away dumbfoundedly after gaining sufficient knowledge about black people.

As a poet of redoubtable lyric power, Motlhahe uses words and phrases in different contexts so as to evoke particular feelings. The use of skilfully selected words makes his lines powerful because they effectively enlarge, flavour or change the normal meanings. The highlighted words of action from “**Montsho**”, express the powerless, position of the blacks under the oppressive white rule:

O tshameka ntšwanyana bosigo
(playing)
O tšhematšhema pele ga pitse

(trotting along)

O **gasamololwa** ka magasane

(spray-gunned with bullets)

O **tsubulwa** ka sankotwana

(swept off)

O **tsirolelwa** batho ba fiwa.

(offered a pinch)

If the highlighted words could be substituted by “**tlolatlola**” (*jump along*), “**sianasiana**” (*run*), “**thuntshiwa**” (*be shot*), “**gogwa**” (*dragged*) and “**fiwa**” (*given*) respectively, they would demand less emphasis. But in the spaces they are occupying now, they display much more denotative power than the descriptive or demonstrative words like adjectives and adverbs. They are ordinary words with extraordinary connotations. “**Tshameka**” changes meaning from “frolics, passing time pleasantly or amusing oneself.” Used in the political context of the poem, the word depicts a black man’s emasculation and degradation by the whites. There is nothing that a puppy can do to protect the household or property at night apart from alerting the big dogs about an intrusion. Therefore playing puppy at night expresses the humiliation that is caused by the blackman’s hard work of guarding the sleeping master all night.

“**Tšhematšhema**” refers to a continuous, laborious and monotonous action which differs from ordinary brisk running because the latter indicates that there will be a stop. In “**tšhematšhema**” the point of stopping is unthinkable just as the subjection of the blacks to physical torture of running and leading a horse by the leash is never-ending. A feature which indicates Motlhake’s power with words is the onomatopoeic character of “**tšhematšhema**”. There are different meanings attached to this word. Firstly, it indicates the motion or the pace of a runner (an oppressed

black) which is slow from hard work yet constant. Secondly, it portrays an auditory image of bare feet running on a hard surface or gravel road, created by the rhythm of the sound /tšh - tšh/ in the word. Thirdly, the word reflects a situation which would force the black person to “tšhematšhema” rather than to “tsamaya” (*walk*) and “gwanta” (*march*) for instance. The word does not only refer to the blackman’s lack of power to change the situation, but it also depicts acts of physical torture.

The action of “gasamololwa” which means to “spray a person with a hail of bullets” already indicates a merciless killing which is done with utter impunity. The blacks are being killed brutally for no reason with weapons they dared not possess. Therefore, the word does not only express the position of the blacks as the shooting targets of the whites. It also indicates the lack of protection by law, and the lack of power to lodge a complaint of “honour-killing” against a callous white perpetrator.

Motlhake’s word choice is not only about precision, it is also loaded with emotion and drama. The word “tsubulwa” on its own, implies a series of actions all performed at once. On one side, it implies that a person who is being snatched (a black man) is able to resist because he is physically stronger than the assailant. On the other hand, the assailant who has political power, is physically weak and his attempt to throw the victim (a family man) face-down in order to lash him on the backside succeeds only because the powerless victim submits. Therefore, the use of this term does not only express the black man’s disempowerment and emasculation, but also portrays his humiliation suffered at the hands of the whites.

The disadvantaged position of the blacks, their poverty and lack of power to own anything are all embraced in the word “go tsirolelwa,” meaning to be given very little or something next to nothing. This idiom is very effective because it portrays

a situation in which the Blacks lack what the whites possess in abundance.(cf “batho ba fiwa”).

All these terms of misery and pathos are syntactically placed where the strong stress or accent will fall on their initial syllables for more recognition and to enhance their importance in the utterances.

tshámeka

tšhématšhema

gásamololwa

tsúbulwa

The stresses and weaknesses of the syllables are not patterned but the systematic stressing of the first syllables depicts the force with which the dramatic-speaker expresses them to the passive listener. Communicating his message through sound is one feature which Motlhake has utilised effectively. The predominant use of the fricatives and affricates speech sounds like /g/, /tšh/, /kg/, /tlh/ and /tl/ which impede the smoothness of speech, best articulate the anger, restlessness and the impatience of the speaker. The highlighted sounds in the following examples complement the meanings of the word by indirectly making reference to the mood of the speaker:-

Montsho, ntšwa ga a na maele

*(A Black person, like a dog,
cannot offer advices)*

Bagoma ba tlhabile mangole

*(The despots lying on their
backs with legs bent)*

A protest writer as mentioned earlier, writes under certain constraints whereby he has to express himself openly but indirectly. The use of impersonal and detached references is one other prominent device in Motlhake's poetry and towards this end. This feature is most observable in the form of passive verbal construction.

O gasamololwa ka magasane
O ntshwa go bitsa Kgorosane
O tsubulwa ka sankotwana
O rongwa go tsoma kgokong

These constructions are not necessarily protest strategies, but are used here in contempt of a perpetrator. The speaker here is an object (on whom actions of collousness are performed), and the actions are also mentioned and not the ruthless doer. This omission of the subject (the oppressor) has two purposes: Firstly, it may be for fear of confronting the oppressor openly and his possible harsh retaliation. Secondly, it is for keeping a safe distance from an authority that is known but hated and despised. The hatred for an oppressive authority is expressed by a term of scorn namely, "**kokorala**" in "**Rotwe a kokoretse godimo**" (*A big male baboon perched on the back of the horse.*) "**Kokorala**" is a term of sarcasm and scorn that expresses more the feeling of the speaker than the action referred to. The feeling of the speaker towards the white master is that of hatred because in contrast to the physical torture suffered by the servant trotting in front of a horse, the master is comfortably 'perched' on horseback.

Contrast has been employed to show striking differences between the woes of the blacks and the bliss of the whites. The whole poem is structured into two parallel situations that can be summarised as follows: On the one, the Blacks are powerless and heavily laden with labour, on the other, whites have all the power which they

would share, and a life full of comfort. The effectiveness of contrast here contributes to Motlhake's depiction of the theme (protest) through form or structure. Most of the lines are presented the side of the blacks and that of the whites. The following pairs of lines are used to illustrate that contrast:

O tshameka ntšwanyana, bosigo!
 'Mong a ile ka dikgotshane;
 O tšhematšhema pele'a pitse
 Rotwe a kokoretse godimo
 O ikatega ka dikatana
 Balekane ba itšhampile
(He plays puppy at night!
While the master is asleep
He trods in front of a horse
A big male baboon perched on top
He is draped in tatters
While his mates are elegently dressed.)

Contrasting words that depict the real situation between the blacks and the whites are:

"Katse"	<i>against</i>	"nkwe"
"tšhematšhema"	<i>against</i>	"kokorala"
"dikatana"	<i>against</i>	"itšhampile"

On the surface, "**katse**" (*cat*) is weaker than "**nkwe**" (*leopard*), "**tšhematšhema**" (*trot*) is a term of pathos and misery while "**kokorala**" (*perch*), although a derogatory term, depicts luxury; and "**dikatana**" (*tatters*) are less presentable than

“itšhampa” (*dress elegantly*). These references suffice to express the disadvantaged position of the blackman lamented in this poem.

Deeper down, the use of contrast delineates the issues which contribute to the black man's suffering as follows:

- (a) **“Katse”** against **“nkwe”** makes a strong comment about disempowerment: both animals are felines, but the cat is weaker than the leopard.
- (b) **“tšhematšhema”** against **“kokorala,”** the White man is portrayed as living in luxury/ comfortably, and at the same time subjecting the Black person to physical abuse and uncalled for humiliating labour.
- (c) **“dikatana”** against **“tšhampa”** implicitly comments about economic exploitation where the black person is depicted as living in object poverty while toiling for the rich white people.

What contributes to the obscurity of the protest element depicted by contrasting lines, is the fact that there is no direct reference to the whites in the poem. Focus is only on **“montsho”** (*a black man*) and his lack. It is through the extensive reference to his position that the opposite (*the whites*) is implied.

5.2.2 “Molao”

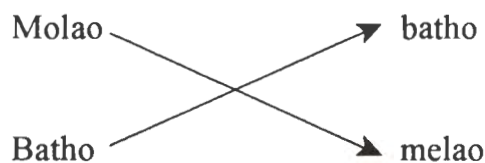
This is one of the very few highly patterned protest poems and is in the form of couplets. It is ironic that a poem that protests against the strictures or the constraints of law should conform to artifice. The irony in confining this poem to a strict pattern of rhyme illustrates Motlhake's ability to use form to express theme. The

poem is about the undesirability of imposing laws, and it communicates this in the form of rhymed couplets.

The witty thought in the last couplet, makes “**Molao**” an epigram, which refers to ‘a witty poem that is pointed and terse’ (ABRAMS, 1988:54)

Molao ga o direlwe batho
batho ba itirela melao
*(Laws should not be made for people
People should make their own laws)*

What makes the meaning of this couplet to pierce deeply through is the balance, the symmetry held firm by the words “**molao**” and “**batho**” which occupy the first and the last spaces interchangeably. The balance maintained in the above couplet can be observed in the chiasmus as shown below:-



The balance maintained gives this couplet a sense of completeness, and of the truth that laws must not be made for the people. The dramatic metaphor of repressive laws clipping the wings of a big bird (“**melao e robaka nong diphofa**”) expresses a yearning for a life free of political constraints.

