

CHAPTER 4

AFRICAN VIEW OF HEADSHIP OF MAN

4.1 INTRODUCTION

According to Nolan (1988:51) the most characteristic form of suffering in South Africa, though by no means the worst form is the suffering of humiliation of women by men. Just like when white South Africans humiliated blacks in the apartheid era, women find themselves in the same marginalization where their humanity is degraded by men. This point makes it clear that the domination of women in this country is not only a reality, but also an urgent matter that needs to be dealt with from all angles of life. The oppressive elements of the headship of man within the family became clear at a gathering of women of the Malamulele area at the stadium.

The author attended a women's gathering on 09 August 2005 at Malamulele stadium, and one of their speakers, the station manager of Munghana Lonene F.M. radio station confirmed the problem experienced by women in families. He said:

“Women are still abused in many forms even in our New South Africa, but the government is trying to help them fight

for their rights. We as a station are also helping by employing more women than men and we are still going to do that. We have programmes like “*gingirikani*” (meaning “*be busy*”) which discuss the issues that can help women to liberate themselves from the bondage of male dominance.”
(Mandla Nsoko, 2005, Aug. 9 - Radio programme)

It is very interesting to learn that African people put a lot of emphasis on the headship of man as the one who makes a marriage work, and it is a good thing. Single parents are not welcomed by communities as complete families. A good example is shared by Kimathi who says:

“Many communities regarded the single person as insignificant, a social misfit and an abomination to the land. Distant relatives living far away kept on enquiring whether the single person had gotten married yet. A single person has no saying among the married persons.”(1994:14)

It is interesting to note that on the other hand, Calvin acceded that the unmarried state is very useful and must not be despised (Calvin, 1972:117).

The author's argument is that even though the single parents may be regarded as families, they are not given equal dignified status to the married ones. That is why Kuper says:

“Most widows were encouraged to choose one man from the closer relatives in order to continue with her as the husband after her husband passed away.”(1986:24)

Therefore the headship of man in the house has always been of greater importance. It will not be easy to understand the headship of the husband if the wife's situation is unknown. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, it is important to analyze both situations (of husband and of wife), so as to get the clear picture of how the headship is valued by African people. By headship is meant that men are seen as dominant figures over women, to an extent that they have the final saying in many things. This is a situation where a woman is blindly following all instructions of a man even when his decisions are wrong.

4.2 THE VIEW OF A WOMAN (WIFE) IN THE AFRICAN CONTEXT

According to “The Star” writer Estelle Ellis, the domestic abuse (towards women) in South Africa has not abated, despite radical new domestic violence laws by the government and the constitution. After five years of research, the Institute of Security Studies says that the first people to

come into contact with abuse survivors, the police, doctors and counselors, need to change their approach. Having been born and grown up in one of the African traditional families, it became easier to detect that the value of a woman in the African community is less than that of a man. (The Star, March 14, 2003:8)

Whether the woman is educated or not, married or unmarried, she must remain an inferior person when compared to male figures. One of the South African lawyers during the struggle against apartheid fought for women's rights by saying:

“Many institutions in South Africa are patriarchy. To challenge patriarchy, to dispute the idea that men should be dominant figures in the family and society, is to be seen as fighting against male privilege, but as attempting to destroy African tradition or subvert Afrikaner ideals or undermine civilized and decent British values.”
(Sachs,1990:54)

The community put a lot of emphasis on the importance of the male at the expense of the female. That is why the birth of a boy was regarded so important in the community (Kimathi, 1994:12). This is what Mugambi is emphasizing when saying:

“Polygamy was potentially allowed by a custom, especially if an earlier marriage did not produce children, or if the children born in an earlier marriage were only girls. The birth of boys was considered to be very important, both for inheritance and for defense of the community.” (2002:25)

The important phrase for the argument here is not polygamy, but the important consideration of boys and at the expense of girls. This practice was done in order to promote male dominance. Girls are not regarded as real fulfillment in marriage.

The relationship between a man and woman in the African tradition differs from that of the whites. There is a different concept because some of the African men marry (active mood) while African women are being married (passive mood). In Shangaan some men would say: “I married you,” with the emphasis on the man being the initiator and head of the household. The woman is from the beginning a passive recipient of marriage since she is the one that is being married, while the husband is marrying. The book of Walter Trobisch “I married you” (Also translated into Shangaan “Ndzi ku tekile” (1979) was written in this African context of male dominance. The emphasis is on man marrying a woman and not the other way round. That is why the author supports Monger when saying:

“The special problems of the delinquent women have at all times been neglected, or glossed over by sentiment and unreliable male intuition.” (1967:179)

The process of African marriage is as follows: Everything in marriage is initiated by man. Man initiates love by proposing it to the girl, he then goes on to prepare *lobolo*, he gives it to the in-laws through his uncles and aunts, he prepares the ceremony and he is also responsible to fetch his wife to his home. After fetching the wife to his home, the in-laws (especially aunts) will give her instructions on how she will live with all people in the home, including her husband. On top of that, the wife relies on her husband for almost everything that will happen in their family. That is why the speeches of the wedding ceremony from the family of the wife would always insist: “Take care of her” and not “Take care of each other”. The author also experienced this one side concept of preparing for marriage. (Baloyi, 2001)

Moosa is of the view that “Women who are married by customary law are seen as minors and thus cannot own a property or enter into a contract.” (1988:205)

It is therefore not surprising in the later stage to find that women are said to please men and not vice versa. That is why Kimathi says that the

woman's part in marriage and sexual intercourse was to please the husband and to bear children. (1994:13)

The author personally understand the African concept of marriage in this context as that of the subject and object, or the owner and the property. This is where the headship abuses women. From the beginning the African marriage is set on an unequal footing. The reader knows that the subject and object are not equal and will never be equal. According to Nyirongo, Harry's wife, was made to believe that she was a slave of her husband when she said:

“It is a shame for a man to draw water, to wash clothes, to pound, to cook relish or sweep the house while her husband is alive. My pregnancy is no excuse for me to lie down.” (1999:36)

In other words she believed that the main aim of her marriage was to do everything for her husband despite her health problems. In the Swazi tradition there is a certain tradition that follows after the wedding. The woman is later smeared with red clay, signifying the loss of her virginity (Kuper, 1986:27).

The custom never shares anything about those who are not virgins, while on the other hand, to the husbands nothing was done to signify whether he still was a virgin. One can understand why men are favored more than

women. Even the traditional rituals uplift men more than women. According to Van der Walt one of the church fathers from Hippo in Africa, Augustine understands the one aim of woman's creation as procreation or childbearing. He says:

“If one should ask why it was necessary that a helper be made for man, the answer that seems most probable is that it was for the procreation of children just as the earth is a helper for the seed in the production of plants. Now if the woman was not made for the man to be his helper in begetting children, in which way was she to help him? She was not to till the earth with him, for there was not yet any toil to make help necessary. If there was such a need, a male helper would be better.” (1988:53)

The author is against Augustine's view that limits the aim of woman's concept of creation to childbearing alone. This is just some typical example of male dominance which enhances African culture to continue oppressing women. If one follows this process we will have a problem with those women who are barren. The society will reject and isolate them further. Men will then ask women to conceive before they can propose a marriage.

As a result of the above, women will be considered properties of men. How will Augustine react to barren woman? This would simply allow many men to go only for women who can bear children for marriage and as such would humiliate them and place them in a difficult position of relating to men. This would give room for the argument of people who say that it is important to have premarital sexual intercourse so that one can marry after being aware that the woman can bear children, hence some weddings are conducted while the bridegroom is expecting a child.

The author is convinced that the woman has more than one aim of procreation. The above concept of marriage places women in an inferior position and lead women into sexual objects.

4.3 WOMEN AS SEXUAL OBJECTS

Women oppression in the society is never a matter of open force only. It always seeks to become socially incorporated and operate through modes of cultural conditioning which make subjects internalize the image projected upon them by men and community. In other words, the subjection of women has become socially accepted as a normal code of conduct. African culture does not only approve seeing the woman as an object of sexual fulfillment, but it also has ways and means through which it instigates men to see it that way through a process of raising children, as well as treatment and rituals performed in their community.

