

**CHANGING THE PATRIARCHAL ATTITUDE OF  
OVAWAMBO MEN: CAN THE BIBLE HELP?**

**BY  
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**Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of  
Theology in the School of Theology, University of Natal**

**January 2000**

## Declaration

I declare that this whole dissertation, unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text is my original work.



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Aron Set Kanana

## **Abstract**

It is the feeling of the author of this thesis that in Oshiwambo society power and authority in families is invested on the male head. This act has caused the society to be a patriarchal society. In most cases women and children are taken for granted by men that they are there to serve men's interests.

This patriarchal society emerged from culture and tradition of Oshiwambo people. Women discrimination starts at birth, when every member of the family is sorry that the baby is a girl. Also the way a baby boy is raised is different from the way of a girl. The boy is treated with a great respect while a girl is not. When the church came in the area, did not change this situation. In stead it gave more power to men than to women. Until 1992 women were not allowed to lead the church.

Nowadays, there is a general feeling that this patriarchal system is good for nothing. As a response to that feeling the state has taken a stand in the present government that women must be well represented in leadership and holding important positions than before. Still, there have been opposition from some people who are not happy with these changes. They want women to be looked as inferior beings.

The author of this thesis is of opinion that there are enough texts in the Bible which say about gender equality. Unfortunately, in most cases, the Oshiwambo men have failed to read these texts in the light of elevating the status of women in their society. Therefore, the problem is not women discrimination as it may sound to the reader, but the real problem is the conservative ideology of men towards women. Men must be liberated from it.

## **Acknowledgements**

This dissertation could have not come to its completion without the support and encouragement of the following:

The Lutheran Commission for Southern Africa (LUCSA) for granting me financial support.

The male adult group at Onandjaba rural congregation, the male students at Okalongo Senior Secondary School and the male theologian students at Paulinum Theological Seminary for their cooperation during the workshop.

To Mrs Hilaria Hamushila for organising the two bible study groups for me, and Dr. Martin Nelumbu for allowing male theologians to discuss with me.

To my supervisor, Professor Jonathan Draper, for his valuable help, patience, direction and encouragement during the writing of this dissertation.

Finally, my special thanks to my family: my dear wife Lydia Nefundja and our sons, Mekondjo, Ndeitumba and Many for their special support, patience and encouragement.

## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my four brothers : Petrus, Jonas, Abraham and Joel who have grown up in this patriarchal culture.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 The problem and its background.

Patriarchy ( literally “father rule”) is the system that is found in many cultures worldwide ( if not all). The Hebrew culture from which the Old Testament was produced is a patriarchal culture. In this culture patriarchs are honoured and remembered as great leaders, figures and heroes of that nation. Furthermore, the majority of the named Christian leaders of the early period were men. This has an impact on the New Testament to be highly influenced by patriarchy. This system has influenced many aspects of life, i.e. social, political, economical and religious.

Oshiwambo culture is one of these cultures, especially African cultures, where patriarchy is dominating. In this culture women’s dignity is not recognized. Socially they have no say at all. They have to listen and obey the rules and decisions of men. Historically, it is hard to find a woman honoured and remembered in this culture as it is done to men. Only one honour is given to some women who belong to the royal clan with the exception that they give birth to kings. It is only here that the clan side is counted on women, because the clan is a matrilineal, not patrilineal.

Our church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia ( ELCIN ) was planted by the Finnish mission on the 9th July 1870. (Nambala 1995: 8) According to the historical evidences of this church, many of these missionaries were males. I have no doubt that the Finnish culture was also a patriarchal culture, because in their mission men were dominating in mission more than women. From this simple evidence one can see how patriarchy is dominant in the church.

One can also notice that patriarchy was not considered to be a problem in the society. Nor was it recognised as one of the systems that are oppressive. It was accepted by both males and females as

a normal way of life. The liberation struggle for human rights has awakened some of the Namibian women to start questioning systems that are violating female rights politically, economically and religiously. Patriarchy became one of the systems that are considered to be violating the rights and dignities of other human beings. Because this system is deeply rooted in cultures, it is hard to convince especially men that this practice is wrong. It is not easy to change a patriarchal society. The purpose of this project is to examine the attitude of Ovawambo men towards the challenges of patriarchy, to seek ways from a male perspective how to help men come to realize that patriarchy is really wrong and sinful, and that the gospel of Christ is against it.

## **1.2 Motivation.**

### **Several factors have motivated me to work on this topic.**

First, the feminist theology course that I attended during the first semester of my first year. I took this course with a hope to hear what the course is all about and why this theology at all. In this course I met a number of challenges when it comes to biblical interpretations or hermeneutics. It is where I came across the words patriarchy and androcentric for the first time. I have also noticed for the first time that the language of the Bible is mainly male dominated language because of the culture and history which is mainly dominated by men. The Bible as a product of this history and culture is influenced by this culture. In this culture women's participation in history and culture is absent. They were not counted as fully human beings. Jesus' challenges towards this culture are hardly taken into consideration. Not even his attitudes towards both males and females were taken very seriously.

Secondly, there is a need to do contextual Bible study with men in the Namibian context which forced me to choose this topic. The Bible as product of a patriarchal culture clearly defends patriarchy. Most of the Namibian Christian men use it to defend themselves against women challenges. The church, i.e. ELCIN, has not considered this problem critically. Instead it puts more pressure on women's freedom and dignity. ELCIN is still preaching women's submission to husbands and husbands as head over women. This happens always during marital counselling and

in sermons prepared for wedding ceremonies. This explains to us that male pastors ( as we are still the majority in ELCIN ) play a major role by legitimating patriarchy in the church. This attitude creates a lack of critical theological examination of texts that contributes towards freedom and equal rights of all human beings.

This project aims to show that though many biblical texts and messages are influenced by patriarchy, there are some texts ( if read very carefully ) that are liberative and anti- patriarchy. Therefore it is the purpose of this project to establish contextual Bible study groups so as to explore some of these texts from male perspectives. This project intends to examine why patriarchy is considered problematic in the church. Furthermore it aims to create the awareness of how bad, wrong and sinful patriarchy is before God. To develop an understanding of the importance of every human being's contribution to the church and society as a whole. To develop an understanding that is contributing to the construction of our patriarchy free church and society. To find ways of reading the Bible ( especially the gospel ) which are transformative and liberative from our old cultural beliefs that legitimate domination and oppression over other human beings.

Few records are available on this issue in Namibia but they are not related to this title of my project. Patriarchy is questioned by feminist theologians such as E.S. Fiorenza, R. Ruether and others. But they are operating from feminist perspectives not from men's perspective as I am attempting to do. The following sources offer some insights about men's attitude in the church and society. R. Olivier, *Shadow of the Stone Heart* (1995), D. Patte, *Ethics of Biblical Interpretation* (1995). Here again patriarchy is not directly mentioned and considered as the main theme.