5.2.3 “Dipolaseng”

Motlhake's power with words is also evident in the vocabulary of pathos and misery which he generously uses. The poem **“Dipolaseng”** is fraught with words which conjure up the pains of the black farm labourers at the hands of their masters. Working on the farm is referred to as **“kweba”** in

Re kweba ntle go tefa.

(We work hard without being paid)

“Kweba” means working very hard as in serving a sentence. The helplessness and insignificance of the workers is illustrated well by the possessive expression **“Dimense tsa ga aubase”**, *(The people of to the boss)*. The words **“dimense”** and **“aubase”** are of Afrikaans origin, the language of baaskap. The expression **“Dimense tsa ga aubase”** therefore refers to the slave-master relationship that prevails on the farm. The humanity of the people (*‘mense’*) is now translated into servitude (labouring for *“baas”*). Farms in South Africa belonged to the Afrikaaner *‘baas’* therefore the use of Afrikaans words localises the environment namely **“dipolaseng”**.

“Koname” in **“o koname le morwadie”** means to bend in painful labour, doing something not out of pleasure but out of pressure.

The pain is intensified by the fact that **“ba otlwaotlwa ka thobane”** which means that they are repeatedly prodded with a stick, probably heaving something like the Afrikaans **“toe! toe!”** (*come-come!*), with the threat of corporal punishment not far off.

Work on farms is a boring continuous routine, which is depicted by a sluggish rhythm of poetic lines that are expressed in a monotonous reporting tone:

<i>Agent</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Labour</i>
Koko	o lela	Manginana
Rre	o pura	mebofu
Modisa	o bolola	natso
Motsadi	o dira	kitseng

The use of words representing members of a family namely “**koko, rre, modisa, motsadi**” (*grandmother, father, son, mother*) in separate incidences and each faced with a particular chore, means that a whole family is at the mercy of the white farm owners. They have no other place to go or stay as they are born on the farm, and that makes them “**Dimense tsa ga Aubase**” (*The people belonging to the white boss*).

Apart from the choice of words, their arrangement as well makes the poetic lines powerful. A word placed at its unusual position in a sentence brings a particular effective change. In “**Dipolaseng**”, the change in the systactical ordering of words directs the point of focus from “**rona**” to “**boroko**”:

Boroko rona ra bo bina.

(As to sleep, we dared not even dream of)

In Setswana, which is an SVO (subject-verb-object) language (MOTHOAGAE, 1993:13), the normal grammatical structure of the sentence should be:-

Rona ra bina boroko

(We dared not sleep)

The deviation from the normal structure places emphasis on “**Boroko**” and “**bina**” which points to being denied sleep. In this instance, it is the plight of farm labourers

who work hard, (*go kweba ntle go tefa*), sleep less (*boroko ra bo bina*) and wake up early (*re tsogelela diforong*) which the speaker communicate with the audience.

The choice of “*pura*” instead of “*gama*” (*to milk*) says much about the monotonous and boring routine job. The sound that is more audible in the word stimulates the “*purrr-purrr!*” continuous sound of milk dripping into the milk pail as the labourer is milking the cows. By the sound of milk, it is evident that what is being done is not a labour of love but of servitude.

It is only the people who have no means of subsistence, who have no place to stay and who own nothing, whose shock about their eviction can be expressed by “*re letse re sule bokidi*” (*we were benumbed yesterday*). This idiom expressing misery does not only refer to the painful shock which is experienced by the labourers who are evicted, but it also dramatises the effect of such shock on the hearer. The immediate reaction when the news of eviction is abrupt silence followed by confusion as the family starts preparing for the unknown destination the following day. In this expression, the aspect of tense too plays an important role as the tense formative “*letse*” (*yester night*) further adds to the pain of the labourers that the notice of eviction came in the evening at knock-off time, and at the time when “*rre a bega setlhabi*” (*father complains about pains*). It is unpleasantly surprising that eviction should take place at the end of the month (“*khuduga mafelo a kgwedi*”) when every worker is looking forward to a month’s wages.

In the last stanza of “*Dipolaseng*”, Motlhake’s elliptical style is evident. There are only four lines, but they make reference to many instances about the white farm owner’s callousness namely:-

- (a) that he can evict a blackman from his farm, at any time, even at night,

- (b) that an ailing labourer dare not report his state of health as this can lead to his eviction; and
- (c) that there is too much exploitation in farm labour that just when a labourer is expecting his wages at the end of the month, he is instead given orders to vacate the master's premises.

5.2.4 “Goreng ke sa nyale?” (*Why don't I marry, [you ask]?*)

It is important firstly to note that the title is in the form of question and not a statement, “Goreng ke sa nyale” (*Why I do not marry*), which would be followed by a calm explanation why the speaker is a sworn bachelor. The emotional appeal of the rhetorical question “Goreng ke sa nyale?” (*Why don't I marry?*) is strengthened by the fact that it sure is a repetition of a question posed by the addressee in the poem. The whole poem is a kind of a response or a reply to the addressee. The question (the title) already raises the tone of the speaker which makes it a statement of protest.

The rapid succession of metaphors which describe a woman as “sephaphathela” (*a thunderstorm*); “morwalela” (*a flood*) suffice to reveal his protest. The description of a woman as “lefatshe la go gatswa godimo, letlase le setse le beng” (*a piece of land you own on the surface while its underground is claimed by others*) is a double entendre. Ordinarily, the metaphor depicted a woman as an untrustworthy person not worthy to be relied upon because whilst she is married, she continues to be her folk's source of wealth. Her marriage is only partial because her other part still belongs with her family. In the second instance, the strength of the land image lies mainly in the effective choice of the word “letlase” (*underground*) instead of the locative construction “kwa tlase” (*underneath*). Apart from its denotative meaning of “down below the surface”, the word “letlase” also vulgarly refers to the genital area

of a human being. Therefore the expression “**letlase le setse le beng**” is an attack on women who get married but continue their sexual activities with their previous lovers. Whether it is expressed as a demotic phrase or an ordinary metaphor, it does not alter the strong feelings the speaker has against women.

The idioms and proverbs that go with solitude or staying away from people have also been used generously and effectively in the fifth stanza to intensify the speaker’s anti-marriage attitude; for example:-

Tshwene tshimong e ntshwa ke senya : *The proverb is used to indicate a person’s withdrawal from a hostile situation*

go gata kusene : *It expresses a speaker’s pride in opting to walk away alone*

go tlhabela pele : *It is uttered in self-praise for moving ahead alone*

maraganateng : *Part of a proverb that encourages a person to stay out of other people’s internal problems.*

go lesa go itshela madi a kgofa : *An idiom warning one to keep off.*

5.2.5 “**A re tla gola?**” (*Will we ever grow up?*)

Unlike in “**Goreng ke sa nyale?**” where the punctuation mark effectively brings forth the mood of revolt and protest, Motlhake in “**A re tla gola?**” employs the question mark to express protest through threnody or lamentation. Threnody is a poem that bemoans the passing of things which are greatly valued (ABRAMS 1988:47), and it is presented as the utterance of a single person. “**A re tla gola?**” benefits the description of threnody as it is uttered by one person who bewails the proper order of things. The

title suggests a sad reflection or a lament for some great loss. In this case, it is the loss of human dignity at the hands of the whites that is lamented. In actual fact, every stanza should have started with the refrain “**A re tla gola?**” for the lament to be formal and sustained, but the question is only in the title so that the stanzas remain unattached like different digressions which the narrator constantly reverts/refers to, to communicate the complaint to his audience. In other words, the whole poem is based on: “I doubt whether we will ever grow up - not when the circumstances are still like this or that!”. Of importance, is the fact that “**A re tla gola?**” (*Will we ever grow up?*) is not only directed at the sufferers or the victims; it is also directed at the oppressive authorities, appealing to them to be more sympathetic to the plight of their suffering subjects..

The poem protests indirectly against the things that stand in the way to liberation. The structure of the poem is as follows:

In the first stanza, protest is against the loss of humanity among the black people (**Batho ba a senyega**) as a result of “**Mosetlhe**” (*Mr Paleface*) and all that he brought with him. The question “**A re tla gola?**” (*Will we ever grow up?*) becomes relevant in that it awakens the consciousness of the audience about the state-of- affairs so that the situation should improve or change.

In the second stanza, the point of focus is on the degradation of the Blacks and their loss of dignity:

Rremogolo o sule a boga,
Pelo ga e na ngwana
Rona re roniswa tlotlo,
Rre o sule e le “boe!”

*(My grandfather died suffering,
Young as I am, that still makes me furious ...
We are deprived of dignity,
My father was still being called by
"boy" when he died.)*

The speaker is protesting against an oppressive system where old people are subjected to suffering, old men being called derogatory names like "boy!" and people being denied dignity. The use of the question or an imaginary refrain "**A re tla gola?**" (*Will we ever grow up?*), amplifies the speaker's lamentation so as to be heard by the perpetrators of human injustices.

In the third stanza, the speaker's tone of lament is used effectively to bewail the inferior status of education fed the black child by "**majakana**" (*the gold diggers*). Here too, the question challenges the authorities of the Educational system which is seen as an impediment to the growth or development of the blacks.

The use of a title that probes the minds of many, as well as the sombre tone that is mostly used in dirges and elegies, Motlhake has created a platform of protest where the people converge as in a funeral, but are awakened to the viles of the system.