That is why Frazier (1975:415) quoted Ruether by mentioning the fear of sexuality as the primary way of experiencing the alienation of and from the body. Through this alienation woman is depersonalized and turned into a body-object to be used or abused sexually.

According to Lopez, in male supremacist cultures women are believed to embody carnality, hence he says:

“Women are sex. A man wants what a woman has - sex. He can steal it (rape), persuade her to give it away (seduction), rent it (prostitution), lease it over a long term (marriage in the USA), or own it outright (marriage in most communities).” (1979:176)

It becomes very clear after this explanation that there are men who are controlled by their sexual feelings; hence they see every woman with lustful eyes. In the above quotation, men tarnish the image of God in the way they treat women.

The “*City Press*” dated 13 November 2005 confirmed that the Commission on Gender Equity (CGE) has a complaint against those who use women as advertisements of sex. The mobile telephone companies such as MTN, Vodacom and Cell C and the SABC and etv are the main culprits who were summoned about these adverts. In its reports on page 8 it says:

“The use of women as sex objects in advertisements has angered the CGE which listed some of the adverts in a report to the parliament. The CGE has listed 28 advertisements that led to complaints from the members of the public to the Advertising Standard Authority (ASA), the body that regulates advertising.” (City Press, 13 Nov 2005:8)

In her book “Is nothing Sacred,” Marrie Fortune (1989:29) unveiled two stories of women who were victims of sexual harassment from men in America. One woman from her case studies quit her job after the male co-worker was severely begging to have sexual intercourse with her. It is clear that many men use women’s beauty and attractiveness as an excuse to victimize them sexually. Any man who uses a woman that way, has lost his own dignity given to him by God.

The relationship problem developed in the book clearly highlighted the problem experienced by women in Africa as well. Men still see women as their sexual objects to an extent that some are even forced to have intercourse with them because of circumstances to get employment. Others will use their bodies in order to get promoted. In other words, economic circumstances will force them to do things that are abnormal. They become sex workers in their places of employment. The author is aware of a case where another marriage was destroyed by a manager of the company where he offered sexual intercourse as a condition for the

woman to be employed, and for the sake of getting a job, she was obliged to do it. When it was found later by the husband, the marriage was dissolved. The selected conditions caused the woman to lack in her values or ethics. The desperation was because of economics. She also thought that it was a once-off thing.

It is quite astonishing to learn that even in some African cultures women's status is lowered to that of a mere sexual object. When Clemens (1971:24) emphasized this he used a concept of "dehumanized sexual object" or "a status symbol" as he was explaining how men view women. That is why most men expect their wives to respond immediately to their sexual needs. In many cases, whenever a man sees a beautiful woman, he thinks of having sexual intercourse with her. Certain African communities will grow the woman as a sexual object. They will stitch their vaginas so that they could be virgins when they marry.

Even the Jews in Jesus' time seem to have the same concept. (Hocking, 1984:75). That is why Christ's words were harsh towards such men. He said: "Anyone who looks at a woman lustfully that person already committed adultery (Matt. 5:28)."

This type of sin plus others come not from the practice itself, but from

the heart and mind. The sinfulness of man makes him to only see one phase of life in a woman, that of being a sexual object. One may come to understand when Malan (1990:14) contends: “The female body is seen as a means of attraction for the purposes of advertising and is thus commercialized.” Many sexual adverts on TV, newspapers, magazines and others are centered and portrayed on the female body. At a certain stage, even women themselves may fall into the trap of seeing themselves as sexual objects to men. A good example is that of Pharoah’s wife who saw herself good for the purposes of sexual intercourse with Joseph in Gen.39:7 (Malan, 1990:14). The modern world through advertisements portrays women as objects to be used.

In the case of Pharoah’s wife the author thinks that it was not wrong for her to be attractive to her husband alone, but it turns her into a fornicator when she tries to entice other men outside her own marriage. It is a pity that we still have women today that is helping to destroy their good images by thinking that they can hook every man into their blankets. De Bruyn (1993:161) emphasizes that unmarried women often give into the temptation of having sexual relations with married as well as unmarried men. In this way women help men to see them as mere sexual objects rather than what they were created for.

In central Africa women are seen as mere sexual object because of the male discrimination factor. Faith also plays an important role in subjugating women in an inferior position. The traditional rituals that are performed to their bodies teach them more about how to behave sexually. Their clitoris is removed (clitoridectomy) and the vagina is sewn up (infibulation) in order to prevent them to have sexual intercourse since they are not yet married (Warunta & Kinoti, 200:142). Only a small opening is left to menstruate and urinate. This process is done so that girls can be virgins when they marry. It is only after the wedding that the operation is performed again to cut and open up the vagina so as to allow her to have sexual intercourse in her marriage. (Thiam, 1986:57-58)

Another way in which a society sees women as sexual objects and prepares men to have the vagina spared for them. No one makes sure that men are virgins when they marry.

From the above, we can learn that the sole purpose of a female person is to be there for men, for the purpose of sexual intercourse. In other words, she would only have freedom over her body when she is entitled to have intercourse by marrying a man. Before the permission is granted, she is seen as something useless. It is a serious question to ask what happens when a divorce occurs or else if the husband passes away, would they sew the vagina again in order to prevent the unmarried woman from

fornication. This is one of the most difficult parts of life for women in that situation, but it indicates that women are viewed more as sexual objects than as being created in the image of God.

One will also understand why women are raped, because they are seen as properties. The Limpopo provincial commissioner (Mr Sengani) spoke during the Anti-crime road show in 2002:

“In 2002 alone 4810 rape cases of women and children were reported in the province. A week ago I was in Nebo where a 75 five year old woman was raped by a boy of about 25 years old.” (22 March :Mukhomi, Malamulele).

The road show was an organized campaign lead by police where the police were educating people of the village on how to deal with crimes, especially domestic violence and rape issues.

This to me is a sign that some men, even when they are still young, view women who are fit to be their grannies as sexual objects. The dignity of adulthood has lost meaning in our communities.

Many men think that women are the first to draw attention to the epidemic of rape and abuse. They spoke up and spoke out about the connection between rape and a male dominated culture. Women are today taking responsibility to stop what men started (Speech at Mukhomi

provincial anti-crime road show on 22 March 2003). The “Sunday world” newspaper explained what rape means under such heading:

“*When sex becomes a rape.*” “It does not matter whether the victim is your wife or not, but even if you started sexual intercourse in agreement, whenever she call you to stop you have to, because from that moment onwards, if you continue, it is called a rape because it is no longer an agreement”. (Sowetan Sunday world, 19 January 2003:11)

The women abuse and rape statistics that are growing day by day in South Africa are initially the results of men viewing women as sexual objects. If they refuse, you force them because they are to serve men as sexual objects or slaves. The above happens because men view themselves as subjects. We would not be reading about rape in our daily newspapers in South Africa, if men were not seeing women as mere sexual objects. The daily newspapers are full of rape and abuse, which shows clearly how men view women as objects of sexual intercourse. Therapy has to restore the concept of *ubuntu* (humanness) between men and women. It is the author’s conviction that when men propose to women, not many of them take “no” for an answer, but most take “no” as “YES”, and that is why in some communities abduction is accepted, where a woman is forced into a marriage. Once abducted, the man is allowed to have intercourse by force, and a message is sent to her parents

so that negotiations for marriage are arranged. In other communities, when you have raped a woman, the man is forced to marry, because the woman is regarded as damaged goods.

Trobisch (1975:115) advocates:

“A boy whose first stirrings of sexual arousal came in the context of seeing women’s underwear may thereafter call up the image of woman’s underwear whenever he wants to re-evoked the original sex rush and in order to aid masturbation.”
(1975: 115)

This is a clear indication that women are seen as sexual instruments rather than what they were created for. The “City Press” shares a painful story under the heading: “The minister’s daughter raped in the church”. A certain 43 year old church elder who was a closer friend of the pastor raped the pastor’s daughter. This elder raped the pastor’s 13 year old daughter inside the church when she was cleaning. This was abuse and misuse of power, but also defiled the girl and the church where worship is to be conducted. One can detect that during his usual visits to the pastor’s home he was seeing the girl as a sex object and he burned with lust until he raped her inside the church (City Press, December 08, 2003: 4). With the above in mind, let us now analyze the Jewish view of women as objects. Several cultures are also caught up in this kind of process, i.e.

viewing a woman as a sexual object. Let me conclude this section by sharing a last story from South Africa.