This project will concentrate mainly on the question of patriarchy from a male perspective and how the Bible can help males in the society, but patriarchy has not been made an issue on the table to be discussed by men. It is hard to find literature being written about patriarchy in my church. Therefore one of the purposes of this project is to bring patriarchy onto the church' table as an issue that needs to be discussed. Secondly, it attempts to collect data and put it together in the form of a document. Hopefully this document will serve as a source of information in my church for others who would

like to do further research. Thirdly, the need of contextual Bible study among male Namibian Christians, is very crucial here. It is only through contextual Bible study that we can help ourselves as men to understand how this system is wrong.

### **1.3 Methodology.**

This project endeavours to make male Namibians ( Ovawambo men in particular ) aware of the system of patriarchy and its consequences towards other human beings. Male members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia will be a case study for this research project. The researcher will conduct contextual Bible study groups amongst these people. Gerald West's example of contextual Bible study forms of method will serve as a secondary source for the researcher to do his work. Questionnaires will be prepared by the researcher to facilitate Bible study. The researcher will collect answers from these Bible study groups. The answers will tell us how these people are thinking about patriarchy and if they consider it a problem, what their suggested solutions will be, If not, why is it not an issue.

### **1.4 Outline**

This dissertation consists of five chapters of which the first is this introduction. In this chapter I will show how patriarchy is to be considered a problem in the society as well as in the church, the necessity of discussing this problem in the church and the need of establishing contextual Bible study, especially for men in our church.

The problem of patriarchy in our culture will not be visible or recognised, unless one explains the cultural and historical background of Oshiwambo men, and the role he plays as a man in the house and the society at large. Chapter two will give details of how a man is perceived and trained to fit in this culture. This is very important because it supplies us with the information of

how Ovawambo men understand themselves as men in the society, which traditional practices were they doing and are still doing.

The current ongoing challenges we then presented. Since the independence of Namibia, patriarchy has been challenged by some of the liberal groups of people and the present government. Literature review here is very important because it will help us to see how far these challenges have gone in the society, and what the reactions of males towards these challenges are. This is the aim of chapter three where these challenges are highlighted.

In chapter four I will do an exegesis on the texts that I have chosen for contextual Bible study. One is from Matthew.19:1-9. The focus here will be based on the patriarchal attitude of the Pharisees towards the practice of divorce. Special attention will be given to the response of Jesus towards their attitude.

In chapter five I will give a summary of male study groups done at Okalongo in Namibia. This will be followed by a final conclusion of this work.

## **Chapter 2.**

### **Cultural and historical background.**

#### **2.1 Traditional understanding of Oshiwambo man and his role.**

##### **2.1.1 Introduction.**

In Oshiwambo culture a man is perceived having more value socially, economically and politically, than women are in the society. Socially, a man is considered having all the necessary rights, such as to rule, to dominate, to punish, to give and refuse permission to his household because he is the head of the house in the society. Economically, because he is made a potential source of cultural economy, such as cattle, salt, iron ores and Ostrich egg shells. He is responsible for bringing this economy in the society from far or near. He is also regarded as the owner of the property. Politically, soldiers, policemen, traditional kings, district headmen, village headmen, judges, etc. are men or chosen among men.

However, Oshiwambo man cannot achieve these callings without passing through certain hardships. The purpose of this chapter is to show how Oshiwambo man is trained in a patriarchal way from childhood up to the time when he is mature to become a father. The reason behind this is to show how the patriarchal system functions in Oshiwambo culture. I will begin with how a baby boy is treated from birth until after he is weaned. I will touch some of the traditional rights of passages a man was expected to pass through to be recognised traditionally as a mature boy or a gentleman. I will explain the journeys the mature men have to travel to keep their male dignity according to our tradition. I will also explain the role the father plays in his house over his household, the power and authority he exercises over his family and the property rights he secured in his house as a father. Lastly, I will show how the missionaries have contributed to the strength of patriarchy in Oshiwambo culture.

Much of the information coming below that I have used is oral historical traditional information that is not recorded or collected in books. It is traditional information that is being transmitted from

generation to generation. The reader should be informed that the unquoted information is what the researcher heard either from his father or grandfather as will be specified sometimes, or which he has heard from people in general especially from friends during story telling.

### **2.1.2 From childhood to puberty.**

In Oshiwambo culture the dignity of a man (male) is given to him from birth, i.e. the time a baby boy is born. Traditionally, when a baby boy is born, the midwives will report immediately to the father that a new frog catcher (*omukwati womafuma*) is born. Boys are called frog catchers because people there are frog eaters, and men, especially boys, are mostly responsible to catch frogs during rain season. The midwives will also place a small bow on top of the mother's hut to indicate that the baby in there is a boy.

A baby boy is also associated with power and strength while still sucking. He is considered able to accompany the mother in a journey especially at night. A mother may feel safe to be accompanied by a small boy or a baby boy on her back to walk a distance at night visiting neighbours. I have heard many talking to these male children pleading for protection from dangers because they are males. One mother was uttering these words to her son: "My son, don't let me be harmed by anything. You are a man. You are powerful enough to protect me, my uncle. I hold your weapons, can you see? Let us go my uncle, (*Ituye tatekulu.*)"

After a boy is weaned, i.e. after 3-4 yrs, a boy is considered as no longer an infant and ready to learn to shoot. His father makes him a bow suitable for his age. Bow strings (*eefipa*) are made from the hide of bucks, (*kudus eeholongo*) or a gnu. Fathers are responsible for making them and keeping them, or for buying them from the experts who can make the best quality of them. After making a bow he makes also some arrows and gives it to the boy and teaches him how to shoot. This exercise may start by shooting soft objects like small melons on the ground. Then he is also taught to shoot objects up so as to make him ready to shoot small birds upon trees.

The boy will be introduced to take care of cattle near the household, especially during summer time while the parents are busy working the garden field. Normally, cattle have to be released from the kraal for three to four hours in the morning for grazing and then sent back into the kraal to be milked. This is called *Oshikwiifa*. The reason behind is to allow milking cows grazing in order that milk flow in the udder should increase. So boys of this age are responsible for looking after cattle during this period of time until the father or the eldest brother is ready to milk them. After milking them the father or the eldest brother may take cattle for big grazing (*oufita*). Boys may also accompany them at this big grazing if they are brave enough to do so. Here they are taught how to look after both cattle and goats together for future care. They learn how to stay the whole day without food until sunset.

Another practice that is done to little boys between one and one and half years is called *Okuhaka*, a kind of immunization from fear. The father or the maternal uncle to a child may come and take a boy throwing him up on the air higher and hold him back again. He may continue doing this as many times as he may feel needed. Sometimes a boy may start crying and as he continue doing this a boy may stop crying and that shows how brave he has become. A boy may also be thrown on top of the roof of the hut and come rolling down and the initiator holds him avoiding him from falling on the ground. He may repeat this as many times as he wants. Mothers to the babies may be chased away because they may object to such practice to their babies, or feel touched and sorry about them. I saw one mother who was crying while watching her baby under this practice. She could not prevent her tears when the child was crying calling her help.

The reason behind this practice is to make a boy brave enough to face difficulties and dangers of the world as a man. He is immunized not to cry like a girl. Many times it happens that boys who under went this practice love fighting very much. They are not easy to discipline, especially by their mothers and fathers, according to African discipline that involves corporal punishment. They do not run away if punished. They are stubborn. This practice applies also to dogs and bulls if the

owner wants his dog or his bull to be brave . He may use herbs and little poison to bull calves and puppies.