The intensity of protest is heightened by the reversal from lamentation to hope. The speaker's exultation expressed in the fourth stanza illustrates another of Motlhake's styles of expressing protest and that is by using prolepsis, prophecy, in other words, a leap into a victorious future while the present oppressive status still prevails. Prolepsis in times of constraints, is effective in that it instills in the audience an anticipation of a changed or improved future.

Boipuso bo mo kgorong,
Bontsi bo ithuta tlhong!
Ba ba tlhatswang maoto
Ba setse ba bola bogato.
*(Independence is just on the doorstep
Many are starting to show compassion to those
they humiliated!
Those who made people to wash their feet
Surely their feet are beginning to rot.)*

The stanza, anticipates a situation of liberation where humanity is restored, people are treated with respect and children are offered good quality education. It is as if this is already happening even though it seems unlikely to happen.

The same technique of anticipation and prophecy appears in “**Letlalo**” (*The skin*) and “**Moreri**” (*The preacher*). What makes this technique or skill more effective is the fact that Motlhake has written these poems during the apartheid era, the period of constraints. The following example is from “**Letlalo**”:

Metlha ya letlalo e fetile
Boipuso bo gorogile
Ba tlang ba re kgalegile
Tsosang majwe a ribegilwe.
*(Gone are the days where the skin colour
is an advantage
Independence has finally come
Those who still yearn to oppress us
Dig ye the past from the buried rocks)*

Ironically, this poem was written in the days when the provisions of the Publications Act of the Republic of South Africa would have rendered it (the poem) undesirable for bringing any section of the inhabitants of the Republic into ridicule or contempt (WATT, 1989:16). The poem escaped the scrutiny of the censor board because of the prolepsis which to the view of the authority, was a remote reality.

In “**Moreri**” (*The Preacher*), anticipation is evident in the last stanza:

Batswana, tsogang borokong -
Bokgoa bo fedile ngogola.
Botho bo letse bo jele bokgoa,
Molaong rotlhe r'a lekana.
Satane o swetse dihubeng!
*(Batswana nation, wake up from sleep -
White supremacy ended last year
Humanity has conquered westernism
Before the law, we are all equal
The devil has died in their chests)*

5.2.6 Stylistic features in other poems in general

Strong sarcastic references to the oppressors in the different forms of protest outlined in the previous chapters, namely the Political protest, Socio-cultural protest and Religious protest are very relevant in highlighting the theme.

Where a whiteman is referred to as “**Mosetlhe**” (*Mr Paleface*) and “**Tshweu**” (*Whities*), there is already a division of race in terms of colour: “their - colour and my-colour. The victims are using these references to indicate their objection to the

discrimination of people because those who are white are the ones who are more advantaged than the blacks. The following terms are coined and used to refer to the white race, namely “**makgoa**” and “**Basweu**”. The preference of the intentional derisions in “**Tshweu**” (*whities*) and “**Mosetlhe**” (*Mr Paleface*) to the acceptable terms already mentioned, also comment on the lack of a healthy human relationship between the two races.

In “**Montsho**” (*A Blackman*), a dramatic monologue of an agitated black speaker, where most terms of colour would be expected, there are no references to colour. Most of the terms which refer to the political situation surrounding the context are those that depict disrespect for white authority, the powerlessness of the blacks and their deep rooted hatred for the whites. The oppressors are called: “**batho**” (*people*); “**bagoma**” (*despots*); “**rotwe**” (*big male baboon*); “**thaka ya gago**” (*people of same age as you*).

In “**Bomatlhow’adibona**”, men against whom women protest are called derogatory names like “**bannana**” (*small men*); “**daekopo**” (*illiterates*); “**dikolobe di rekelwa kgetseng**” (*pigs in pokes*). Terms prevalently used for whites are “**Mosetlhe, Tshweu, Sebefa**” (*Paleface, Whities and Ugly one*) “**Tlhabologo ya Bophirima, Boruti, Moepong.**”

Poems are written in free form, that is, against the poetic rule of rhyme. This style of projective verse used by Motlhake has proved to be very effective in expressing inward anger freely.

5.2.7 CONCLUSION

The evaluation of Motlhake's style in this chapter has indicated that he is a poet of no mean order. Most of the poems are written freely, without diminishing their value as protest poetry. His skill with words, biting sarcasm, images, dramatic metaphors, silence by punctuation marks and ambiguity, all indicate that he is not only a writer of poetry, but a person who is very observant and critical about events of his time. He has also explored other forms of poetry like epigram "**Molao**" and threnody "**A re tla gola?**" rarely ventured into by many Setswana writers. The analysis of his poetry also shows that wit, satire and ridicule are effective means through which vices, faults and the unavoidable defects of human character within a society can be exposed and corrected.

CHAPTER 6

IN CONCLUSION

This being the first study of the protest theme and its expression in a Setswana literary form, in Setswana poetry, and specifically in S.F. Motlhake's poetry, this brief final chapter can only claim to have made a small beginning. This line of research can only start here and not end here.

The study has attempted firstly to put to rest the misconception that there is no committed writing in the African languages, especially in the form of protest literature. Secondly, it has hopefully demonstrated that, on the contrary, there have been literary creations (oral and written texts) of this nature for ages in these languages, enough to engage us in life-long researches.

We have cited traditional orature in the form of proverbs, narratives and songs as examples of literary contributions in the African languages to the fight against unfair social, religious or political practices. We have briefly noted how modern novelists, dramatists and poets, even in the face of stringent censure, have dared to voice their displeasure at socio-political evils of their times. Fair enough, their voices were not strong or numerous enough to match those of their counterparts in English; but there is no denying the fact that they represented the voices of the more repressed, more disadvantaged speakers of the native languages. They deserve recognition, respect and a closer, more extensive examination than the present study could offer.

It is in this regard that the study hopes to alert the attention of the scholarly world to the shining example of Motlhake, whose poetry not only protests against politicians, but also against socio-cultural as well as religious institutions. Most importantly, it demonstrates that he achieves this without being propagandistic. His ample use of real

life dramas and conducts; his ample use of poetic devices like various poetic voices, cryptic, loaded and highly expressive word choice; his biting sarcasm as well as his perceptive sense of irony: these have been fairly demonstrated in the analysis of selected poems from his wide collections.

It can be said without doubt, that it is in fact in his protest poetry that his maturity and mastery of poetic mastery really come to the fore. It can also be claimed that although he writes in a language of limited reach, he compares well with the best of his native counterparts in English, the rest of whom fall far too short in terms of artistry.

Although we chose a small sample of his poetry for the purpose of this study (the presence of protest can be detected in the majority of his vast repertoire in varying degrees), the selection fairly represent his views on society, religion and politics. It voices the misgivings of men against married life and relationship with present-day women. It expresses protest by women against disrespectful treatment by the menfolk. It speaks against Christian bigotry and against the abandoning of indigenous forms of worship. It speaks out the feelings of the masses regarding racism and all forms of political oppression.

Finally, issues dealt with in Motlhake's poetry are a reality, since they are based on everyday situations in apartheid South Africa and its aftermath. Even more importantly, they are topical now as they will also be for some time to come. Aspects concerning human existence are not static; they constantly change. So are socio-political structures and tendencies. As governments change, laws are made, powers are gained and lost, and there will always be disparities and struggles between the powerless and those in power, between those who seek change and those who resist it. As a result there will always be some form of protest, and a place for protest literature. This fact will ensure the continued value of protest literature such as Motlhake's poetry, which is contrary

to the general belief that with the democratisation of countries like South Africa, such literature ceases to matter. The following six newspaper cuttings, four of which are from different newspapers of the same day 3rd January 1999, show that even after 1994, acts of discrimination, harassment as well as abuse still abound, and are not likely to end soon:

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A: *“Racism - the struggle continues into the next millenium.”*

(3 January 1999, CITY PRESS)

The article is about the problem of the colour line which has given birth to the system of racial discrimination in South Africa. The contents hereof relate to the poems “**Montsho**” and “**Letlalo**” where Motlhake comments about racial hostility and discrimination.

APPENDIX B: *“Please relieve the pain that I still endure!”*

(3 January 1999, CITY PRESS)

Even in the new South Africa, many blacks are still physically abused and tortured. This incident where a group of worshippers have been shot at for “passing through a farm,” relates to the brutal killing of farm labourers as outlined by Motlhake in “**Montsho**” and “**Letlalo**.”

APPENDIX C: *“They are free because they’re white”*

(13 December 1998, CITY PRESS)

The contents of this article are similar to those of contained in Appendix B namely racism and discrimination. The outcry of the powerless black people expressed in the title of this article, echoes the voices of the oppressed masses in the poem “**Letlalo**” where they are being killed with utter callousness.

APPENDIX D: *“Blacks being overlooked for senior posts in SAPS”*

(3 January 1999, CITY PRESS)

The article is about racial discrimination and the issue of job reservation. This is the same practice which Motlhake has made a statement on in **“Moepong”** namely:

“Tiro di ajwa ka mmala” (Jobs are allocated according to the colour of the skin).

APPENDIX E: *“Sexual harassment is everyone’s problem”*

(25 April 1999, CITY PRESS)

The contents of this article relates to Motlhake’s poem

“Bomatlhwa’adibona” where women speak out about sexual harassment and the stereotypes of woman-inferiority.

APPENDIX F: *“Granny booting out”* (3 January 1999, SUNDAY TIMES)

The article is about the exploitation of farm labourers. Because of powerlessness, the labourers are at the mercy of their employers. The eviction of an old woman from a farm has also been complained about in Motlhake’s poem **“Dipolaseng,”** last stanza where an old man has to leave the farm because of an aching body.