The author read in “Sunday Sun” newspaper about the incident of a husband from Bethal, in Mpumalanga, who was involved in the gang-raping of his own wife with two other men. The reporter says that the husband sent the other two men to fetch his wife and brought her to the forest, where he became the first to rape her in front of these men, and the other two did likewise afterwards. They also assaulted her before they left her for dying without transport in the forest (Sunday Sun, 24 July 2005:31).

This barbaric incident can only be done by a man who is not normal in his head. Should we blame culture for this mental sickness? Analyzing the process, therapy or care givers need to create in man a culture of ubuntu, where men and women will be respected as human beings. The process needs to rise a new generation that will respect the body as a sacred temple worthy to be treated with dignity.

4.4 JEWISH VIEW OF WOMAN

The Jewish community also struggled with this issue of women being regarded as sexual objects.

The status of Jewish women was lowered to less than that of a male servant or a boy in the family. From the context of 1Cor. 14:34-35 we can understand Paul's exhortations to those women in the Jewish culture. He brings out the image that is worthy to share. Women were treated like any piece of property that was owned in the house. She would not say a word nor give her input as to how the family should be run. According to Bennet (1974:182) the message of 1Cor. 14:34-35 was based on the Jewish ordinance which stated that women were not permitted to teach in the assemblies, or even to ask questions.

Judaism did have appreciation of marriage, but so often at the expense of women. Van der Walt says:

“The wife was literally locked up in the house. She had to be seen in public as little as possible, because she would with her innate cunning, seduce the innocent men. The Talmud warns us that men should not converse with women, even with their wives, too often because this would ultimately make them fall into immorality.” (1988:21)

The Jews would not permit a woman to read in the synagogue, though a male servant or a child had this permission. It is interesting to note that in the later Judaism changes came (Bennet, 1974:183). The reaction of Jesus' disciples when they find Him speaking to a woman in John 4:27

taught them how women were viewed by Jews even during the time of Jewish strict rules. It says:

“Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find Him talking to a woman.” (John,4:27)

Their surprise was not because He spoke to a Samaritan woman, but that He spoke to a woman in public, whereas a rabbi was not supposed to speak to a woman publicly. The author believes they would be surprised even if he was speaking to a Jewish woman.

When we read about the miraculous feeding of the five thousand men on the mountain the Bible says:

“The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children (Matt.14:21)”.

This is another way of viewing women as secondary people. They were not important, hence not counted.

Why would women and children be left out in counting? Were they part and parcel of the multitude or rather a property of men? The idea is clear here, that according to Jewish traditions women were not counted among men. As men were more important than the women, therefore only men were counted. Some commentators say that it was because women were not allowed to walk that distance to the mountain while others indicate

that even though they were not many, they were present and should have been counted also. St. Matthew, being a Jew, would not violate his tradition of seeing women as minors, and that is why they were not counted in this episode. This is not surprising because cultures had not taken women seriously.

According to Clemens the myth of feminine inferiority has become a more widespread belief, and he says:

“In the ensuing centuries the church fathers spoke of women in quite contemptuous terms. The women were to be avoided as dangerous temptress waiting to beguile men.” (1971:23)

That is why even the divorces mentioned in the Old Testament were done unjustly towards women. For instance, in the divorce practices as recorded in Deut.24:1-4, women were seen as disposable toys which could offer man pleasure for a while.

The Pharisees who derived their definition of marriage after the fall of human beings saw man as the ruler of the woman, and he could even determine how many wives he wished to have. That is seen from their reaction to Jesus in Matt.19:3-12. In fact, they did not only see a man as the ruler, but having all the power and might so that he could decide when to expel or leave his old wife for a new one. An image of

bubblegum comes into the author's mind, where one can chew for some minutes and after its former taste is finished, one can simply spit it out on the ground because it has lost its sweetness. The status of women is less than that of a piece of furniture in the house.

Rabbi Yehuda (150 AD) taught that every Jewish man should praise God daily and his prayer must include these words:

“Praise is to you that you have not created me a heathen, a woman and not a slave.” (De Bruyn, 1998:1)

Orthodox Jewish men still say this Morning Prayer:

“Blessed art thou O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has not made me a woman.” (Bennet, 1974:68)

The concept is that a woman is an inferior being. Ryrie (1991:35) says that the right of divorce in Jewish culture was at the discretion of the husband, and if he so chose, the wife would expect was a bill of divorcement. There is no question but that men dominated the religious scene in Judaism and oppressed women. The major contribution of a Jewish woman was their service in the home, where they were accorded a place of honor in carrying out the privileges of motherhood.

The Rabbinical teachings of the time emphasized that this should be a man's daily devotion. It is important to emphasize that this prayer is not

only bad, but it also took the image of women into a very low standard. Readers must not forget that what we say in prayer is what we do in our daily lives. Therefore it did not come as a surprise when Jews treated women so badly, because that is what they prayed for. They lived according to their prayers. To them women were a lower being that needed to know their own position. They are not far from the way African cultures treat their women. It is clear that the father in the Jewish tradition was recognized as the one having all final decisions in the home (same as African culture). Even when the daughter was engaged, the father was to decide whether his daughter may continue to be married or not. Which means even if the agreements were reached for marriage, but if during the course of engagement the father changed his decision about the marriage of his daughter, all were supposed to agree with him without questioning his decision? A good example is in the letter written to the Corinthians which says:

“In case of an engaged couple who have decided not to marry: if the man feels that he is not acting properly towards the girl and if his passions are too strong and feels that they ought to marry, then they should get married, as he wants to. There is no sin in this. But if a man, without being forced to do so, has firmly made up his mind not to marry, and if he

has his will under complete control and has already decided in his own mind what to do, then he does well not to marry the girl. So the man who marries does well, so the one who does not marry does even better.” (1Cor.7:36-38)

It was a custom in those days for the father to choose a husband for his daughter. According to De Haan:

“No marriage was countenanced without the consent of the father of the girl involved. In many instances the bride was chosen exclusively by the father (e.g. Isaac’s case as their reasoning). Today we have a faint reflection of this custom when the prospective groom goes through the formality of asking a father for the hand of his daughter in marriage. Then the phrase “flower of the age” means maturity of age. But if the father thinks that refusal to let her marry after she has passed the flower of her age may be misinterpreted or bring scandal upon her and her suitor, then let them marry.” (1966:88)

The author’s concern in this process is that the mother of the girl is not in the picture, in other words, her husband will always decide for her. This means that even if the mother would decline the decisions of her husband, she cannot because she is inferior, and let alone the husband take

decisions even if they are wrong. Jewish women were not allowed the permission to give their own view, objection nor opinion, but they blindly followed their husbands.

The researcher went to marry his wife in the magistrate's office in 1994, but what touched him was that only his father-in-law was asked to be there in order to take an oath that he allowed him to marry his daughter. The thinking of the author was that the question to be asked by the official should be: Do you allow this boy to marry your daughter? The response was to be answered by both parents. But he decided alone while his wife back at home did not take part. The researcher's understanding is that, if parents must participate in this, they should both be present, or if not allowed, both of them must be excused. They are both parents and no one is a minor parent, hence they should both be given equal responsibility to take an oath for their daughter.

Coming back to the Jews, the author believes that their opinion about women was just polluted by sinful attitudes they mixed with their culture.

In his book "The essential works" Josephus says that he realized a woman was a person who was formed from man's rib with the sole aim to bear many children. He says:

“Since Adam had no female consort and looked with astonishment at the other creatures which had their mates, God took Adam’s rib while he slept and formed woman from it. In Hebrew, a woman is called “*essa*” but the name of that first woman was Eve, meaning “the mother of all living, hence a woman is created to be a mother.” (1988:19)

The author personally understands that if the aim of woman’s creation is motherhood alone, then the liberation of women will not be easy because the author’s understanding is that the first aim of the creation of woman is “helpmate” to man as written in Gen.2:18. The author wants to concentrate on the word because this idea cannot respond to the question of women who are unable to bear children; the implication is that they are created for nothing.