Boys of about 3-4years of age are prevented from crying. This is the traditional understanding in Oshiwambo culture that a man should not cry, no matter how much pain he is undergoing. If a boy hurts himself, the mother may stop him by telling him, 'oumulumenhu' 'you are a man'. I remember these words from the mouth of my mother, when I always came to her crying, beaten by somebody or hurting myself. This disciplinal understanding does not end there. It goes on with men as they grow up. A man has to show bravery (*elitumbo*) when facing pain. He is prevented from showing it or expressing it. What I have experienced is that men are allowed to show anger rather than fear. It is normal to shed tears for anger rather than for fear. As men, we are trained to keep pain inside burning us up. We don't have to express it. I therefore agree with the quotation made by Olivier from *Fire in the Belly* that says:

silence is manly, and we are trained to keep our feelings inside. Better a heart attack than speaking openly about a broken heart... We have been so conditioned to curtail our natural needs for intimacy that only in sex we do have cultural permission to feel close to another human being...

Emotionally speaking, men are stutterers who often use sexual language to express their forbidden desires for communion. What else would you expect from a gender that has been conditioned not to feel or express but to stand and deliver?  
(Olivier,1995.32)

According to our tradition men behave in this way. There are 2% of those who can speak openly about their problems. Even as a pastor who served a parish for seven years, I have observed that for men it is not easy to confess their problems (sins) openly to us as counsellors. A man keeps that pain within. But if he is angry with you, then he is ready to show it to you because this can involve fighting if you argue with him, to show how brave and strong he is to you. Many men in our country are committing suicide because of these unspoken problems.

### **2.1.3 Rights of passages.**

When a boy is about 13-17 years of age and his voice starts to change, he has to undergo an initiation rite. In olden days circumcision was practiced. Boys were circumcised either when they are 14-16 years of age i.e. when they showed the first signs of puberty or before when they are nine years before showing these puberty signs. According to what my grandfather told me, and confirmed by Loeb, circumcision practice ended in King Haimbili Haufiku's reign. The other kings after him were not circumcised from King Mweshipandeka, his successor, up to the last Oukwanyama King, Mandume. (Loeb, 1962:24) Haimbili forced every man under his reign to be circumcised. So during his time men were compelled to circumcision.

*Ekulo* ceremony is another practice that involves both boys and girls. This is done during winter time when it is cold. Early in the morning the expert is called to perform this practice. The two lower central incisors are knocked out with an instrument called *ondjao*, an iron chisel or with panga. Two reasons are behind this practice. The first reason was to show the public one's national identity. The second one that I found in Loeb's book is that there was a belief that if these teeth were not removed a child will bring death to his/her relatives. (Loeb, 1962:236) The third reason is a derogatory one. Its literal translation means a person without these teeth removed will be called shit eater. *Ekulo* is still practised in some Owambo areas, but the sense of rite of passage is less.

### **2.1.4 The period of Oumati, a mature boy or being a gentle man.**

The period that I mean here is a period between boyhood and fatherhood, the period a man is not married and has not yet taken up his role as a future father. When a boy has traditionally passed the right of passage, and during the time when he is 15-18yrs of age, he is regarded as a mature man (*omumati*), able to perform the works that mature men are doing. To prove this stage a boy has to pass through the following:

### **(i) Ohambo journey**

*Ohambo* journey, is a journey that takes stock far away from home for grazing purposes. This journey can take five to seven days or more to reach a preferred destination. The fathers have to seek suitable places for cattle for grazing because, after summer, grazing in the inland becomes poor. This journey might be 60km to 150km long as I have counted with my car when I went to visit our *ohambo* in 1988. It is a long journey and men have to take cattle there by foot all those days walking. Boys at this stage are obliged to join this journey to prove they are grown up. They are called *ovafita voimuna*, herd boys (sing. *Omufita* herd boy). It is from this word the word *omufita* pastor is derived.

In the journey the cattle are under the care of herdsmen, the mature men, assisted by the herd boys. It was considered very dangerous for inexperienced herd boys to go alone on that journey to *ohambo* or out posts. There is a fear that they may take a wrong direction and get lost, or they might be unable to defend themselves and their cattle against the enemies, such as cannibals, wild animals (lions) and robbers. That is why this journey has to be a co-operative journey, consisting of 11 to 15 men taking their cattle together and making one journey. The same number or more of boys accompany them, together with their dogs.

Before the boy leaves the house, the parent prepare the food he needs for the journey called *onghuta*. Cows cannot produce much milk while they are travelling. The boy has to carry his food, a wooden milking paid, a calabash and other equipment necessary for him. Bow and arrows, pangas, knobkerries are weapons he must not leave behind. There must be somebody as a leader who knows the forests, where to find water during the journey and who gives the direction to the preferred grazing places.

When they reach their destination the leader has to organise boys to start with a settlement. He may assign some boys to look after cattle, some to take care of calves, while others are constructing shelters. First, as my father told me they have to start constructing a cattle kraal. After that they

make shelters for their calabashes, milking pails and baskets. Then they build temporary shelters for themselves and for the herdsmen.

After few days they have to dig wells for water according to the need of their cattle and for themselves. They enclose them with thorn branches so as to avoid cattle entering inside the wells and mudding the water. Cattle there are watered in wooden troughs where water is poured for them to drink. It is the duty of the herd boys to give water to these four to six hundred cattle. They have to queue to get water from the well to the trough. They have to rotate after thirty minutes of serving to allow others on the queue to rest a bit.

Life there at *ohambo* is not easy for the boys. Herd boys are responsible for watering cattle daily. The leader assigns boys every day to herd cattle at grazing places, those who will churn butter (*okushika oxupa*) i.e. to push the calabash forward and backward as this movement will produce butter in the calabash. Herd boys are responsible for checking cattle in the evenings to make sure no cattle is missing from others. The missing one has to be hunted until it is found. If it gets lost the boy concerned will be responsible for paying it back to the owner. Moreover he will lose his dignity as a man and at the same time lose his reward. Herd boys milk cows twice a day. Some times they depend on milk, especially when the food they brought together is finished. They also shoot birds and small animals for meat. Wild fruits are also additional food for them in this life situation. During the night they do not sleep in their shelters. They sleep around the fire. They have to be alert always to the attack of wild animals. Dogs are very important here as useful guards for them. Boys have to defend themselves from the attack of lions, hyenas, leopards and wolves as these animals are enemies to both their livestock and to themselves. Immanuel, a son of my maternal uncle told me how they had to run away, chased by elephants, at *ohambo*. The elephants were provoked by barking dogs of *ohambo*. The elephants destroyed their shelters and muddied their wells. The task of reconstructing those shelters and muddied wells was daunting indeed.