Racism: the struggle continues into the next millennium

IN his address to the 1999 Pan African Conference a prolific African American writer, scholar and philosopher WEB Du Bois declared the problem of the twentieth century as "the problem of the colour line".

Indeed the 20th century had sharpened and deepened distinctions between colonisers, the powerful, the wealthy, the developed and privileged on the one hand, and colonised, powerless, poor, diseased, and the landless and disadvantaged on the other.

The fact that these distinctions manifest themselves along the colour line suggests that Du Bois was both insightful and prophetic.

As we peek through the next century, it would appear that we are no closer to resolving this problem.

With the computer revolution upon us, and the accompanying glaring distinction between the electronic haves and have nots, it would appear that the problem of the colour line is likely to be perpetuated.

The problem of the colour line is fundamentally a problem of racism, which we in South Africa have been reluctant to address squarely in the face.

In our haste to bid goodbye to the past, we have failed to appreciate the tenaciousness and magnitude of white racism.

We allowed ourselves to be hoodwinked by seductive phrases such as rainbowism and non-racialism as if invoking these phrases in our speeches and literary footnotes would magically transport the country to the idyllic future.

If we are to solve the problem of white racism we will need to have a proper grasp

of what it is, its historical context, how it manifests itself, and what new forms it is likely to assume in the new dispensation.

Under apartheid white prejudice and racism was overt and frequently crude and the material, physical and psychological impact of blatant discrimination on black people was severe, all encompassing and persistent.

As would be expected, the effects of white racism could not suddenly disappear with the ushering in of the new dispensation. What is troubling, however, is the pervading reluctance to engage head-on white racism and whites' racial attitudes.

While we no longer experience a blatant form of discrimination, the subtle form had equal devastating effects. For most blacks most encounters with whites can mean a confrontation with racism.

Not unexpectedly, most whites refuse to acknowledge that racial discrimination remains widespread and entrenched in traditional white workplaces, company boardrooms, law courts, schools and other institutions.

In fact some white commentators and black neo-conservatives have argued that the emphasis on racial discrimination and redress for discrimination is unconstructive and wrongheaded.

This view is derived from a limited notion that sees racism as certain extreme views and actions about white superiority and supremacy; prejudices and actions acted out only by extreme bigots not considered representative of the general white population.

This viewpoint, and the luxury of look-

The problem of the colour line is fundamentally a problem of racism, which we in South Africa had been reluctant to address squarely in the face, writes Professor Sipho Seepe of the University of Venda.

ing at racial discrimination with detachment, make it easy for whites to deny the reality of the racism reported by blacks.

Racism refers not only to discriminatory actions of particular bigots, but also institutionalised discrimination through which whites dominate people of colour. One could easily refer to the stereotypes and jitters that almost always follow the appointments of blacks in areas considered no-go areas such as the judiciary, financial institutions, major businesses, and white institutions of higher learning.

Through institutionalised discrimination whites not only restrict individual mobility, but also social and economic mobility for people of colour as a group. Racism is backed by power and resources.

In their incisive study of racism, Feagin and Sikes, authors of *Living with Racism*, advance four theoretical propositions to understand racism. These propositions are shaped by theoretical insights provided by victims of racism. The first proposition is that modern racism should be understood as a lived experience. When blacks speak of racial discrimination, they do not speak about abstract concepts of discrimination learned from books, but tell of mistreatment encountered as they traverse historically white places.

A second proposition is that racial discriminatory experiences are not only

painful and stressful, but also have a cumulative impact on the individual, their families, and their communities. A black person's life is an unending disruption and mistreatment suffered personally and by family members. For the majority of whites acts of discrimination and acts of violence are isolated events. As a result they feel that blacks tend to over-react. What they forget is that blacks' lives of quiet desperation, generated by a litany of daily large and small events, remind them of their place in society.

For instance, for whites "Kaffir" and "Nigger" may simply mean epithets that should be ignored, but to most blacks the terms bring into focus all kinds of racial manifestations, racially motivated murder, torture, denial of constitutional rights, limited opportunities, unequal justice before law and daily humiliation.

The third proposition is that daily experiences affect a black person's behaviour and understanding of life. When you have the door slammed continuously in your face, you learn not to take initiatives. You become less proactive, less creative and less innovative, and become resigned to following orders. This could explain, why whites, already used to being affluent, jump at the slightest opportunity, while blacks often wait to be asked to perform tasks.

The fourth proposition is that the daily experiences of racial hostility and discrimination are the constituent elements of the inter-locking societal structures and processes referred to earlier as institutionalised racism. As evidenced by events in the Northern Province and elsewhere in the country, the casual manner in which racially motivated attacks against blacks are addressed and entertained can be traced to differential and preferential treatment white offenders receive from the police and the courts. Individual blacks soon realise that no amount of hard work or achieved status can protect them against racial oppression across institutional arenas.

As in most discussions on racism, the approaches tend to focus on how blacks are disadvantaged by racism embedded in society and societal institutions. An incisive approach should, however, include a focus also on advantages that whites gain from blacks' disadvantage. In other words whites are beneficiaries of black oppression, a point raised by Peggy McIntosh's *In White Privilege*, where she argues that whites are taught not to recognise white privilege.

They are taught to think of their lives as morally neutral, normative and average, and also ideal, so that when they work to benefit others it is to allow them to be like them. She describes "white privilege" as invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, assurances, tools, maps, guides, codebooks, passports, visas, clothes, compass, emergency gear and blank cheques. She goes further to point out that even those who grant that privilege, the institutionalised and embedded

forms, are likely to deny that this privilege has opened doors for them personally.

In the article McIntosh gives a list of special circumstances and conditions she experiences that she did not earn, but have been made to feel they are hers by birth, citizenship and by virtue of being a conscientious law-abiding normal person of goodwill.

McIntosh says "I can go shopping alone most of the time, fairly well assured that I will not be followed or harassed by store detectives."

"I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race."

"I can go to a book shop and count on finding the writing of my race represented, to a supermarket and find the foods that fit my culture, to a hair dressing salon and find someone who can deal with my hair."

"Whether I use cheques, credit cards, or cash, I can count on my skin colour not to work against the appearance that I am financially reliable."

"I can be sure that if I need legal or medical help, my race will not work against me."

These unearned advantages make whites feel at home with the world.

To conclude, any discussion on race and racism that fails to highlight whites as beneficiaries of racism would be grossly inadequate. By focusing on both the white privilege and black disadvantage as by-products of racism, we might begin to devise remedies that might inaugurate a different consciousness.

"What they forget is that blacks' lives of quiet desperation, generated by a litany of daily large and small events, remind them of their place in society."

"I can go shopping alone most of the time, fairly well assured that I will not be followed or harassed by store detectives."

'Please relieve the pain that I still endure!'

■ Pic: PANYAZA MCINEKA

By MATEFU MOKOENA

A MIDDLE-AGED woman who was shot and wounded by a Free State farmer still suffers from severe pain caused by unremoved pellets in her upper thigh, almost a year after the attack last February.

Johanna Morajane of Vrede was wounded when the farmer, Cornelius Potgieter, allegedly shot at her and a group of worshippers en route to a night vigil on his farm.

The group used the Wapad road on Potgieter's farm which he forbade people to use.

He allegedly opened fire on them, killing Pastor Mfuphi of the Zionist Church. The incident raised a storm and made headlines around the country.

"The farmer followed us and started shooting at us. I heard the gun go off once.

"Within seconds everything went dark and I was unconscious for some time.

"When I regained consciousness I felt an excruciating pain in my thigh. It felt as if nails had pierced me."

Morajane was taken to Vrede Hospital on the same night.

"The nurses just bandaged up my wound and discharged me the following day. I thought they would examine me thoroughly and do X-rays but they did not.

"After a few days the pain became unbearable. I then went to the doctor at my own expense. The doctor referred me to Bophelong Clinic.

"I was given pain-killing tablets and told to fetch the pills regularly.

However, the pills did not stop the pain. The pain subsided for a while and started all over again."

As the pain worsened, Morajane went to Newcastle Hospital at her own expense.

"The doctor X-rayed my thigh and told me there were pellets embedded in it. He said it was too late for them to be removed. They should have been removed immediately after the shooting," said Morajane.

Sister TV Mbambo of Bophelong Clinic said: "The clinic deals with minor injuries and when the hospital or doctor refers a patient to us we regard the injury as not serious. We just treat minor injuries.

"In the case of Morajane, the doctor prescribed five visits to the clinic and pills. Her last visit will probably be towards the end of January."

Mbambo said the clinic could do nothing until Morajane completed her visits. After her last visit, they would then refer her to the doctor.

She added that Morajane did not receive pills in December because the clinic had run out of stock.

Morajane feels miserable and without hope. She walks with difficulty and is unable to work.

"I should be working and helping my husband look after our children and home. I always feel sad when I see other people going to work and think that I should have been joining them," she said.

Cornelius Potgieter is out on bail and will appear in court on March 23 on charges of murder and attempted murder.

They're free because they're white

By STEVE DLAMINI

TWO young men who shot and injured a labourer on a farm in Villiers in the Free State have still not been charged two weeks after the incident.

Angry residents of the area have accused the police of not taking action because the men are white.

But Villiers police station commander Superintendent Peet Viljoen denied this and said: "Every case receives serious attention."

John Tshabalala, an Apostolic Church clergyman, said his 20-year-old brother Buti spent two weeks in hospital after he was wounded.