On the other hand, the well-known philosopher Nietzsche said that the woman is the second blunder of God (Van Wyk, 1985:38). In other words, the Jewish understanding of woman pushed them into an extent of blaming God for creating a woman, yet they (men) cannot live without a woman. I understand very well that the biblical story of the creation of the woman and the purpose thereof (as in Gen.2: 8), escaped the minds of many clever and educated Jewish teachers of the time.

In some parts of Africa, even today, the bride is paid for and regarded as common as a chattel. Muslim mosques have signs that say:

“Women and dogs and other impure animals are not permitted. Men are superior to women on account of the qualities in which God has given them pre-eminence.”

(Habermehl, 1976:258)

In the Islamic belief, woman is believed to be of a lower level, she is thought not to have eternal soul. Four wives are allowed to each Mohammedan male, even up to today. For women are regarded as sexual object to please men (Habermehl, 1976:260).

According to Mnisi (classmate at UP) the traditions governing the widows of Sotho people do not allow her to attend normal church services during the period of mourning in early stages of death. She said this after she visited one of the victims around Warmbaths. There is also a custom of dressing the widow in black clothes until the unveiling of the tombstone or a year later. During the period when she is still in black she is restricted to many things, for instance, sharing and being with friends (she must usually be with the elderly people), using her own plate and mug and not changing clothes as she wishes. She is also not allowed to get another husband until she is permitted to do so by the in-laws, and

that mainly takes a long time, while this process treats men in a simple way. They are treated differently.

In other words, they do not have to follow the process that woman undergoes.

The author also had this experience when his father passed away in October 1985. His step-mother who was present faced a lot of difficulties. One of the cousins went on to take the two vehicles of the father when this woman was there without any objection about the belongings of her late husband. She was taken to the forest and one day she came home tied up in ropes crying while the old widows were beating her from behind. Unfortunately we could not hear what they were saying because while others were beating her, others were singing the songs while the ritual was being performed on her so that we could not hear what was said. From then onwards she was dressed in black and while still in the period of mourning, the father's relatives were taking whatever they wanted that belonged to the deceased. When the period of mourning was finished she found out that nothing that belonged to her late husband was left, except his clothes and she decided to leave the house for good. When a man dies, his relatives can easily jump into his position and decide on his behalf whatever may happen towards his widow and children.

The author also became a victim because his father's death did not only bring sufferings to his step-mother, but it also brought poverty to his life as well, since after his father's death, he remained a helpless beggar. All these happened because the woman takes no decisions on her husband's behalf. This is one of the bad sides of the rituals that oppress women in African customs. The community will watch these rituals on woman, and allow a man to break the rules.

4.5 AFRICAN SAYINGS ON THE DOMINATED WOMAN

The reader needs to understand that language also plays an important role in our daily lives, and it can be oppressive. Our hopes, beliefs and lifestyles are shaped by what we say. African languages have the so-called "sayings or idioms" in the wisdom literature. Some call them riddles while others call them proverbs. These sayings emphasize the unconditional subordination of women under their husbands. This is another way in which women are oppressed by men through these idiomatic expressions.

For example, a Sotho idiom says: "Lebitla la mosadi ke bohadi" (literally meaning "the grave of a woman is in her marriage or her in-law") (Kriel, 1991:27). This saying strongly emphasizes that a woman must stay in her marriage even if it causes death. In other words, only a wife (not a husband) is bound to remain in marriage even when things are bad. In

other words, she would not be permitted to get out of it. In literal terms the implication of this saying is that a woman is not allowed to initiate a divorce or separation, but that right remains with the man. The inferiority complex of a woman in this situation enforces her even to death, while it remains very quiet about men or husbands. It is questionable whether this is not another way of pushing women into a far corner of life, where they remain without any say in the family at all. The person who initiated this saying was influenced by the tradition that allowed men to oppress women. It would be fair if the grave of both is their own marriage to force both of them to die in it, or say that they both are not tied to the marriage for life, especially when the marriage becomes dangerous to at least one of them.

Another Shangaan idiom says:

“Nsati wa le nhongeni anga yingisi” meaning “a woman who is always beaten with a stick does not mind being beaten anymore.” (Junod, 1990:188)

In the first place this saying is one-sided since it only refers to the woman as the object of the beating, while the man is the one who beats. English people had the same concept as “the rule of thumb” (olden days) which allowed men to beat their wives with a stick that is the size of a man’s thumb. The main question to ask is: When will the man be an object of

the beating since he also commits mistakes? Another possibility of research for someone. Secondly, the author believes that men who always beat their wives might have also been influenced by the fact that the wives are no longer worried about being beaten; this is a myth followed by some men. Thirdly, new couples may learn from this saying that a wife is someone who may be beaten at will. If being beaten is painful, then how is it that a woman gets used to it? That should be called severe domestic violence.

The author's classmate in a high school says that whenever he holds a broomstick, his wife gets under a double bed in fear of the beating. A newspaper had the following headline:

“Where am I wrong when I beat *my own* wife?”

The newspaper went on to say: “This was a consensus at a recent safety and security *imbizo* in Driefontein near Piet Retief in Mpumalanga. (City Press, 18 Feb.2007:10) Another man in this meeting voiced out that he is still trying to understand why he was arrested for bringing his wife to order (referring to wife beating). Driefontein, like many parts of Mpumalanga is in ruins because of violent crime. Many people still do not believe that assaulting a person (women in particular) is a crime” (City Press, 18 Feb. 2007: 10).

The other saying:

“Vavasati ava na huvo”, literally meaning “a woman’s word has no value or her words will not have the same weight as that of the man in court.” (Junod, 1990:188)

If both man and woman’s words come from the mouth, then what is it that makes the one weighty while the other one is inferior. This is another way of saying that a woman is useless in the society. Pastoral care needs to address therapeutically the culture as well as the domination by men.

The opinion of the author is that there are men in the community who are more useless than many women. In some of our church councils there are men who share their useless ideas compared to women in their meetings, but this saying is one-sided. Personally, the author knows of many women who are active in bringing success in their communities and churches where men are doing nothing at all. Therefore some women are powerful when given a chance by men and community.

Junod also shares another saying that continues with the process of oppression:

“Loko homu ya ntswele yi rhangela emahlweni, ti ta wela exidziveni” (If a female cow leads the herd, all cattle will

fall into the pool). This means that when a woman is in the lead, the life in the village deteriorates.” (1990:190)

From the perspective of this saying, a woman will never have a leading role either in the society or family. That is one of the reasons that the houses or families of the single mothers are underestimated even though they raise children with good values. This denies the fact that it is God who gives the gifts of leadership to the people. Our people should learn to see the difference between the gender and cultural issues. Paul says that some people were given the gifts of apostleship, prophecy, evangelists and teachers, but he did not mention men alone. These gifts of the spirit are given to people according to faith, and not according to gender. The scriptures says:

“It is He who gave gifts to mankind, He appointed some to be apostles, others to be prophets, others to be evangelists, others to be pastors and teachers.” (Eph.4:11)

On the morning of 22 March 2003 the researcher was watching TV news where people around the world were demonstrating against the ongoing war of America on Iraq. There were women in the streets of Washington who were also protesting against their male president and leader, George Bush. To me that was a sign that women can analyze the mistakes that are being done by their president while he, being a male and a leader can not

see that his decision to attack that country was wrong. The final consequence was that women and children were going to suffer more than men.

The researcher started thinking about the concept of a woman being president of America, then the war we are speaking about today would not have been there, and those who lost their lives in the battle would have still been alive today. There are women who are so gifted that they can lead families and communities better than men. It is an unproven belief that a woman cannot take the lead in society or home.

“Vukati bya katinga” (meaning “marriage roasts”) only applies to women. It is a woman who always suffers in the marriage progress while it is quiet about the man.” (Junod, 1990:180)

One can also wonder if it is woman alone who should struggle for marriage, it is said:

“Ku teka iku hoxa nyoka enkwameni”, which means “to marry is to put a snake in one’s handbag.” (Junod, 1990:181)

As we know, a snake is something that is feared by many people in African life, while on the other hand, during the fall God declared the enmity of man and snake. The behavior and lifestyle of the snake is

something of concern, because to the author's understanding this saying is trying to draw our attention to make similarities between a woman and a snake. In the fall, both man and woman sinned; hence we cannot blame a woman or give her the responsibility of Adam's problems.