If grazing becomes poor at the *ohambo* place they settle first, the herdsmen are forced to look for other alternative ground places where may show well. Then the herdsmen have to break shelters

they have made and move their cattle to another place. Herd boys have to make sure that the cattle entrusted to them are growing fat and healthy. If cows produce much milk, this will make butter to abound. Herd boys are responsible to take butter back home. By doing this they will be reckoned or get credits for a successful journey of bringing butter home. They are given calves for themselves as a reward by cattle owners. They will be reckoned as good herders and more cattle will be entrusted to their care for the next *ohambo*.

The more a boy gets chances to go to *ohambo* and to be regarded as a good herder the more he will receive heifers. This will make him to start with his own cattle and be a future father or household owner with a big cattle kraal. Traditionally, these herdsmen possess little or no cattle at all. The cattle they are taking care of at *ohambo* belong to others. A man's first cattle are from *ohambo* life. No one will give you or entrusts you with his cattle unless you have proved this by being at *ohambo* during your boyhood.

When the boys became mature and used to the conditions of *ohambo* life, some will become herd leaders and professionals who know the grasses preferred by cattle and plants and leaves of some bushes that make cattle become fat. These professionals are also expected to know remedies which they can use for cattle as medicines for cattle diseases. Bull castrators and cow slaughters are also found from these herdsmen.

Cattle owners organise a cattle festival every year. This festival is called *okuludika eengobe*, or *omaludi* literary means to compare cattle. The other name is *eengobe tadi dana*, means cattle dance. Herdsmen are expected to bring the fastest cattle to this festival. Women are responsible for preparing food and traditional beer for the festival as many guests are invited and expected to the festival. During the festival herdsmen separate cattle into little groups while the owners and their friends observe them. A herdsman who's cattle appear poorly fed is rubbed with fresh cow droppings on his head and face. This is a very great shame herdsmen have to avoid during *ohambo* life. It prevents them being given a good reward and trusted with more cattle in the future. The good herdsmen are then rewarded with *eendema* ( young cows or heifers). But one man also told me that

some even will not receive anything as reward. They are rewarded with the food of the festival. Only the lucky ones whose cattle owners are generous are rewarded with heifers.

As I have already stated, *ohambo* life is very hard. The time (period) the boys stay at *ohambo* is a dry and hot season. They have to endure this intense heat and dryness. There is much thirst. They are forced to remain there until summer time. This causes them again to suffer from colds and fevers from the first rain. That is why women were not allowed to live such a life.

#### **(ii) The Ekango lomongwa journey (journey to the salt pan)**

There are two places where *Ovawambo* men used to fetch salt in *Owamboland*. The first place is called *Ekango loKondonga* the salt pan of *Ondonga*. This salt pan is named after the *Ondonga* tribe which is settled on its side. As I have heard from some of the *Kwanyama* men, this salt pan was not popular to many men from other tribes. I have heard that it was hard for them to get there. Only *Ondonga* men used to get salt there. The reason why other men from other tribes could not get there is not mentioned.

The second is called *kango lokOukwambi*, *Oukwambi* salt pan, named after *Ovakwambi* tribe which is settled on its side. Many men from different *Owambo* tribes used to get salt there. These tribes are *Kwanyamas*, *Mbalantus*, *Mbadjas* and *Kwambi* themselves. *Ngandjera* and *Kwaluudhis* also get it there. The journey is organised in the same way *ohambo* journey is organised. Men were going there in groups. They have to be armed for self protection against enemies. Sometimes some of them used to take animals such as oxen to carry salt. Because there were no donkeys or horses in *Owamboland*, men used to tame oxen as means of transport for their goods and for themselves. These trained and tamed oxen are called *eenghutwa*. Some who do not have oxen have to carry burdens (*omitengi*) on their shoulders.

They have to take food with them because the journey is long. It can take a week or more to get to this salt pan. They have also to spend some days at *ekango* place collecting salt and packing the amount that they are able to carry home. The journey itself is not easy. A man has to stay for at least

a month in the forest travelling, carrying his own food and his load. They have to protect themselves against the attack of lions and other wild animals that might try to attack them, because there were not roads to and from the salt pan. They have to pass through villages and jungles to get to and from *ekango*. There should also be a group leader who knows the direction and who is also brave enough to lead them through.

What I was told by my father is that men who were going in forest journeys for the first time have to be trained and advised what to do when their group is attacked by a wild animal. Especially that no one should run away from the rest of the group. It is risky for the run away to be killed by animals. They have also to listen to the command of the group leader, for defending themselves.

What I want to bring here is mainly the hardships men had to face by collecting salt from the salt pan and bring it home. There is hunger, thirst and tiredness involved as well as the heavy burden to carry home. There is a risk of losing one's life in the jungle they have to journey through. For the successful journey women have to praise men for the luck they had through out the journey. There are expressions of joy songs which women sing and shout for the successful salt pan journey for men. The well known expressions are as follows:

*Oilumenhu yaNekanda*  
*Oikongi yongobe ya Haivinga*  
*yanashitai shiyala*  
*Yanekondo laNambinga*  
*kEkango ya et'Omongwa*  
*kOita ya et' Eengobe*

literally this means:

Men of *Nekanda*  
Cattle raiders of *Haivinga*

The branch of *Shiyala*  
for *Nekondo* of *Naminga*  
From the salt pan they bring salt  
From war they bring cattle.

Women whose husbands or sons come successfully through the journey greet themselves said: *Ofuka ya dalulula* or *wadalulula*? This expression of born again from the jungle. The main idea here is that when a man is in the journey, and a woman is left behind, she is waiting to hear what ever news is coming from that journey, whether death or a living person again. This waiting is similar to that of a pregnant woman waiting to give birth to a baby, whether living or dead baby. So when a man comes back home safely, they express it as born again that a woman has experienced. The woman is considered to give birth again to her husband or son in this way. The woman has given birth again while the man is born again from that dangers he has gone through the jungle. The word born again is not a new thing from the Bible but it was already expressed in our culture in this way.

### **(iii) Oukongo (hunting) journey**

Hunting is another practice a man must know and experience to prove that he is grown up man. Boys from 12 to 18 yrs are allowed to test themselves for such practice. Boys under this age are not allowed to go for hunting by themselves. The reason for this will come later.

The *Kwanyama* hunting, like other *Owambo* ethnic groups, is organised in similar to that of war. There must be a day set up in which *oukongo* will take place. Four to five days men are informed about this good news through out the villages. There will be a place where to meet that day. The time the news is spreading is the time for men to prepare themselves for hunting. Boys prepare well their bows and arrows and test them. They cut throwing sticks and make knobkerries for throwing. What my father taught me before my first *oukongo* experience was how to throw a knobkerry to a running hare. He told me that a knobkerry must be thrown ahead of or in front of the running animal not behind it. The reason is that because the animal is running fast it will meet the knobkerry ahead

of it, but the stick that is thrown on it or behind it will miss it. To test this practice he throws melons in front of me in a similar way the speed the animal runs and tells me to hit it. Here one can see how one can miss or hit the target.

The time that *oukongo* takes place is also similar to the time herdsmen take cattle to *ohambo*, the dry and hot season. Normally it is from September to December the time *oukongo* take place. This time the northern part of Namibia is hot and dry and water is very scarce. Only wells (*omifima*, *omatambi*) and water holes (*eendungu*) supply water during morning times before stock is watered. During the day water is very little and hard to get.