He said Buti and two friends, Sipho Msimang (15) and Themba Radebe (16), passed through the farm on their way to Rondemeat, 15 km from their homes, to deliver a letter informing fellow church members of the date of their next church service.

Buti said they were stopped by two young men who accused them of being poachers.

"They shot at us and when we started to run I was hit in the leg," said Buti.

"I fell down but my two friends managed to escape unhurt."

Buti said he was lucky to be alive. His pet dog, a toy Pom, was shot in the head and died instantly.

"It's a common practice here. White people will at times attack us for no reason," Tshabalala said.

"We have even been attacked in our yards. Although we report these incidents to the police, we hear nothing further."

Tshabalala said that instead of opening an attempted murder case against the two young men, the police had opened a case of illegal hunting against Buti and his friends.

"How can they do that? We were the original complainants and phoned the police about three times before they called on us to take a statement," he said.

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'Blacks being overlooked for senior posts in SAPS'

By STEVE DLAMINI
and ZOLILE NQAYI

A LONG-SERVING senior police officer has sharply criticised the SA Police Service for overlooking blacks for promotion to senior positions.

Captain Thabang Letlala of the Vaal Triangle police service this week pointed a finger of accusation at the "old guard" within the service whom he charged with maintaining white supremacy in the force.

Letlala is the SAPS spokesperson for the Vaal.

He has a university degree and has been a policeman for 34 years.

"But I am still only a captain.

"The fact that I cannot be shortlisted for positions that I am well qualified for has forced me to speak out," he said.

"I refuse to be treated like a small boy by individuals opposed to changes in the SAPS."

Between 1995 and 1998 Letlala applied for several senior positions, which included the post of area commissioner for the Vaal Rand area, station commissioner for the Sebokeng area, assistant commissioner (promotions) and equity manager in Pretoria.

He was not shortlisted for any of these positions and, according to him, "junior

candidates" in terms of qualifications and experience were appointed.

Letlala, who holds a business administration degree, a nursing qualification and several diplomas and certificates from a number of tertiary institutions, believes his failure to make the shortlist for all the positions was prompted by "racism and unfair labour practices".

A spokesperson for the Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (Popcru), Captain Caesar Mbali, came out in support of Letlala's claims.

According to Mbali, black officers found guilty of malpractice are treated more severely than their white colleagues.

"Blacks are normally suspended without pay whenever there are accusations against them," Mbali said.

He agreed that blacks were sidelined for promotion when less qualified whites were short-listed and appointed to senior positions.

Popcru had received a number of complaints from members saying that their complaints to the area commissioner and the national commissioner were not attended to.

Senior Superintendent Strini Govender, from the national commissioners' office, declined to comment on Letlala's complaints, saying it "looks like an individual issue".

Sexual harassment is everyone's problem

Men must change their attitudes to women

SEXUAL harassment remains a serious issue facing the majority of women in the paid labour force.

According to recent research conducted by the Sexual Harassment Education Project (Shep), over three quarters of women in the paid labour market have experienced sexual harassment at some stage in their working lives. The research says that the figures could even be higher as many cases of sexual harassment are not recorded because victims are scared to speak out.

They fear ridicule, reprisal at work or home and at times think that no one will listen to them.

Take the example of Nandipha (not her real name) who opted to resign rather than report the persistent and unwanted sexual behaviour of her boss.

"I was his secretary and this man would touch my bum at the slightest excuse. Then he started fondling my breasts whenever there was no body in sight."

"When he started kissing me, that was it. I resigned without reporting the matter."

Because of such under-reporting, reliable statistics on the occurrence of sexual harassment in South Africa are not available.

However, a survey conducted by the Institute of Personnel Management, the Institute of Directors in South Africa, the Unisa Centre for Women's Studies, the Women's Bureau of South Africa and the ANC Women's League to provide background for policy guidelines relating to sexual harassment, revealed some very telling statistics.

In the survey 37.7 percent of respondents said they knew of sexual harassment in the organisations where they worked, yet only 6.5 percent of those organisations had a formal policy on sexual harassment.

But what is sexual harassment? This is a question over which there has been a lot of debate hinged upon cultural and traditional differences.

Some have argued that what is sexual harassment in one culture

WHILE many South Africans will be celebrating Freedom Day on Tuesday, April 27, and the racial equality it introduced, the question that begs an answer is whether women have cause to celebrate, particularly in so far as they are treated in the workplace. SOLLY MOELA discusses sexual harassment in the workplace.

may not necessarily be so in another.

For example, a Zulu man, particularly when he is single, can howl or wail when he sees a beautiful single woman. That is considered a form of appreciation, says Theminkosi Mtambo who hails from Nkandla in KwaZulu-Natal.

But Thembi Bophele, who is also a Zulu, disagrees with this argument.

"I am a Zulu woman and will not take kindly to a male stranger ulu-

lating at me and making sexual overtures under the guise of appreciating my beauty."

These differing perspectives on the same subject by people who come from a similar cultural background was bound to lead to courts, in matters of litigation, seeking legal definition of what sexual harassment is.

Sexual harassment was first defined by Catherine Mackinnon in *Sexual Harassment of Working Women*

(1979) as "the unwanted imposition of sexual requirements in the context of a relationship of unequal power".

Although both males and females can suffer sexual harassment, it is predominantly women who are victims because of their lack of power in society.

The nature of this offence has been recognized by South African Industrial Courts.

In one case, the Industrial Court pronounced that: "Sexual harassment, depending on the form it

takes, will violate that right to integrity of body and personality which belongs to every person and which is protected in our legal system both criminally and civilly."

Thembi Mosito, a school teacher at Soweto says: "Women are harassed by their male co-workers because most men see women as sex objects as opposed to colleagues who have to be respected."

She says as most positions of power in the workplace are held by men, sexual harassment is sometimes quid pro quo.

"Some men may abuse these positions of power and demand sexual favours from women. The acceptance or rejection of the demand will then determine one's promotion or pay increase," says Mosito.

She finds this kind of sexual harassment "disgusting" as it gives the impression that the most valuable asset of a woman worker is her sexuality and not her brains.

Then there is the kind that comes in the form of flattery, unwelcome physical contact and straight-forward derogatory and degrading insults. It is equally disgusting, she says, as it draws attention to the woman's sexuality rather than her competence.

According to a senior Industrial Psychologist from Rand Afrikaans University, Kasthuri Nainar, sexual harassment is an issue of power.

According to her, sexual harassment consists of sexual advances, requests of sexual favours in return for employment benefits, the display of sexually offensive posters or any other unacceptable form of physical or verbal behaviour with sexual undertones.

"This can include verbal abuse, suggestive comments about a person's appearance, physical contact including touching and direct sexual propositions," she says.



IS THAT PART OF THE CONTRACT - SIR?

The offender often has a position of authority over the woman, which makes it difficult for her to complain or take action.

She says people in lower level jobs may be more likely targets of

sexual harassment.

"Sexual harassment can affect your health, your relationship, your home life and your workplace relationships. Being sexually harassed and feeling unable to

do anything about it can put people under a lot of stress," she says.

When it is not promptly addressed by the victim, it can lead to absenteeism, poor concentration,

late-coming and lower standards of work, she warns.

Her advice is that victims of sexual harassment should confront their harasser and not leave it until it is too late.

But the nature of this harm is not only confined to the workplace. It is also prevalent on university and technikon campuses.

Nomsa Ndlovu is experiencing the same problem with her student tutor at university.

"He wants me to stay behind to talk about my work, but then he touches my breasts and my buttocks. Now I make sure that I am not in a situation where I am alone with him. He takes advantage of the fact that he is my senior," she says.

Lawyers believe that even though sexual harassment is not yet a criminal offence in South Africa, present legislation and the common law permit action.

According to them employers can be held liable for sexual harassment of employees in the workplace. Employers who are aware of the harassment and take no action could be considered implicitly to have authorised or encouraged the offence.

The employer could be held liable as an accomplice. Thus, many employers today are developing codes of conduct to ensure that their employees are not subjected to sexual harassment.

Brian Greenstein, a labour relations consultant at Andrew Levy and Associates, says sexual harassment is recognised as an unfair labour practice.

He says what matters is how the victim is affected by the harassment and not what the harasser intended to do and so victims should not place emphasis on the offender's intentions but on how such have affected them.

He says employers have the obligation to protect their workers from sexual harassment and to inform and educate them about the issue.

"If victims are harassed in one way or the other they should be willing to notify their employers," he advises.

Patricia Khumalo, the policy coordinator of Shep says her organisation is slowly winning in addressing the problem of sexual harassment.

They are doing it through providing training and doing awareness campaigns in workplaces.

But men's attitudes towards women will have to change drastically if sexual harassment is to be entirely eliminated from the workplace and for that matter from society in general.

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THIS WEEK

INFIGHTING FORCES SOUTH AFRICAN BOXING ONTO THE ROPES — PAGE 28

GRANNY BOOTED OUT

Farmer repays elderly woman's 18 years of loyal service by evicting her

LUCAS LEDWABA

AN ELDERLY woman was evicted from the farm she had worked on for almost two decades after she told her boss she had joined a union.

Now Mashudu Rashavha, 57, a single mother of four from Louis Trichardt in Northern Province, is taking legal action against the farmer, H J van Rensburg.

For the past 18 years, Rashavha has been paid R10 for an 11-hour shift. In desperation, she joined the SA Food and Allied Workers Union so that she could get a R5 increase. But when van Rensburg heard she had joined the union, he fired her and threw her off the land.