This saying seems to have a relationship with the other one:

“Wansati u fana na xigalana emirini” (Wife is like a tick on one's body). The meaning of this proverb is that marriage brings trouble.” (Junod, 1990:186)

In Shangaan, it literally means “to marry a wife brings trouble”. There are still many other sayings that are used to pull down the image of a woman so that she can be seen as a mere doormat for a husband. These proverbs are used often in order to discipline women and their meanings are always in the minds of many people, especially men.

4.6 THE TRADITIONAL VIEW OF MAN'S HEADSHIP

Olthuis (1974:28) says that the interpretation of headship is not common because most interpreters have confused the order for creation and the disorder of the fall. An African man or husband who believes that his wife is like “the snake” or one of the mentioned idioms above, will obviously treat her without respect and dignity. The reaction of such a husband to such a woman will be defensive, and he will always want to

be a better person than the wife who is explained by the idioms. It is obvious that the man will try more and more to distance himself from the bad woman. Pastor Walter Trobisch (1979:29) describes an African traditional view which compares a woman to a piece of unclaimed land. She is more like a garden without an owner. A man is compared to being a gardener, for he claims the garden and sows his seed. If the seed do not grow, the land is considered infertile and the gardener has the social mandate to acquire another piece of land in order to grow his seed. A man can have several gardens but a garden can have only one owner. This concept illustrates why men are more leniently judged for the sins of adultery than women.

Trobisch was so affected by African customs to an extent that some of his ideas are not good when analyzing our society. His allegory of equating woman with a piece of ground does not portray a good picture of woman, especially when you view creation of humanity with God's creation. If his thinking is the way some African people live, then every woman would like to find herself far from such a society. That is oppressive and extremely abusive.

The first example, of the traditional headship of man is drawn from a man called Moses in Kenya of whom Kimathi says:

“Moses Marimba is a traditional Christian husband. As soon as he comes home from work he washes and goes to the shopping center to meet his age mates. After enjoying his company he finally leaves for home at about 8.p.m. when he estimates that supper will be ready. Quietly entering his house, he occupies the big chair in the sitting room and start playing radio alone while his wife enjoys the company of the children in the kitchen. When his food arrives at around 9 pm. he hungrily eats alone while his wife eats with children in the kitchen. It appears to me Moses was not delivered from the traditions. His father taught him that an African man must behave like the unapproachable, lordship and chief in the house.” (1994: 42)

The researcher personally feels that such kind of husbands is a disgrace to their families and society, especially if they are Christians. Men live in two worlds, the outside world of work, and the abusive one in homes. From the above short episode, it is clear that some husbands are very good with sharing and relating to others outside their homes, but they turn to be equated with lions (so to speak) when they arrive at home. Such is one of the characteristics of a real African traditional man. It is a problem since even some of the Christians, like Moses Marimba, are still hooked

in this type of life. They are the type of men whose wives run until they injure themselves because of fear when they have to prepare the husband something. There is no time to share the blossoms of life with his wife and children, let alone the society and the church.

Wimberly believes that it is not only possible, but also important that pastoral care should move people from being dominated and shamed to realizing their worth and importance. He goes on to say that oppressed and victimized women must be brought to realize that they are important people both in the families and communities. Pastoral care must not only look at the oppression by men, but also by the evil spirits and actions portrayed by violent men. Wimberly shares a powerful story saying:

“I was approached by an African Christian woman whose background was dominated by a sophisticated worldview that included demons. She said that she was beaten and raped nightly by a demon, leaving her scared and tired every morning. She continually felt humiliated and abused by the demon. She was tormented by the low self-esteem and mental illness, but her husband was not abusive, instead he was supportive to her.”
(1999:93)

My view to this is that whenever we speak about liberation of any kind, or oppression of any kind, we must not be mistaken to undermine the spiritual side of things. The pastoral care can help liberate women from

the oppression of men, but it must also help to liberate them from the spiritual forces that the devil uses to dominate people's life.

Tchividjian (no year: 70) says that another way of liberation is when everyone takes his or her own responsibility. He says:

“Liberation comes as a mother takes her own responsibility in life, e.g. ministry to husband, to children, to the community and also to the church.”

When the abusive husband calls his wife, she is frightened because she does not know exactly what is going to happen, whether she is going to be beaten. We still have in our communities, even in the church, such men who is the boss of his wife to such an extent that she cannot even ask where he was when coming home late is problematic. Some are beaten or expelled from the home if they do so. It becomes very difficult for her to detect the difference between headship and lordship.

Zinn and Eitzen (1990:271) say:

“The society assigns a superior status to husbands. He makes more money, he has more prestige in the community, he works outside home and he has more power.” (1990:271)

The author disagrees with Zinn and Eitzen because making more money is part of his responsibilities as a man, but it does not promote him into a

superior person to abuse the wife. We also have women who work outside the home and earn more money than their husbands, but they remain inferior to their husbands. This proves that this argument is not convincing. After the fall of man into sin God in Genesis 3 gave husbands not woman that responsibility to work hard in order to get food. Then it can not be used as a good excuse to abuse women.

Romano says:

“In some societies, primarily non-Western societies the woman’s role is to the man including hard physical labor deferring to his judgments and socially subordinating her in such ways walking behind him and eating after he has eaten.” (1988:43)

The researcher does not condone this since it is a result of human’s sinful nature. There is nowhere in the Bible where God teaches or commands us to treat women in an abusive way. That is where our cultures (if it comes from culture) should be revisited so that we can have a better life for all people irrespective of gender.

Clemens (1971:24) contends that some traditional men could see women not only as evil, but inferior and unimportant as well. Even today many men think of women largely in terms of dehumanized sex objects. The above facts remind us of the concept of *lobola*, especially how it can be

used by men in order to oppress, turning women into property, for example. They will remind them that they have paid the bridal price for them. I have already indicated earlier that women were not created only for the purpose of pleasing men sexually, in Biblical terms it will be regarded as a heresy. They have more important reasons than that one.

Lobolo also influences the behavior of a man as the husband in the family. Some researchers believe that wife beating and harassment result from the fact that after the final payment of lobolo the man immediately owns a wife (Baloyi, 2001:51). Because of the fact that there is no credit left, she is owned to an extent that she has no saying in the home at all. She may become a slave that can be ordered around and beaten without excuse. (Warunta & Kimothi, 1994:105)

The emphasis on the statement:

“I do not understand why I am arrested for beating my own wife because I have paid *lobola*, she belongs to me” is given more value by the fact that the man paid everything to make his wife his own like one buys a car (City press, 18 Feb. page 10).

Moosa (1998:199) responds to the issue of human rights by saying that despite human rights, the Muslims in the Cape maintain that men should still dominate women.

Alsdurf on the other hand contends:

“The man, once a church deacon raped his girlfriend before marriage, strangled, kicked and bruised and repeatedly threatened to murder her.” (1989:33-35)

This type of behavior is not a result of African culture or religion (not even Islam), but it may have been as a result of some health problems within that man. If that church did nothing to discipline him for such actions, then this church must revise some of its governing rules and regulations. Although we still have such husbands in our societies, it cannot be allowed as a good thing. The reader needs to understand the concept of ownership.

By ownership the author means the fact that a husband claims to take his wife as owned property like a piece of land that was bought as a result of the *lobolo* payment. The argument here is that if one pays a lot of money for *lobolo*, some traditional Africans become confused to an extent that they think that there is no difference in handling the so-called “bought wife” and “bought furniture”. The result will therefore be to treat the wife like any other thing bought.

The researcher attended an “Anti-crime road-show” that was conducted by the Police staff from Polokwane and social workers from Malamulele

at Mukhomi village on 23 March 2003. Amongst the speeches that were delivered, the author had to work out a programme of an education plan. The first one being the social worker, Mrs. Bila (March 23, 2003: Speech at Malamulele), had this to say at the workshop:

“A woman was created for a good purpose, to be a helper rather than to be a punching bag. In the past I know mothers used to feel proud of being treated in a harsh manner (by their husbands). If the husband did not assault her before he left, she would feel not being loved. I believe that not all men are abusers; there are good men out there whom we encourage to form a forum in order to address this epidemic. Let us break the silence. We know that when we work together we will overcome.” (Bila,2003:speech)

The researcher believes that after reading the words above, one can get another picture of how some traditional husbands look like and are caused to believe in a wrong way. They do not only beat their wives at will, but they also abuse them as well. It is a pity to learn that some traditional women are also in favor of being abused, since they do not want to break the silence. The word “punchbag” reminds the author of the picture of a half-naked woman called Ntombifuthi Zwane of Brits in the City Press of 09-03-2003 on page 6. The first thing to be remembered here is the meaning of the “punch bag” (City Press, March 23, 2003:6).