When the day of *oukongo* comes, men as well as boys gather to the place they agree to meet, with their dogs, well prepared bows and throwing sticks. Meeting places might be *etambi lonhumba* (a certain water holes place) or *oshana pokati komikunda* (a water pan between villages). There they will organize themselves by choosing leaders who will lead others on the right and the left hand side of the queue (directions) and those who will lead the middle queue line. Then they form a queue line of six to ten kilometres long in a form of a bow. This is called *epala londjaba*, literally means the face of an elephant.

They also plan where to hunt, how far to go and where to turn back. There must be water places to pass and drink otherwise boys will die of thirst. This is the reason why boys are not allowed to hunt alone in the forest without a leader. They are inexperienced and will be getting lost in the jungle or die for hunger or thirst if they do not know places to get water. The leaders will tell the hunters the instructions and rules of *oukongo*, especially the rule that if one hits an animal and it fell down and by trying to raise itself up again to run away the other hit it again, it will belong to the first hitter.

There are two types of hunting. There is hunting that take place in the village forests. This kind of hunting is mainly for small animals like *oundiba* (hares), *eembabi* (deers), *eemhundja* (steenbok in Afrikaans), and birds such as *eenghanga* (guinea fowls) and *omakonghola* (a noise bird in the forest). Every man can participate in this kind of hunt. It is a general or public hunt. That is why

it has to invite all men who do want to take part. Boys are allowed to join and test themselves in this type of hunt.

The other one is done deep in the forest or jungle. This is the tough one because it seeks only big animals. It last longer than the first one that takes only one day. Only adult males have to take part in this kind of hunting, but their number is limited to ten maximum. Men take food with them (*onghuta*) consists of millet meal, beans, cabbage cakes, etc. They hunt animals like *eeholongo* (kudus), *eengalangobe* (eland), *eemenye* (springboks), *eenduli* (giraffes) and *eendjaba* (elephants). Although they do not hunt for lions, hyenas and leopards for meat they have to be aware of their attack and ready to fight with them. They can kill them for skin purposes.

An elephant is very important to kill because of ivory. Very strong and important buttons are made from ivory called *eemba*. These are used by women for decorations, when they make their hair styles (*okupanda eexwiki*), or to decorate their traditional garments. A woman who is married to a rich man is identified by having many of these *eemba* buttons on her outfit.

Giraffe is valued for its skin and stomach from which traditional garments for loyal women are made. A man can get a good reward from a king if he brought the skin and giraffe stomach to him. Elands are important to kill because they provide much fat that is used for frying purposes. Springbok meat is very tasty. The child's sling that fasten a baby on her mother's back is made from *ombabi*(deer)'s skin. A man is valued by providing it to his wife/ wives. For poor men a goat's skin is used for such a purpose.

What I want to show here is that as a man or to be regarded as a true man, one has to endure these hardships of *oukongo* (hunting). He has to suffer the journey of hunting, with its dryness, hungry, thirsty, tiredness, sores and multiple lacerations in his feet because not many people could afford to make sandals for themselves. I remember my first experience of this journey was very terrible. After coming back home in the evening I was extremely tired. My feet were painful, I was hungry and thirsty, but after I drank water I started vomiting and became very much dizzy. My mother has

to warm water for me to place my feet in. That was too much and I never forget that day in my life. Fortunately I brought a hare home. But from all of these hardships and the determination not to give up for the next hunting one get a recognition as a man, brave enough to face difficulties. My mother was proud of me. She was even proud to tell other women in the village that I had proved, I am grown up because I completed the journey. Many of the young boys were dropping of the journey and went back home as they get tired. To do this one will be called *evaya* (coward) and will be laughed at the next day.

Women are not allowed to go hunting. It is a taboo for them to do that. Traditionally, some of the taboos are inexplicable. If you ask a question why, some times there are no answers. But it does not mean that there are not answers. Answers are kept secret so as not to reveal the reason behind the taboo so that it may work effectively. There is a taboo that says that a woman does not eat food cooked outside the house. This taboo prevents women from joining men in cattle outposts (*kohambo*), hunts and war expeditions. They have to wait at home ,because they are women. If they join them they will die for hunger. But the real reason for that is just to keep women in the houses. There is nothing that really can prevent them from joining men in these type of activities.

The struggle for freedom in our countries has proved that women can join men in the forests. They hunted and fought wars side by side with men. They ate food cooked outside houses and they did not die. But there are some who are still keeping this belief, especially men who did not participate in war and the old men in rural communities.

#### **(iv) Oita (warfare)**

Grown up boys or young men were also trained to fight and ready for warfare. This training prepares them to become future warriors. The training starts with games that allow boys to prove their bravery.

*Onghandeka* (fighting with open hands), is the game played by boys. It is a fight between pairs of

boys. Normally this practice was done in the presence of girls. In olden days they were using knobkerries to fight each other. They can fight until one pair admits a defeat. The defeating pair then perform a jumping dance and by doing so they call themselves with the names of warriors. During our time (the time we were boys) until now *onghandeka* is done without sticks. We use to box one another with open palms which are less hurting than before.

*Okapumba* is another game that was and still is played by boys. It consists of two groups of boys throwing cow dung or stones or shooting blunted arrows against each other. This is really done like war because one group can be chased by the other for a long distance. One can also get hurt if stones and arrows are used.

Another game that boys enjoy is *ondjubu* (wrestling). This is the game in which two boys wrestle, where one boy is trying to pick up the other and throw him to fall on his back. Normally one tries to hold another's legs together and lift him up while the other is trying to avoid being caught and do the same to the other. Sometimes one gets the back injured if the ground is hard.

The other game is second *okapumba* done with bows and arrows, a kind of target shooting. Normally a melon serves as a target. By playing this game, boys agree to use limited number of arrows and give turns to each other. The one all of whose arrows successfully hit the target wins the game and gets the prize.

Another game is the imitation of *okasava* raid (cattle raid). This game was performed in the presence of the king to enable the king to choose among the young boys those who will become future good warriors. According to the information I got from my grandfather, some sticks were put in the bush to represent real cattle. Then boys were grouped and ordered to fight with knobkerries. Others formed groups armed with bows and unpointed arrows and perform warfare by shooting at each other and dodging arrows (*okuyepa oikuti*).

All young men in the country were subjected to military activities. Those who were afraid to go to war were regarded as *omashenge* (homosexuals). This is a derogatory name applied to them to devalue their male dignity. They were counted as women and were ordered to behave the manner women behave to men in the society towards men. They were forced to wear female clothing and perform women's duties. Many young men according to my grandfather chose *oushenge* (homosexuality) in order to avoid going to war.

There are four kinds of wars Ovawambo, Kwanyama men in particular, fought. The first is called *Oita* (war against a foreign enemy). The aim of this kind of war was self defense against foreign enemies who attempted to take hold of their land. A dispute on borders between countries can also cause this kind of war. In this war houses were burned down and crops taken away or destroyed. Cattle were captured and people were taken away as slaves.