"I decided to join the union because people were joining up on other farms. I thought that might persuade my employer to pay me more money," Rashavha said last week from Venda, where she is staying with her eldest son. Van Rensburg allegedly told the workers they would be fired if they joined the union because he could not afford to increase their wages. He refused to comment last week, saying he could do so only after speaking to his lawyer, who is on holiday.

Rashavha said that losing her job after so many years was a hard pill to swallow, but losing her home was even harder.

"Van Rensburg told me to leave his farm because I do not work for him any longer. But this is my home. Where else can I go?"



SINGLE MOM: Mashudu Rashavha faces a bleak future. Picture: JULIANI VAN DER WESTHUIZEN

When she refused to leave, Van Rensburg allegedly threatened to poison the crops she had planted in her back yard. He then gave her R900, the most money she has ever held in her hands, as compensation for long service, and told her to leave.

But she is putting up a fight to stay on the land where two of her children were born and four of her relatives are buried. "All I want is to return to my home."

When Rashavha realised her fight to remain on the land would not be an easy one, she contacted a local councillor, who hand-

Development Organisation, which deals with matters relating to the Extension of Security Tenure Act, assisting evicted farm labourers.

A field worker at the organisation, Shirinda Shirinda, said Rashavha's eviction was illegal because the farmer did not have a court order. Also, according to the Act, Rashavha is entitled to live on the farm even though she no longer works there because she has lived there for more than 10 years.

Shirinda said his organisation would lay a charge of illegal evic-

tion is not an isolated case. People on the farms have realised the power of unions and are now joining in large numbers," he said.

"On the other hand, the farmers see this as a threat, and some of them try to get rid of people who join unions, without following proper procedures. And some of the farmers do not understand the law."

Shirinda said that last year more than 200 farm labourers were fired from their jobs after joining a union in Messina.

"We need workshops to educate farmers and farm labour-

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1. A RE TLA GOLA?

Ga go senyege ting fela
Batho ruri ba a senyega.
Dilo di tlišwa ke Mosetlhe
Botshelo bo ntšhwa makgethe!

Rremogolo o sule a boga,
Pelo ga e na ngwana ...
Rona re roniswa tlotlo,
Rre o sule e le "boe!"

Fa dithuto di tlhaela
Bana ba rutwa matlakala
Go jalwa mokolonyane
Thutokgolo ya majakana.

Boipuso bo mo kgorong,
Bontsi bo ithuta tlhong!
Ba ba tlhatswiwang maoto
Ba setse ba bola bogato.

Ke tlhologeletse sebaka
Rre le ene a tlotlwa -
Tlhokwa di tla re robalela
Motlhang re itirela
(MAHUBE A MASA, 1982:39)

WILL WE EVER GROW?

*It is not only the sour-porridge paste that ferments
Humanity too does indeed ferment
Bad things are brought by Mr Paleface
The true values of life degenerate.*

*My grandfather died suffering from sheer humiliation
Young as I am, that makes me still furious...
We are deprived of our dignity
My father died being a “boy”*

*When proper lessons are not available
Our children are taught trash
Ranking cassias are being sown
The major education of the Christians.*

*Self-rule is just on the doorstep
The majority is beginning to show humility
[For] those whose feet were washed by others
Are now experiencing rotting feet.*

*I am longing for a time
When my father too will be respected -
The gods will smile upon us
The time we will be able to take care of our affairs.*

2. BOMATLHW'ADIBONA

Bomme re senya go tshepa modidi
Go swela legapeng re se dikhudu
A motho ga a tsalwe le digole?
Kgalemang makau re lebelwa tlase!
Motlogapele a re, ga go gole di melala.

Rona basadi re a nyadiwa,
Re ntshitswe matano go tthatlosa batho.
Borre ka bontsi bo re tsaya Setswana,
Re gogwa ka tsebe re se dinku;
Motho a goga fela a hulere.

Monongwaga re bona dikgolo,
Bomme ba intshitse maswe dinaleng.
Bontsi bo akga dipurapura.
Bannana ba digile ditlhogo;
Ba itia ka go reka tse pedi.

Selo se kgala ga se go botlhe,
Se tshwana le go pherekana.
Ke makaditswe ke **daekopo**
A iphetlhela **setafonese**;
A itlhoma a tshwere **jekepoto**.

Basading go a kakabologa,
Bontsi bo wela bo okometse.

Re kile ra wela re lebile,
Motho go tse tshwene o jewa mabogo,
Dikolobe di rekelwa kgetseng.

Dibese di tle di fagiwe
Motho a tlameletswe lejwe,
O tla ngangwa tlhogo o se tumoga,
Ditlontlokwane di tlolelwa kgotla
Motho a thiba mitlwa ka madi.

Bontsi bo fela bo re kala botlhofo
Bo tsaya melomong ya batho.
Motho o feta o bokwa dikhularo.
Lo ijesa dijo tsa ditoro,
Noka ga e tshwelwe ka matlho.

O ka mpotsa o tla gakgamala,
Nna ga ke batle monna wa mmopa:
Ke gwerile dilemolemo
Batho ba athatsetse letsatsi,
Ga ke mosadi wa leoratsatsi.

(KGOLA YA BORWA, 1987:17)

THOSE WHO ARE FOREVER VICTIMISED.

*We women folk, spoil our case by relying heavily on silence
By dying in our shelves even though we are not like tortoises
Is a person not born with cripples?
Reprimand the younger men, they look down upon us
The sage says respect is never measured by physical stature only.*

*We women are being despised
We are turned into stepping stones to elevate other people
Our menfolk in most cases marry us in the traditional Setswana fashion.
We are dragged by ears even though we are not sheep
The dragger pulling away with no regard.*

*This year we see great things
Womenfolk have shaken off their sloth
Many strut in academic regalia
Little men are now hanging their heads
Having wasted their times buying two [cans of beer]*

*This attribute called shame is not in everybody
It is just like being insane
I was astounded by a male nitwit
Proposing love to a staff-nurse
With the hope of hitting a jackpot*

*Women are now becoming enlightened
The majority fall victim to abuse barely aware*

*We once fell into it with eyes open.
It is said one is a baboon whose hands are eaten
Pigs that are bought in pokes!
Sometimes the broth is spoilt
A person sitting with a rope around the neck
Being moved from pillar to post
Small antheaps being turned into mountains
A person evading to speak the obvious truth*

*The majority (of men) take us for granted
They rate us by what people say of us
You feed on fantasies
A river is never crossed by a mere look at it.*

*Ask me and you will be shocked
I for one detest a man of clay;
For I experienced life the hard way
While people were basking in the sun
I am not a woman that basks in the sun*

3. BORUTI

Phologolo e bolotsana leobu
Lona le fela le tlhoka nnete
Leobu ruri tlhoka mmala,
Go le tlhalosa o a balabala!

Boruti bo dubakanya ditlhogo!
Bo tshereantse ona majakana.
Motho o phuntse moraba leroba
Mamphorwana a ponketse.

Motetesetso sera sa motho!
Batho ba tshwerwe ka lenaneo,
Ba tshoswa ka masaitsiweng:
Nnakgolo e tshaba go nama;

Mokao mokaya masilwana;
Thuto tsa gagwe ga di mo reye!
Kobi e bonwa e iphotlhere fela,
Radigwe a kgaotse mogala.

Lefoko thipa ya magagane;
Letlhale le betlola ka yone
Mosetlhe, o kgotse, o re jele
Leba gae, sebefa o jakile!

Banna ba epa motlhoboloko
Go latlha Lefoko hukuhuku!
Mothwana o re tsile ditlhodi -
Ra thanya mepo le le tsebeng.
(MAHUBE A MASA, 1982:15)

PRIESTHOOD

*That mischievous animal, the chameleon
It is for ever without the truth
A chameleon indeed is colourless.
To try to describe it you will end up jabbering.*

*Priesthood boggles the mind!
It has stupefied even the Christians
Someone made a hole through the bag
While the bleary-eyed chickens can hardly see.*

*Intimidation is man's worst enemy
People are systematically subdued
They are threatened with the unknown
Old men fear even to stretch their legs.*

*A hopple that hobbles the idiots
His teachings do not bind him
A bird-snare was seen empty
The muscular partridge cock having broken free.*

*The word, a double-edged knife;
The cunning one slashes with it
Mr Paleface, you are gluttoned, you have sucked us dry
Go back home ugly one, you have had your share.*

*Men are digging a bottomless pit
To throw the "Word/Bible" into it.
A fellow came to spy on us
We regained our senses long after the goodies had gone by.*

4. DIPOLASENG

Boroko rona ra bo bina
Re tsogelela diforong
Koko o lwala manginana
O tshwere phage ka mangana.

Rre o pura mebofu
Modisa, o bolola natso.
Ke kweba ntle go tefa,
Dimense tsa ga Oubase!

Motsadi o dira mo kitseng,
O koname le morwadie.
Ba otlwaotlwa ka thobane
Nkgwe se šwetse isong.

Kgomo e tshweu mongaba!
Batho ba tshela ka legaba
Bana ba tshwarwa ke bololo,
Ba ngaela ka mefokolo.