The woman was naked because the husband beat and battered her until she went out of the house naked since she felt that if she should take time to fetch clothes it would be too late with the beating that was continuing.

This is a bag that is hanged somewhere on top so that boxers use it for training by punching it, just like they are boxing in the ring. One can hit this bag as much as he pleases, for the purpose of strengthening his punching abilities while in the ring. Back to Ntombifuthi, this woman was young in age but her body looked old since she claimed that her husband used to beat her until she reported the case to the local police station. On top of that, she claimed that the prosecutor who held her case told her husband to assassinate her in order to nullify the pending case, since she was a woman. Another concept of regarding women as property.

The author personally knows of women in the church who do not want to spoil their husband's name or to put them in the situation where they can find themselves under a certain type of church discipline. The wife of an evangelist in another church, broke the news about her abusive husband in the home to the author's wife, but when the author asked this woman that he may take it further with the church council responsible, she refused. Her reasons were that it might spoil her husband before the entire church and it might cause the missionaries to stop paying his salary and

the children will suffer. Her view was that the children first had to grow up and then finally we could tackle the problem. (Case study)

The tradition of the so-called “untouchable husband” also brings some negative consequences to churches. The question is, are the churches collaborating with the perpetrators? The church must receive blame and criticism for using theology that uplift men more than women. Is it because we still have some husbands in our society who use the Biblical concept of “man is the head” to strengthen their argument in favor of women abuse? They say that God is on their side when treating women as inferior and minor beings. Some of these abusive issues can be addressed through an education plan, therapy and workshops that train the church in order to review cultural issues that oppress women. Highlighting them is important.

The researcher also conducted a personal interview on 24-03-2003 with Mrs. Maluleke V.M. of the family court at Malamulele Magistrate’s office. The first thing the author wanted to know was the statistics of domestic violence that were reported in their office. She said that in 2002 alone, the cases of domestic violence of husbands to their wives were 165 while in 2003 until the above date there were 367.

This means that if things were going that way, every three months they would have to deal with more or less 367 cases, then it means

mathematically that by the end of 2003 they would have dealt with more or less 1468 cases. This indicates that the statistics of women abuse in the home are competing with HIV/AIDS in growth. She went on to indicate that these were the cases where traditional men were harassing and mistreating their wives at home. When I asked about the main reasons for these cases she mentioned the following:

*Unfaithfulness - When the husband becomes unfaithful in the marriage relationship, he expects the wife not to have a say nor ask anything, since she is entitled to unconditionally respect him. As he is the boss in the house, he would reward her with beating and maybe threats of expelling her if she asks questions. Women suffer because they depend on men financially. The power of finance and traditional belief that “man has unquestionable authority” plays an important role here. Many husbands do not shoulder the blame of unfaithfulness but they try to shift the blame to women by threatening them. The researcher is reminded of one incident when he was passing the house where the couple was fighting about a problem of infertility. They were married for more than three years and did not have a child. The researcher repeatedly heard the man shouting these words: “Where are the children, go and fetch children from your mother!” This was a sign that the woman was in trouble since she was now the victim of lack of children. According to the author it is

unfair since there were no medical tests done yet in order to prove that the woman was the cause of the problem. The cause could be the husband, but he became fast to judge the wife.

*Alcohol or substance abuse - Most men, when drunk, cannot control their temper and they would beat and mistreat their wives without valid reasons sometimes. This is the most disturbing problem even in Africa.

Getui says:

“The effects of chewing the gum, glue and petrol the street children sniff are equally dreadful. These substances are soaked in cloth or kept in plastic containers and are inhaled through the mouth and nose. Sexual abuse is suffered by both girls and boys; however, the girls are more hit.”

(2000:158)

Although the author has no argument against this, he can only emphasize that our society is being disturbed by the fact that men who use substances are always found guilty of mistreating their wives. The question to ask is, why do we have street kids doing all these? Is it not because of the abuse at home?

*Tradition - The patriarchal tradition allows men to take, and give them power more than women, therefore in some cases a husband would come

late at night with a concubine and try to expel his wife from the main bedroom. If she refuses, the reward is beating and harassment. The result of their actions places women at the risk of aids. The tradition of putting husbands above their wives is also supported by Dr. Michael Mawema in Zimbabwe. This medical doctor sees nothing wrong with wife-beating as a corrective measure, hence he claims that wife-beating reduces divorces and blames women movements for instigating Zimbabwean young women who leave their husbands after the first fight (Wasike & Warunta, 2000:184).

Some of the causes of wife-beating and battering are:

*The influence of the in-laws

When mother, brothers or sisters to the man report negative things about their sister-in-law, for example, they may say that she is mean and does not share with them generously. In some situations, even before the husband listens to his wife's side of the story, he will descend upon her and beat her without any discussions.

*Beating as accepted way of keeping peace and harmony. The beating, as one man explains it, curtails the bad behavior in women and disciplines them in order to keep in line with what is wanted by the man.

*Unwed mothers who remain within the home. These are girls who have given birth to children without being married and they stay bitterly with their brothers because they believe their brothers do not care for them like before, especially after the brothers get married. In some situations they may quarrel with the brother and his wife because they want to claim some of the inheritance from their father's house.

*Others are financial problems and barrenness. (Warunta & Kinothi, 2000:128-129)

When reading about this doctor in Zimbabwe for the first time the author could not believe that a medical doctor can promote things that can also lead to medical problems. He said to himself that this doctor probably wanted as many people as possible to flock to his hospital or surgery because in a beating anything can happen, including sustained injuries that would need a doctor to cure. But on the other hand he could not see wife-beating as a way to reduce divorce because God did not plan divorce when he initiated marriage. It is also true that differences between husband and wife do not automatically lead to divorce.

The tradition on the other hand expects the woman to tolerate everything that the man does, even wrong things that are done deliberately. She is bound to obey and follow him even when he leads her to death. Therefore, if ever she shows some signs of resistance, it is the time she

would be beaten and harassed. A woman is not expected to debate with the husband on matters that touch his moral life.

Alsdurf quotes a husband's position to his wife saying:

“My wife thought that being whatever I wanted her to be, she would please me, which she did, but her success also frightened me terribly.” (1989:44)

The author says that being someone else must not depend on what someone does for either husband or wife. She would be beaten for doing exactly what the husband wanted her to do. This way of doing things indicates that this man used stimulus to make his wife do something he wanted. It is not very different from using a stick for animals to keep them doing the right thing, which is to run or turn the other way.

Kuper writes about the Swazi marriage:

“In Swazi marriages, if a husband dies, the woman is inherited through the custom of the levirate by one of the male relatives of the deceased in order to raise the children in his name. Even in the case of death, the woman is not allowed to voluntarily marry a second time. During the day of the traditional marriage ceremony the girl's mother while crying, tells her daughter to behave with restraint in the

husband's home though she be subject to unaccustomed restrictions and accusations." (1986:24)

Therefore the understanding here is that marriage is restricted and regulations oppress the wife, while it is not the case with the man or husband. It is very disturbing to see those women who are told that the marriage is going to harass women before it even starts. They enter into marriage expecting to suffer at the hands of the husband, the in-laws and the society.

The emotional and physical abuse will be extreme in relationship with partners because of being a female. There is also a Swazi idiom that asks:

"If your mother and your wife are both drowning, which one would you save?" The right answer would be: "My mother, I can get another wife, but I cannot get another mother (Kuper, 1986:29)".

This idiom teaches that a wife is of less importance compared to parents, especially mother. The other point is that a wife is something that one can more easily get than the mother. This undermines the status of a wife and causes her to be of less importance than the mother or a car, which can be replaced at anytime if it has mechanical problems. The general attitude of man to woman, not only in Africa, has made woman in many cases

unable to take her rightful place as a complete human being both in the family and in society at large. When married, she would not be considered to own her own property (Kisembo, Magesa & Shorter, 1977:151). This cheap way of understanding women and their capabilities is not only wrong, but also sinful according to my understanding.