There is *Okasava* war (cattle raid). This war was conducted with the aim of collecting cattle from others in the country. If the king needs more cattle he sent his men to seize cattle from others in the country and bring them in to his kraal. In this war women and children were spared to live. The main targets were cattle, and men were killed.

*Olwoodi* is another fight between clans for blood revenge. Here the purpose was to get a suspect in the victim's clan to either kill him or sell him as a slave to foreign country. The clan males of the suspect were forced to fight back to protect their family member. Here again a man, woman or a child from the suspect's clan could be taken on behalf of the suspect and face the same consequences the suspect was to face.

*Oshitondokela* is a punishment raid, an internal war in the Kwanyama country. If a person is regarded as offensive to the law and to the king because of failing intentionally to pay fine for the offence applied to him, the king may order him to be killed and his properties taken away. False witnesses were applied to people who were rich in the country, or those who were powerful in the country, because they were feared by others. So, false reports were given to the king as a demand

for permission to kill the suspects. In this raid houses were burned and crops were taken or destroyed. Relatives of the offenders were killed.

What I want to reveal here is that in all these four types of wars men were the agents. They are the subjects as well as objects of these wars. Women were not participating in these wars, though they were also victims of these raids. In reality, the patriarchal system is the cause of these orders and rules that are set up to test males and to strengthen their so called male identity. If a man fails to comply with all the necessary tests, he automatically fall out of manhood and is regarded as a woman.

#### **(v) *Oshimanya* journey**

Before the Germans came to *Owamboland*, the indigenous people of *Owambo* had access to the rich copper and iron places (deposits) at what are now *Tsumeb* and *Otavi* mines, as well as *Cassinga* mine at *Oshimanya* in Angola. (Hishongwa, 1992.36)

*Oshimanya* is the place where *Ovawambo* men from *Kwanyama*, *Kwamatwi*, *Vale*, and *Kafima* used to get iron ores. The name *Oshimanya* is derived from the noun *Emanya* stone. *Oshimanya* means a place of stones. According to *Estermann*, this place is located in Angola where there are little mountains. The name of that district is called *Omupa* by the natives. (Estermann, 1966.146)

Here I will focus on what *Kwanyama* men were doing at *Oshimanya* mine. According to *Estermann*, after they arrived at the mine, miners who are related grouped and started to construct temporary shelters. After they settled they then started with the work of extracting the ore. But before starting a certain ritual had to be performed that was believed would enable them to transform stones into iron. The master has to be invested with supernatural powers to be able to perform this ritual. The ritual is also understood as the cure, because the ironworkers believed that it was only after this ritual, (as they call it *okuhakula omamanya*; curing of stones) that the transformation can take place.

The following is the prayer of this ritual as quoted by Estermann:

Just after lighting the fire with a brand brought from the village- from the fire of the *olupale*, which must never be extinguished- the master stands facing the East, lifts his arms to the sky, and in a loud voice utter this prayer.

*Hailikana, hailikana hailikana*

*Vakwamungu amushe komuvelo kwinya*

*Wokatili elikalele*

*Ou woshali neuye*

*Emanya omweendo woshima*

*Poloka unene ngomuteki takateka*

*Emanya elao lomupika, longobe loshikombo, loshilanda, nolungodo  
noshiposha*

*Okuya kweyungu, omweendo woshimbode*

*omutwe unene, unene*

*Outale uhapu*

I pray I pray I pray

All you spirits from the other door (from the other side)

May the grudging one stay away

May the generous one come

The stone (ore) runs like the tortoise (smelting is a slow work)

Run fast like a girl going for water

May the stone brings us luck (permits us to acquire) a slave, an ox, a goat,  
beads, bracelets and anklets.

May the quantity of iron be like a mountain of (edible) caterpillars  
and a cloud of locusts

A big, big head (block of iron)

Much molten iron. (Estermann, 1966, 147)

After this prayer the extraction work and smelting of iron started. According to Estermann, they removed the thin layer of soil that covered the ore, and took out blocks of the ore using crow bars. Those with families were assisted by their wives on this work. They carried the stones to the surfaces where smelting was done before sunrise. After the smelting process was over, and after they made iron blocks they took them to the smiths in the villages. (Estermann,1966.146)

Although women are involved in this work it is mainly men who are playing a role in controlling the whole process. Women are just assistants. Traditionally they were not allowed to join men until in 1936 when they were first included in the trip. (Hishongwa,1992:36)

When they go back to the village as they draw near, they form a procession and march singing a song of praise for their art. The words of the song are as follows:

*Oshimanya tashiimbwa*  
*Sha Nangobe ya Kambulukutu*  
*Tashi ende oufiku ngoNdjaba*  
*Eengula dinene ngoKahenge*  
*Hashimanya unomulenga*  
*Nomumati takeheka*  
*A li okalume kawa*  
*Paife okwaninga mwii*

Let us sing, Oshimanya, of Nangobe son of Kambulukutu,  
(The work of smelting) Walks at night like the elephant  
Early in the morning like the beast of the canebrakes (elephant)  
Hashimanya (work in the mines) confers riches  
The boy that was so pretty  
The youth that was so handsome  
Has now turned very ugly.(Esterman, 1966.148)

## (Vi) Oushimba journey

*Oushimba* is a word delivered from the *Herero* tribal name *Ovatsimba*, or *Himbas*. This tribe lives in central and north west part of Namibia. Their place was the first to be discovered by whites, as well as to be taken away from them. Mines were made there after they were chased away. When *Ovawambo* men went to look for jobs on these mines, it was said they have gone to the land of the *Himbas*, (*va ka ungula*) to work, from the Herero word *oviungura*, work. If a man comes with goods he got or bought from there it is said that *okwa ungula*, he has worked. The journey itself was not easy to get there but before I go into its details let me first explain how this journey came into being.

After *Owambo* was occupied by Whites, the places where *Ovawambo* men used to get iron ores were taken away from them by White settlers. *Oukwanyama* was divided in the middle after king *Mandume* the last king of *Oukwanyama* was defeated. The border between Angola and Namibia divided the tribe into two parts. One part was given to the Portugese and constituted the southern part of Angola. The other part constituted the northen part of Namibia. *Oshimanya* became a place of mines for the Portugese and blacks were forced to work there for them.