Re letse re sule bokidi,
Motsadi a tla ka mabifi.
Rre a bega setlhabi
Le khuduga mafelo a kgwedi.
(MAHUBE A MASA, 1982:1)

ON THE FARMS

*Sleep to us is a rarity
We leave early for the ploughfields
Grandmother suffers from stiff ankles
She works extremely hard indeed.*

*Father milks the cows
The herdboys drive them to the pastures
I toil for no pay
The people of "Oubaas"*

*A mother is working in the kitchen
She toils heavily alongside her daughter
They are repeatedly beaten with a rod
Bread has burned in the kiln.*

*The white cow holds back its milk
The people are left starving
Children develop itchy sores
And whine painfully due to ailments.*

*We were shocked to the bone last night
Mother returned home with bad news
Father complained of severe pain
And our eviction by the end of the month.*

5. GORENG KE SA NYALE?

Rona re tla ikakabatsa
Botshelo re leka ba ditsotsi,
Motho a lwala a re go lokile!
Matlho a menolwa, re ikidibatsa,
Tshwene tshimong e ntshiwa ke senya.

Mosadi wa diketekete, sephaphathela,
Morwalela, ga o tshetse!
Ke lefatshe la go gatšwa legodimo
Letlase le setse le beng:
Lenyalo le ile go setse **dithemporari**.

Mo tsee o latlhe kgololosego
Monna o sitwe ke go ya seema;
Kgomo o disitswe motlhana!
Mosadinyana, o senya sebaka,
Dikgomo ga go diswe maradu.

Ke tlabilwe ke batho malob'a tlhola,
Kana motse re feta wa balala ...
E rile ke ise ke fodise matshego,
Phokophoko ya tshololelwa molora,
Motho a balakanya motho dithwe.

Ka gata kusene ka tlhabela pele,
Felo e se bonno, boetelo:

Batho ba neeletsana ka matlhapa,
Ditsalapa maraganateng ...
Lesang go itshela madi a kgofa.

Lo sentse diso lo di ngwaa,
Lore ga lo ojwe lo omile.
Mmangwana o re fagisa dibese,
Re sugetse kobo le leswe,
Go fetsa re tshaba matlho a batho.

Motse o tlhoka borre o a falala,
Lapeng go tshamekelwa konkodi.
Tsosang ditlhogo gare ga mesonyo:
Mmatla phofu ya gaabo g'a tshabe go swa lentswe;
Sa mosima se jewa ke ba ba jalo.

E re lo tlhopha lo tlhokomele,
Pula re bone ya maebana;
Mabele go tswa a mela le digole,
Maiye a farafere mabele;
Ntšhwe e tlile go gaka segolo.

Mmamosimane o a ratharatha,
Barwa ba fofa ka dijokwe;
Motho o tla tsoga a kgokgoile.
Betsi ba motsi b'a nyala.
Banna re tloga re ntshetswa magadi.
(KGOLA YA BORWA, 1987:3)

WHY DON'T I MARRY?

*We will pretend to be seeing nothing
Life we will try to lead that of the tsotsis
Someone being ill, yet saying all is well
Rolling eyes and faking unconsciousness.*

*A woman of thousands of rand “bogadi” is a torrent
She is a flood that offers no life
She is the ground that you own on the surface
While its bottom belongs to someone else
Marriage has gone forever, pseudo-marriages remain.*

*Marry her you throw away your freedom
A man can hardly leave to answer to the call of nature
A cow's afterbirth remains is closely guarded.
Young woman, you are wasting your time
Cows with sucklings cannot be tended.*

*I was astounded by people now recently,
It is the home of the poor that we pass by...
Before I could take a seat and settle down
The father was accosted by his spouse with insulting words
Naming each and every vital organ.*

*I stepped on the doorstep and walked out
For it was no place to rest, to visit
As I left, they remained exchanging vulgarities*

*Family matters are complex
Stay clear of them, do not court trouble unduly*

*You spoiled the sores by scratching them
A twig cannot be bent once it's dry
Mother-of-child has spoiled the broth,
Now we have to condone all things wrong
And as a result we shy away from public eyes*

*A home without fathers disintergrates,
Senseless games are played in the courtyard
Hold your heads high amidst criticism (gentlemen):
Do not be discouraged from pursuing your goals;
Criticism always follow people like yourselves.*

*Please be careful when you choose
Now that we had good rains
Sorghum will grow together with the weeds
Small weeds will grow around sorghum;
Sweet cane will be hard to identify*

*Mother-of-son chatters continually
Her sons' behaviour is unbecoming
Very soon one will drag in a woman (from nowhere)
Daughters-in-law today initiate marriage
“Bogadi” will soon be paid for men.*

6. LETLALO

Nna ke bolawa ke mala
Fa ke akanya mmala;
Letlalo mogatsa mmala -
Ra bolawa ntle go kgala!

Motho o senyega bonolo
Jaaka lehura la tsholo.
Melao ya bogologolo
E wetsa rona ditlogolo.

Metlh'a letlalo e fetile
Boipuso bo gorogile
B'a tlang ba re kgalegile,
Tsosang majwe a ribegilwe!
(METSWEDING YA POKO, 1979:22)

THE SKIN

*(As for) me, I suffer from stomach ache
Whenever I think of the colour issue
To which the skin is regarded the spouse
We were killed without (feelings of) shame*

*It is easy for a person to be corrupt
So easy like the hard fat for tanning leather*

*Laws of the olden times
Lead we the grandchildren astray.*

*Gone are the days where the skin colour mattered
Self-rule has finally come
Those who still yearn to oppress us
Lift ye up the upside down rocks.*

7. MOEPONG

Lefatshe le a falafalwa
Mo ineng ja tswelopele
Kwa matlhakanelathapong -
Puo re tsoga e tlhaphoga;
Bontsi bo gapa tshenyego.

Motho o newa selekanyo,
Bathapi ba ila letlhale -
Tiro di ajwa ka mmala
Fatsheng la Fanakaloo -
Go tshelwatshelwa mašwi tlhoa.

Batho ba tlogetse basadi,
Tshadi e tlogetse banna
Merafo e tshotse botshelo -
Teng e lala le mmaayo,
E tsoge e sutlhaka mhiko!

Tshweu di re b'a selekanyong
Re latlhegetswe tlhe, ke moko!
Tumoga tsa go jara thoto,
Motsing re tla bo re tlha!
Batho ba tla lela ditlhaa.

Motswana, teba moepong,
Go fokotswe makomofere -

Re lapisitswe ke mafolo
Dilo di thajwa ka makgolo
Mpa di tsile morakeng!

Dikgaityadi di manne ...
Tsona nnete di ganne;
Batho bao, b'a golagola -
Phefo e foka wa iphua,
O tsile go fetsa o phua!
(MOLODI WA PUO, 1983:34)

AT THE MINES

*The earth is being scratched (for gems)
All in the name of civilisation
At this melting-pot of races and characters
Comes the next morning our language is adulterated
And many follow corrupt ways*

*A person is given limits
The employers hate the clever one -
Jobs are allocated by skin colour
In the land of the Fanakaloo pidgin -
Where milk is sprinkled with whey.*

*People have left the wives behind
Women have left their husbands behind*

*The mines have taken control of their lives
There, a calf sleeps with its mother
The next morning it escapes through the barricades.*

*The whites put us on scales
Oh, we have lost our essential being
We male donkeys, beasts of burden
The day we get our independence
People will cry very bitterly.*

*Motswana work hard and stick to the mine
Let the number of foreigners be reduced
We are sick and tired of these gelded bulls
These things are employed in hundreds
Having come here to feed their hungry bellies!*

*Our sisters have grown very thin
Truly, they refuse to be reprimanded
They do so because there's some money they earn
You fall for foreigners blown hither as if by wind,
Ultimately, you'll end up insane!*

8. MOLAO

Molao ke phologolo ya kae
Go ntlama o sa dirwa gae?

Gantsi molao, matlakala -
O tlhaga le phefo kgakala.

Melao e tletseng lehufa,
E robaka nong diphofa.

Molao ga o direlwe batho
Batho ba itirela molao.

(METSWEDING YA POKO, 1979:4)

THE LAW

*Whence comes this beast called law
That binds me and yet it's not home made?*

*Very often law is but trash
Being blown hither by a wind from far/
When it is blown hither by a wind from far.*

*Laws borne of jealousy and ill-feeding
Clip the wings of a vulture.*

*Laws should not be made for people
People should make their own laws.*

9. MONTSHO

O itseng ka go nna montsho?
Ke tla go bolelela, o botsa;
Pula e sena go go nela
Tšheše pelong di go melele!
O tla ipolaelwa ke tshigo
'Gobe ka letswai bo relediswa.
Ditsagago ke ditsababangwe;
O tswa katse, gare ga dinkwe.
O iphotlhara sephogolo -
Motlhoiwa setswabololo.
O ntshwa go bitsa Kgorosane
Batho bona ba itaya mathe,
Banna ba tsena mafokong
O rongwa go tsoma kgokong!
Bo sia tlou go se matsapa:
Motho o rerelwa le matsapa.
O itseng ka go nna montsho?
O botsa, ke tla go bolelela ...
E rile kgomo e kokobela
Nare ya bonwa bokokorwe;
O tshameka ntšwanyana, bosigo!
'Mong a ile ka dikgotshane;
O tšhematšhema pele'a pitse
Rotwe a kokoretse godimo!
O rafa semane, le re tsee!