According to the writer Estelle Ellis (The Star, 14 March 2003, p8) nothing much had changed in women's experiences of domestic violence in the past few years, which raises serious questions about the efficacy of existing measures. The police added that many of the victims are women who were considered to be cheeky and aggressive when they demand attention by their husbands.

What kind of men abuses their wives? Alsdurf answers:

“Quite often, the suspicious and jealous husbands and the low esteem ones are the culprits.” (1989:41-44)

On the other hand are those who misuse alcohol and other drug substances. One drug addict who was recovering was quoted saying:

“Drinking was like pouring gasoline on smoldering coals.”
(Alsdurf, 1989:82)

In fact, some husbands use drinking as a reason for acting wrongly while they are the problem themselves. When they are drunk, they do many bad

things, including wife-beating and the next day they claim that they did not do it intentionally, but they were under the influence of liquor or another substance. That is why, in some instances, drinking of liquor is more or less like accelerating their bad behavior towards their wives. The next intensive teacher of violence is the media, especially films.

4.7 FILMS THAT RELATED TO THE TOPIC

4.7.1 Neria (oppressive film)

This section will deal with films and other concepts that oppress and abuse women in our culture. This is a traditional film acted in Zimbabwe. It is about the man who died leaving behind his wife, children and a younger brother. According to the custom the younger brother should take over the caring of his brother's widow. People were taken by surprise to learn that instead of taking care of his brother's wife and children, he started persecuting his brother's wife and children. He misused the riches left by the deceased and even took over the town house that his brother left. He went on to take his brother's banking accounts and facilities, which broke the widow more and more. The rescue only came after her friends advised her to take legal steps, but before, the tradition allowed the man to do as he pleased with his brother's properties, while the wife was suffering.

Another incident that humiliates women is the story of Sarah Baartman who was taken to England for display. She was used as an object for people to view her body for 200 years. In Britain she was viewed as an object and people could pay to view her body.

4.7.2 The return of Sarah Baartman

This film shows how the colored woman was taken out of the country to London and was abused both mentally and sexually while other people were making a lot of money out of her display in a museum in the UK. The reader will learn how women were discriminated against in our society and abused even when they were deceased. For years people would visit the museum in order to see her behind on the display.

4.7.3 Amapantsula

This film was showed on SABC 1 between 21h00-22h00 on 2003/03/02. This Zulu acted film taught something related to woman's compromise on abuse. One of the bully husbands followed his wife to work (she was a domestic worker) to get money for beer and cigarettes from her since he was not working. As she was, all she earned belonged to him. When they were still quarrelling about this money and the husband started manhandling and fighting her, the white owner of the house called her and asked what was happening, but she protected her husband by saying:

“There is nothing mam, we are just laughing.”

The female inferiority complex taught her to protect her husband even when he was endangering her life. Humiliation continued. The fear of revealing the truth becomes a problem in the abusive relationship.4.7.4

4.7.4. **White handkerchief**

This film was broadcasted on SABC1 at 20h30 on 21 September 2004. The film was about the traditional wedding where the representatives of both sides of the in-laws were gathered at the house of the newly wedded couple. The main aim was to witness whether the girl was a virgin or not, after their first sexual intercourse.

It was painful for the girl to allow the husband to sleep with her since she knew that she was not a virgin, therefore the husband immediately went out of the house shouting to the people gathered outside: “She is not a virgin!” After that the marriage was dissolved and the girl committed suicide because of the fear that the community saw her as a disgrace, especially members of her family. But the main problem is that culture does nothing to use the same process with men. Even films continue to portray women by undermining them; while on the other hand, men walk free even if they are the guilty party. In short, young men grow up with these portrayed images of women as inferior and lesser beings.

4.8 CULTURAL BONDS THAT BIND HUSBANDS AND WIVES

4.8.1 *Lobola*

While researching about *lobola* for the purpose of the M.A.degree, the researcher discovered that *lobola* is of special importance for the marriage bond amongst African people. According to Warunta and Kinothi (2000:123 and 128), some of our men think that the herds of cattle, goats and sheep that they pay as bride-wealth for their wives give them the right to own and beat their wives at will. Therefore, men own the women for they have bought them, just like shoes, cars or other properties. *Lobola* is viewed as a gift, which replaces her in her family, reminding the family that she left them but she is not dead. This is a way to show that she changed her place of stay in order to stay in her marriage. The author does not agree with Mbiti's view when he says that after *lobola* has been paid she is bound to her new family to an extent that there is no coming back, since the replacement was done. This clearly connects with what the author has already mentioned in chapter one when using a Sotho idiom saying: "Lebitla la mosadi ke bohadi", meaning "the grave of a woman is her in-laws". According to our culture, the power that the *lobola* has for one's marriage enforces one to stay in it even when the marriage is life-threatening. That is why, even during the time when the parents of a girl are receiving *lobola*, they will call the girl to make a solemn promise that they may use the *lobola* since she will stay in her marriage. The author was personally involved in this process where one

of his sisters' *lobola* was being paid, and there was a time when his uncle called his sister into the house. This was the time when the total amount of money for *lobola* was put on the table and he asked her:

“Xana wa tiyisa leswaku hi dya xuma lexi ke, na swona u ta ya tshama evukatini ke?” (Meaning: Do you swear that we may use this money and do you promise to stay in your marriage?).

To the researcher this is a sign that *lobola* binds women into marriage in such a way that the wife may not decide to divorce because she cannot pay back the money. Another concept of *lobola* used as property and ownership of women by men.

4.8.2 Children factor

The author's experience as a minister taught him that in some African marriages there is a process that forces a wife to stay in marriage even when things are difficult, simply because she has children with the husband. If she leaves him, she won't be able to support herself; hence dependency is the main problem. He is, of course, not a supporter of divorce, but sometimes in a life-threatening situation, the only way out is by divorce, especially after everything has been tried to save the

marriage.

The author knows of a woman who is without teeth today because of her abusive husband who is still beating her today. When people ask her: “Why don’t you divorce him because everything has been done to stop him from this bad habit?” she would always answer: “He is the father of my children and there is nothing I can do but instead I have to stay with him, till death do us part”. There was another woman who was married to a gay husband. When people ask her about that, she would always say that she has nowhere to go since they have children together - how will she support herself and her children?

4.9 POWER AS A REASON FOR THE OPPRESSION OF WOMEN

Looking at the physical appearance of males and females, males always look stronger than females. The other important thing is that women are naturally dependent on men for protection. In other words, God gave men more courage and physical fitness so that they can also protect women. That is what Pobebe means when saying that the male is the source of the woman’s spiritual protection. (1979:131)

This means that when God gave men physical strength and power, He intended that this double gift will also be used for the benefit of the weaker partner, the woman. That is why Col.1:15-17 indicates that the

origin of the power was in the creative purpose of God. The Greek New Testament has two concepts referring to power. The origin of this power is God Himself. The concepts are “*dunamis* and *exousia*,” but the power that men abuse when mistreating is not one of these. The reason is that the two concepts refer to the power that is given to man by God, and is used for the good purpose in developing God’s creation.

Although some people confuse power and authority to mean one thing, in this case Yonder teaches us that we must learn to distinguish between the two since power has much to do with the physical while authority has to do with emotions. (1972:139)

When coming to the African concept of power, the male, who is the source of income, is automatically given the whole power to take final decisions in every matter. That is why even the meetings of the community used to be handled and decided by men alone without women, even if the decisions were going to affect women in either way. That is what the researcher is arguing against since that is misuse of power.

That is why he fully supports Pobee when saying:

“Power is a delicate thing which has to be handled with great care. Power is like an egg. If it is not handled with care, it destroys both the wielder and those over who it is

wielded.”(1979:147)

This is echoed by White who believes that power can be wrongly used. God even bestows power on fallible immature human beings when he makes them his partners in the Gospel. He says:

“The greater the power, the greater the danger.” (1988:121)

In his “*The Deceptive Morality of Power*” Fowler indicates clearly that the intervention of both America and Iraq in the Kuwait war was as a result of misuse of power. (1991:4)

Without denying the fact that the war was a result of abuse of power, the researcher’s opinion is that Kuwait had a good reason to call its allies in order

to assist her when she discovered that she was invaded. The same concept can be applied on an abusive relationship.