In Namibia, places such as *Tsumeb*, *Otavi* and *Grootfontein* came into the hands of South Africa and other White companies. They established mines there, and for the work force they started recruiting black men from native tribes to work there. Blacks were deprived of access to the ore they used to get. Then they were persuaded to work for the whites as Goldblatt writes:

Soon after the occupation of the territory, major Pritchard, officer-in charge of native affairs in South West Africa, was sent (4 August, 1915) to *Owamboland* to establish friendly relationship with the *Owambo* chiefs and persuaded them to get their men to accept employment on the railways, in the mines and in industry in the south. (Goldblatt, 1971. 206)

Katyavivi also confirms this by saying that *Mandume* was defeated by the Portuguese and South African forces in 1917. After that the South African administrator later declared the following words:

The country is now entirely tranquil. Our representatives in *Owambo* will continue to watch the situation closely and do all in their power to induce the able-bodied men of the different tribes to go to south to engage themselves as laborers on the railways, mines and farms ... (Katyavivi,1988.18)

*Owambo* men were motivated by some of the following reasons to accept white labour. According to Hishongwa, two years after *Owambo* was taken by white rulers there was severe drought that brought famine in *Owambo*. *Owambo*, however, has a short rainy season and limited rain falls. When the rainfall is bad, crop production was often impossible and cattle also suffered by death. Therefore men found contract work more reliable means for supporting their families. She further added that whites had imposed a system of taxation through the tribal chiefs, imported their culture and their way of living to Owamboland, and brought up commercial goods available to *Ovawambo* people. In this way many European goods were introduced, like various types of food, and agricultural implements like ploughs, fencing wires and modern axes (Hishongwa,1992.53). To be able to buy these things as well as to pay the tax, *Ovawambo* men were forced to join the modern economic sector in order for them to earn cash wages. They needed employment to be able to buy clothes, food and other modern staff.

The other reason is that the areas where men used to collect minerals were made white areas. This made it impossible for them to use and control resources from those areas as they formerly were doing. These and other things, some good, some bad, motivated them to accept the contract labour. They were recruited there on a migratory basis, because they have to come back to their traditional houses and families after the expiry of their contract.

The contract period was about two years. After that they come back to *Owamboland* to their families and relatives for a short time. Then they go back again for re-employment. The disadvantage of this system was that men were not allowed to be accompanied by their families.

The journey is not easy to walk as these men have to travel many kilometres on foot to get to the recruiting place that was established at *Ondangwa* in 1943, called the South West Africa Native Labour Administration (SWANLA). They have to wait there for days for employment. However it was not easy to stay there. There were problems of accommodation and shortage of food as Hishongwa writes:

They stayed in big compounds and sometimes they had to wait for months, depending on their luck in finding work. These men had to bring their own food with them from their homes, as well as cooking utensils and wood. If there was a long delay before they were recruited, they often had to walk hundreds of kilometers back home to get more food, and return to wait for their luck to turn. (Hishongwa, 1992.58)

I have observed this with my father when he came back two times to get food from home, because he was not able to get a job on time. The other problem was that there was no transports available at that time as it is nowadays. Men were travelling even to the mines where they had to work, and back home after their contract is finished. Hishongwa gives more details:

In the olden days, they walked long distances to the south of the country in search of jobs. On their way they faced hunger, thirst, fatigue, robbers and wild animals; and sometimes they even went without knowing the exact route. Although they carried food and water to last them on their way, the long distances involved meant that carrying sufficient provision was a problem. Since they did not have wagons or cars, they carried their belongings on their shoulders. This required them to be strong, healthy and

determined to face the situation which was not only tough but could also lead to death. Many of them never reached their destinations. They died on the way. (Hishingwa,1992.54-55)

As a matter of fact this is the hardship a traditional Oshiwambo man is trained to face. And always when he completes it he is recognized as a man. Besides the other pressures that forced them to accept contract labour, Ovawambo men, traditionally, had been involved in high risk jobs with a higher mortality rate. So this journey was not a new experience Ovawambo men were going through. According to Moorsom, migrant labour reveals many structural similarities with raiding and long-distance trading. He said:

...men had to cross long distances through inhospitable country in order to bring back the specific material prizes. As raiding and trading were increasingly curtailed by the expansion of the colonial system, it would appear that there occurred a form of culture transfer in favour of migrant labour.(Moorsom,1995.11)

He also added:

Men monopolised the long-distance seasonal migrations to the cattle posts, an annual experience for many from boyhood onwards. The cooperation and shared solidarity of men in groups drawn from a number of homesteads was reproduced in a more intense form in the long-distance raiding parties of the 30-40 years before colonisation in 1915. (Moorsom,1995.38)

#### **2.1. 5. The role of the father.**

To become a father a man has to marry first and stay in his father's house for years. I will not go into details of how marriage was done at this point. I shall limit myself on the role that the father plays in the house.

After three to four years in the father's house, the father may allow his married son to build his own house. With the assistance of his father a man may look for a suitable place to build the house. He is responsible to clean up the place, i.e. by cutting down trees and bushes. Traditional axes were used to chop bushes and small trees. Big trees were removed by burning them with fire on their trunks. This is called *okulilika* and the fires on this place were called *eendilika*.

The branches of trees serve as a fence of the field (*ongubu*) that prevents animals from entering the field and damaging crops. With the poles from trees a man build the enclosure of the house. After completing this enclosure he is responsible for building huts in the house, the corridors that divide the house to respective places. Important huts are sleeping huts for the wives and their pantries, if he is a polygamous man, his own sleeping hut and pantry.

A father is also responsible for constructing barns for storing crops, and the huts to roof them. Each wife should be provided with her granary(barn) at her kitchen place. A man has more granaries separated from those of his wives. This is called *etambo*. Sometimes this *etambo* is kept on the eastside of the house to prevent the fire in the house burn them up if one of the hut got fire in the house. Most of the time wind blows from east to west. So it is risky to place them on the west side of the house. The reason for this is that food needs to be protected more than other properties.

The father in the house is responsible for constructing cattle kraal, kraal for goats and small for pigs. He has to cut trees and get wood or poles to be able to build these kraals. Traditionally, men carry these poles on their shoulders one by one from the forest to the house. So it takes months to gather these poles at one place to be able to start building. When I was young I used to see my father carrying this wood on his shoulder. When I was 16yrs of age I started helping him carrying too. Fortunately the introduction of ploughing with oxen facilitated us to use oxen to pull these poles from the forest to the house. But still men are responsible for training cattle to be used for this purpose.

Another task of the father is to find water for the family as well as for his stock. In the field he chose there should be a place where he can get water. His duty therefore is to dig water holes or a well in the garden to be able to supply water to the household. Traditionally, wells were dug with sharpened sticks (*ioshe*). Nowadays we have got spades and pickaxes that we use for such purposes.

A father is responsible for constructing a milling place in the house. He has to provide stamping vessels (*oini*) and stamping stocks (*omishi*) that women use to stamp and mill flour. *Oini* (sing. *Oshini*) are made from a stump of a tree. There are certain trees whose stumps are used for making *oini*. A man has to cut down the tree and cut its trunk into short stumps. Then he can make a hole levelled for holding grains for stamping. *Omishi* are special stamping sticks that men make from mopane trees (*omifyaati*). There is a head on top of this stick that helps to give it weight when pounding.

The father is also responsible for renewing the fence of the field (*ongubu*) during the summer time. He cuts thorn bushes and repairs places where cattle made openings into the field. We call this *okufitika ongubu*. Likewise it is his duties to repair huts and the roofs of the huts that are old, the stockade fence of the house and rebuild granaries. He has to make sure that cattle are taken care of well by boys and schedules their rotations.

All the duties that I have highlighted here are traditionally done by men especially by fathers. Women are not responsible for these duties. One can find a few women who can try some of these duties. In our village there was only one unmarried woman who was able to construct barns and huts. Women were and still are not trained to perform these duties, as we men are not trained to do cooking at the kitchen.