Bagoma ba tlabile mangole.
Thero di tsewa o romilwe -
Montsho, ntšwa, ga a na maele.
O thimotsa ntsi ka seditse
Kobo e hunolotswe segole.
O disa mogoma ka mmele
Thaka ya gago e lora ditoro;
O itseng ka go nna montsho?
Ke go boleletse, o mpotsa;
O ikatega ka dikatana -
Balekane ba itšhampile.
O tsubulwa ka sankotwana:
Barwadio ba go bogetse;
O nna ntlo ka kwa morago
Jaaka koloi ya molelo;
Mašwi ke tlhoa le kgatsele -
Go phimola, thitho sa beke;
Bangwe ba bolaile matswalo
Go peela mongwe a nyelela;
O gasamololwa ka magasane,
Thunya se tsokoletswa legano;
O itseng ruri ka Montsho?
Montsho sekai sa bolala ...
Re sotlegile bogologolo -
Bangwe ba fiwa dikgorokgoro.
Montsho, 'kai sa tlala -
O tsiroletswe, batho ba fiwa;
O tshositswe bogologolo.

O pakang ka bana ba thari?
Ba tshositswe bogologolo
Tshogo la agela maleng.
(MOLODI WA PUO, 1983:52)

A BLACK PERSON

*What do you know about being black?
I'll tell you, since you are asking;
And after the downpour of the rainlike information on you
May your heart with blossoms of truth be filled!
A Black person starves and lives in poverty
While the others enjoy porridge and tasty meat.
Your belongings are somebody else's
You become a cat among the leopards
Like an animal, you're stripped of all your belongings -
Just like an abandoned animal suffering from a skin disease
He is sent away to call a non-existing human being Kgorosane
So that people can remain enjoying delicious meals
When men are about to commence with serious talks
He is sent away on a wildebeest hunt!
The excuses to send him away are endless
Even though he is the topic to be discussed
What do you know about being black?
As you are asking, I'll tell you ...
As I, the one of the cow family totem became obedient
I, of the Buffalo clan name, was seen as an idiot
A black man plays puppy at night*

*He trots briskly to lead a leashed horse
While the baboon bull is perched on its back!
He fetches honey in the scorching sun!
While the despots relax on their backs
When negotiations are entered into, he's sent away -
A Black person is a dog, he can contribute nothing substantial
He wards off the flies with a whisk
When it is time for relaxation
He guards the boss literally with his body
While he (of his age) wanders in dreamland
What do you know about being black?
I told you as you wisely asked me
He is draped in tatters
While his mates are elegantly dressed
(Being black) you're thrown to the ground to be thrashed
In full view of your own daughters
He stays at the back of the house
Just like a motor-vehicle
For milk, he gets whey and beatings
To wipe off the sweat of the whole week
Some bury their own conscience
So they dance as someone dies
He is blown by a hail of bullets
An excuse being that this was merely an exercise of cleansing
the gun cavity
What is it that you actually know about a Black person?
A Black person, a symbol of servitude/ slavery
We have suffered from a long time ago*

*Some are given old useless things
A Black person, a symbol of hunger
He is given a pinch, while people are given plenty
He has been intimidated from a long time ago
What testimony can you give of children of the black race?
They have been intimidated from a long time ago
And terror settled for long in their stomachs*

10. MORERI

Molwetse y'o fapaaneng tlhogo,
O tlhajwa ka lona rumolegolo
Sekgaetsa phologolo le motho;
Rumo lebe la majakolobe!

Moreri wa Lefoko la mafoko,
Motshumi wa bone ja Aferika;
A gorogela gareng ga batho -
Sebefa a gakantsha bagaka,
Nkgwegadi e fitlhile dinala!

O gorogile a bokabokile!
Mabogo a tshotse k'a mabedi.
Ka moja a tla a tshotse thipa
Buka yona e le njogotlhong.
La nja le oma go ripitla!

A bua dilo di gana go fela,
Mollo a o bua le pholoso -
Banna bona ba kgalwa segolo.
E rile tshadi e tlala kereke
Borre jwa ikgoga ka morago.

Kwa kgotleng legolo ja Batswana,
Magogwe o belaela lemepe;

Bontate ba 'a sebaseba:
Phokoje ene o sentse metsi
Fatshe le tletsetletse kgethololo!

Batswana tlhe, ba lwallwa ke bana,
Batho b'a nwa moro o themile.
Morwana wa sebata se sa jewa!
Bangwe ba setse ba tshega letsatsi -
Botshelo bo dule nong ya naga.

Magodu a rona ke a magolo!
Moutswilefatshe, o nonofile.
Bangwe ga ba lekanwe ke manno,
Mongwasa o rothile madi,
Bareri ba tl'a retolosa matlho.

Alogane tsa pusotlhaolele,
Lo re go di ja, lo beye peo
Bontsi, ona mafalpanse,
Moretomogolo wa bolala.
Mogapi o busiwa Kgalagadi!

Selo se go ja, se jesa maswe
Legaba le weditse ditšhaba.
Motho o tsaya tshwetso di wetsa
Morwa o tshetse matleputlepung
Kante, mosekelampeng!

Sešeng setsiba se a tlala,
Ngwana wa dikgomo o godile -
Malata a a neng a di iphile,
A khutsa : dilo di baakanngwe;
Monyadiwa ga se mmolawa!

Batswana, tsogang borokong -
Bokgoa bo fedile ngogola.
Botho bo letse bo jele bokgoa,
Molaong rotlhe r'a lekana
Satane o swetse dihubeng!
(MAHUBE A MASA, 1982:30)

THE PREACHER

*A patient who is mentally deranged
He is stabbed by this great spear,
The same that stupefies both animals and humans;
The evil spear of the pig-eaters (Germans)!*

*The preacher of the Word of words
The lighter of the lamp of Africa
He arrived and settled among the people-
The ugly one deceived even the best of the wits
A leopardess which has hidden her claws*

*He arrived with both hands full
With each of the hands holding things*

*In the right he was holding a dagger
The Book was in the left hand,
Wielding with the right hand to destroy.*

*He spoke about things too numerous to name
About the fire and salvation -
And men were reproached greatly.
When women started to fill the church
The men began to withdraw*

*At a mass gathering of the Batswana,
Feelings of doubt are being expressed
Men are speaking in whispers
The jackal has soiled drinking water
And the world is full of discrimination*

*Poor Batswana people, their children are now sick
People drink frozen gravy
Useless gravy extracted from a forbidden beast!
Some are even laughing at the sun -
Like a wild bird, life has flown from them.*

*Those who steal from us are of great standing!
The stealer-of-land, you are indeed powerful.
Some of them are unfit for their position
When the cat is let out of the bag;
To this the preachers would turn a blind eye.*

*The products/ graduates of the apartheid regime
As you enjoy their company, know them well even for the future
Because many of them are grey-bellied boers
The great mark of servitude and barbarism.*

*This act of eating leads to corruption
Starvation too has corrupted the nations
A person is forced to take destructive decisions
The son led a life of plenty
In the ultimate end, all the luxuries enjoyed need to be repaid
Whereas he was committing himself!*

*Nowadays, people have gained experience
That young herd boy has now grown
The servants who allocated them to themselves
Have stopped: So let things be returned to normality
The despised, does not deserve to be killed.*

*Batswana, wake up from your sleep -
White supremacy ended last year
Humanity has conquered white supremacy
Before the law, we are all equal
The devil has died in their chests.*

11. *TLHABOLOGO YA BOPHIRIMA*

Tlhabologo ya bophirima
Ke sona sewagodimo.
Bontle bo ntse jaana
Bo na le dibebejane!

Tlhabologo e phepafetse ...
Ke ona metsi a tlabula
Mašwi a itswela kgomong,
Selabe se tla ka mogami.

Batswana ba tlhomola pelo,
Ba henahenwa bonolo;
Thako di agwe ka makgolo,
Se latlheng segologolo.

Foko le taga badumedi
Motsha o tshela ka medi
Fa medi e abelwa tsatsi
Kala di orwa di le metsi

Bodumedi bo a bogisa
Selo kgama ya letsetse
Baekobi ba swa la katse
Tshega e setswe ke badisa.

Nama e kaletse mosung -

Tshweu di e bitsa modima
Rona re tshosetswa ka kung:
Beng ba rapela badimo.

Batho ba betla 'roleng,
Tsuatsue tsa bodumedi ...
Tlowa le tletse mogobeng,
Go gatšwa le tse 'nemeru.

Botshelo jo, bomenemene!
Modimo ga o tlhakanelwe -
Nka se rapele rr'ago
Go go phuthela masego.
(MAHUBE A MASA, 1982:36)

WESTERN CIVILISATION

*Western civilisation
Is an unexpected gift
Beauty as appreciable as this
It is never without flaws!*

*Western civilisation is pure ...
As pure as water in the Spring season.
It's as pure as milk from the cow,
Where dirt is only brought by the carrier of the milk-pai!
Dirt is brought about by the milker*

*Oh how I feel sorry for Batswana
They are easily tossed hither and thither;
Let the kraals be built in hundreds.
Please do not throw away our traditional heritage*

*The Word intoxicates the believers
A “**Motsha**” tree survives by its roots
When the roots are exposed to the sun
Supple branches will be used for fire wood*

*Christianity is humiliating
It's like a hartebees with calf
Whose pursuers end up dead like cats
And herdboys picking up their fallen loinskins*

*The flesh tangling on a thorny tree
The Whites call it a god
We are threatened with evil experiences
While the owners (of Christianity) worship the gods.*

*People wonder confusedly in dust,
In the dusty whirlwinds of religion ...
A net cast in the pull is full,
For it caught even those that are in calf.*

*This life is treachery!
God cannot be shared -
I won't worship your father
Thereby collecting blessings for you.*