This gives Dobson more sense when he says that at times there is an underlying possibility that the oppression and battering produce stubborn and cruel women in the society. This is one of the dangers that the misuse of power can have. (1974:17)

The impression here is that any form of power can be misused, depending on how the one in power is handling it. When looking at African leaders, whether a king or chief, all people under his power are oppressed, since power to them means dominating other people’s lives. Husbands

who beat their wives are also victims of abuse of power, since they were given their wives to take care of them and protect them, but instead they abuse them. On the other hand, Shaw indicates that every power that is used for destruction or to the disadvantage of others is an evil power that does not come from God. (1983:204) That is why Chafer and Walvoord say that there is the power of Satan. They say:

“The power of Satan cannot be estimated. Sometimes his demons merely influence men and possess them so that man’s physical bodies as well as their speech are controlled.” (1974:195)

Man’s given power either at home or in the community does not entail that he must impose his will on the woman, nor always dictating his final decisions, but he should instead follow the way of Mol’s understanding that the man should direct the woman in a loving and caring manner. (1981:111) The rule of man over woman in Gen.3:16 did not imply that the woman will be treated like a piece of property, without being listened to, but it meant that the husband is given a weaker partner whom he should support and journey with in life with tenderness and appreciation. Mol goes on to say that the physical power of man must be used for the benefit and protection of his wife, family and community. (1981:112)

How can a fallen man redeem himself as far as dominating women is concerned? Gladwin has a good point when saying that the revival of man's good use of power can only be found in Jesus Christ. (1974:46)

The salvation of Jesus teaches us that oppression is not only brutal and barbaric, but it is a result of the fall of human being into sin. According to Wimberly the victim must be helped therapeutically to overcome negative personal mythologies that were brought to her by the abusive actions. He says: "Women must be helped to overcome that she has no control over her being abused. She must also be helped to accept and understand that she is not responsible for the battering or any form of abuse. She needs not to blame herself". (1994:65)

The other important thing that abused people need to know is that it is not God who caused the entire misdeed, but the devil. Therefore this serious sin, like other sins, needs the redemptive work of Christ so that the renewed and the reborn man can start over again where he left to do what pleases God, including his renewed view on women.

Gladwin says:

"When we think about power, position, authority, and glory, the lifestyle to which we are committed in belonging to Jesus Christ radically reshapes our traditional inheritance of

a fallen social life.” (1979:47)

When the word “inheritance” is mentioned, it takes us to the thinking of Boesak when he indicated that power is social reality and cannot exist on its own. He went on to argue that John Locke believed that power is a relational reality. Therefore the man is seen as powerful when compared to women. Ruether has this to say:

“The abuse of environment and the imbalance of the distribution of male-dominated political power over centuries are intimately connected.” (1996:122)

That is why Boesak goes on to say that one cannot simply say that power is good or evil, because it depends on how and against whom it is applied. (1981:47)

The fall of man into sin made it possible for him to misunderstand what God’s intention with the creation of woman was, hence the treatment of man towards her was also affected because of that. No man saved by Jesus Christ will continue to view a woman being inferior or subordinate, but all saved people will begin to realize that women are important and better people in the society. That is why White suggests that we must engage ourselves in the battle against the powers of darkness. (1976:223)

In conclusion, the researcher, like Freire, is convinced that all domination involves invasion. Because of the misuse of power by men,

women find themselves invaded by the rules and unjust judgements by men to an extent that life becomes more difficult for them.

(1986:151) That is why Robbins says:

“I define power to be an active force that unifies, rather than destroys. It allows us to create our visions, be successful and influence events and people.” (1996:11)

In this way he sees power neither as domination nor invasion. That is the way how we should understand and use power.

When looking at some of the results of this oppression, it becomes very difficult to raise good children in the oppressive society. That is why Freire (1986:152) concludes by saying that a rigid and oppressive social structure necessarily influences institutions of child rearing and education. That will justify the “cause and effect philosophy of David Hume in which he argues that the effect result is always likely to be the same as the cause. (1988:36)

4.10 PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS OF THIS CHAPTER

4.10.1 The society view an African head of the family as the boss, unapproachable, lord and chief within the family

The sovereign and absolute power of the husband in the traditional African family makes him something like a boss, since he has the final

say over the home territory. He can decide how and when things should be done without consulting even his wife. When most traditional husbands enter their homes, wives and children become frightened to an extent that they even fail to know what to do and for what reason. If we can take an example or a picture of Moses Marimba, one can detect that even when his footsteps are heard from the gate, children and their mother start speaking softly while on the other hand, everyone tries to remember what he or she must do before he gets into the house. Even during his absence, he rules them with fear. (Kimathi, 1994:42)

If ever such a husband may decide that eating must stop, everyone in the house must stop eating irrespective of how hungry he or she is. His decision is final. The wife is only entitled to what she is told without any question or correction. This type of husband can commit a lot of mistakes but do not correct them since everyone fears to advice him. He does not have time to discuss any business with his wife. The fear in the house is not mere respect that the father deserves from his house.

4.10.2 Headship implies that one must treat his wife unconditionally

When the author was still studying fulltime at a University one of his classmates once beat his wife until she lost three of her teeth. He wants to believe that even today, whenever this woman falls or see her open gums in the mirror, she would remember the incident that removed her teeth.

Another way of emotional abuse. We have read and analyzed the statistics of domestic violence, and there are still many men in our country today who are living under the influence of this epidemic.

If it's true what the social worker (Mrs. Bila) indicated, that in the olden days women enjoyed being punch bags, then the husbands who severely beat them did these things with pride. The author is reminded of one man saying that it is only after he has beaten his wife that life goes on well in the house. It has become a normal way of living to some husbands to beat their wives, while it has become a norm for women to accept such treatment with both hands. Some of them are persevering in those types of marriages since they are threatened to be expelled from marriage and family. Dependency syndrome is the biggest problem faced by women in our community.

Like the Swazi idiom which emphasizes that

“I can still get another wife, but not another mother,”

(Keane,1988:65)

it is evident that women must be mistreated because they are very cheap.

One can simply get another one if the first one gives some problems.

Since they are objects of sexual pleasure, she may be demanded to have sexual intercourse even if she is not ready, since she is owned by her husband.

This reminds the author of a case of a couple who related to each other in an abusive way. The woman indicated that since her marriage (they married in 1993) she never enjoyed sexual intercourse because her husband would grab her like a lion grabs an animal for food. In other words, the moment the husband feels he wants sexual intercourse, she is told nothing, but she would be forced in doing it without her consent. It is he alone who decides when his sexual feelings should be aroused and nourished the wife's part is just to please him.

The traditional Kamba woman avoids sexual excitement. If she shows evidence of sexual excitement and becomes an active participant in the sexual act, it is an indication to the husband that it is time he marries a new wife. At its best, therefore, the sexual act is for the enjoyment and satisfaction of men only. Generally, the woman's part in the act is to please the husband and to bear children. (Kimathi, 1994:13)

4.10.3 Headship should command unconditional subordination from the woman

If in the Jewish days a woman was to be treated more or less equal to a slave, there is no reason to deny that the status of women was lowered.

When the British singer in those olden days said:

“Freedom of life is a fundamental human right, but not in South Africa”, I would say today: “Freedom of life is a fundamental human right, but with the exclusion of women”.

The wife’s inferiority pushed her into unconditional submission, which makes it difficult for us to differentiate between a woman and a slave. That is why it is also important to mention that by so doing, instead of producing better women in our society, because of the poor perception by males towards females, we always have revolting women who lack love and tender care towards our nation. Because of that, Nietzsche indicates that in a state of hatred women are more dangerous than men because their hostility has been aroused and they allow their hate to grow undisturbed to its ultimate consequences. (1990:154)

Both African and biblical views on headship have been discussed individually, now we need to compare them in order to see where they differ and where they overlap, so that we can heal our people. Therefore the next chapter will make a comparison of the two views and come to a conclusion with a way forward therapeutically.