## **2.2 Man as the owner of power and authority**

Patriarchy (father rule) placed fathers on the top of other people to rule them. Traditionally, a king

is the head of every person in the country. He rules over them all. His commands, rules and orders have to be obeyed by every one in the country.

The same applies to the father in the house. In the olden days a man was considered to have similar authority like a king, in his house. He behaves like a king in his own house because he is the owner of the house and its property. He commands and disciplines the inhabitants of the house, his wives included. Everybody has to listen and obey his instructions and orders. Though he is not allowed to give severe punishment to his people by the law like what kings are allowed to do (by killing them), he has the right to use corporal punishment on them and to give them extra labour to fulfill.

Traditionally, women were, and still are, vulnerable to be beaten by their husbands. I have grown up in the society in which many women experienced such hardships because they were beaten by their husbands in the presence of their children. They scold at them and have the right to accuse them for what ever a man thinks is unfair. Traditionally, women and children were forbidden to quarrel with the father. Out of 27 families in our village only seven families were Christians. The same applies to the neighboring villages. Imagine how much influence this system can give to those boys who have grown up under it.

Many fathers were non-Christians. Therefore they were keeping their male traditions they learned and experienced from their father's houses. Even those who later became Christians are still keeping these traditions because they were brought up under it. Though my father also grew up under this system he did not keep many of those rules in the house as other fathers did. He does not marry many wives as many of our neighbors did. Having grown up in a Christian family did not prevent me witnessing these orders and rules in the so called pagan houses. My peer friends from these families used to inform me about the rules they kept in their polygamous houses. Traditionally, many fathers do not permit lighting fires in the house at night, except at the cooking place (*pepata*) or the sacred fire at the court place (*popupale*). They do not allow drawing water, dragging pots or milling grain after sunset. Loeb also confirms this by quoting headman *Vilho*. He writes:

Every kraal ( house) owner rules over his kraal and no one in the kraal dares to disobey him. If any one is impertinent, he or she is beaten and given hard labour. The kraal owner says, “in my kraal (house) do not kindle a fire in the night. Fires are allowed only at fireplaces where cooking is done, in the sleeping huts and in the sacred fire place. No one is allowed to light fire else where or carry a torch for illumination. A wife might wish to look for something in her hut and she might want to tear off a piece of straw roof for further illumination. The kraal owner says, “in my kraal do not draw water after the cattle have come into the kraal. That is after the cattle are in the kraal, no one is allowed to fetch water for them. Also people are not allowed to pour water at night within the kraal. (The reason given for this is that if a person wishes to enter the kraal to have sexual intercourse with one of the wives, or to steal, he would pour water on the sand to conceal his tracks). The kraal owner says, in my kraal do not drag cooking pots at night. If a person purposely dragged a cooking pot at night, a snake would bite them. (Loeb, 1962. 134-135)

There are many orders that fathers give to their people in their houses some of which I cannot remember at the moment. Some of them I do not know because I was born in a Christian family. My father was not keeping them in the house but the traditional understanding was there. He has the full right to say no or yes to everything done in the house. We have to respect him also. So what I know and have experienced is the understanding that the father is somebody in the house to be respected by all. If the child is crying and refuses to stop when the mother comforts him/her, the last thing the mother can do is to threaten him/her with the father. At times they call fathers to give threats to children with their voices so as to stop them from crying.

Sometimes father beats them to show respect of cooling down. This is not totally bad if is done in a disciplined way, and as long as that father is able to show love to that child again. But this unfortunately is not the case with the patriarchal fathers. They become wolves and snakes to their children. And this does not apply only to children. Some wives suffer threats from their husbands

too, by threatening to chase them away or divorce or separate from them or beating them. Loeb also writes:

a pagan husband is not expected to be faithful to his wives except on several ceremonial occasions. But he has to protect them and guard them against unfaithfulness on their part. (Loeb, 1962.137)

As part of *Oshiwambo* tradition a polygamous father has got more granaries than his wives. The large part of the garden field belongs to him. All the inhabitants have to work on his field as well as to do the full process of harvesting until the grains are stored. Because the wives have got small portions of land, and each has got one granary she stores her food, that food does not last long because they are responsible for cooking for the family every day. After several months grains will be finished and therefore they are forced to beg from their husband to provide them with food.

The husband has the full right to accept or refuse the request. Sometimes husbands are harsher in this to their wives than to their maternal relatives. If the request is from his mother or his sister then he will not even hesitate to agree. But the fact is that the stored food was worked by the wives and children not by his relatives. When the father provides them with food we call it *okumatula*, literally means to open the lid of the granary (*oshimato*). The father is the only one who permits it, not somebody else in the house.

In *Oshiwambo* culture as in many other African cultures, a man has the right to propose relationship to a woman. Women are not allowed to take this initiative first. There is also an expression that says that *oxuxwa yonghadi ihai lili*, literally it means “ a hen does not crow”. Women have to wait in the houses for men to propose love to them, not vice versa. This is how patriarchy has made men to be rulers and allow them to dominate others in society.

### 2.3 Man as the owner of property

Before colonialism the economy of *Ovawambo* people was based on cattle (*eengobe*), and millet (*oilya*). There were also additional properties like garden implements (hoes and axes), weapons, (daggers, bow and arrow, and spears) and traditional ornaments, (beads for necklace and for waist wear).

But cattle and millet were the main powerful economy on which *Ovawambo* people have been, and still are reliant on. If we talk about rich people in *Owambo* then we mean people who have got hundreds of cattle called *oipuna*, or people who have got many granaries full of millet corns called *eengudja*. These people were able to feed their families for many years as well as their relatives and were able to sell some of their animals and products. In addition to cattle, *Ovawambo* people have also goats and pigs that were raised for meat purposes. Sheep, donkeys, and horses were imported from European countries.

The owner of these economic resources were and still are men in the society, though *Oshiwambo* property is understood as a clan family economy. If I own cattle, it is only mine individually as long as I live, but if I die it will belong to my clan family. I will come to this later when I will talk about inheritance or property.

The house is one of the properties a man in the society has to own. Traditionally, the land belongs to the headman. He (the headman) has the right to sell plots to those men who want to build houses and make fields. It is the man who has to make a request for a land (place) and pay for it. So it is believed it is his place, his house and therefore he owns it and everything that is supposed to be in should be under his control. Furthermore, the house is called after his name until he dies. After his death the house will cease to be his and will return back to the chief or headman who will sell it again either to one of the deceased clan men such as (brother, or maternal uncle) or to someone else.

In *Oshiwambo* culture women were and still are considered as properties of their husbands. Once

a woman is married she is considered cut off from the control of her family and belongs to her husband's control. Hishongwa confirms this by stating that "by Owambo tradition she now belongs to her husband who is said to own her" (Hishongwa 1992.43). This is the traditional understanding of women to their husbands. In Oshiwambo vernaculars a woman is said to be married 'by' her husband, (a *hombolwa* in *Kwanyama*, or a *hokanwa* in other vernaculars).

According to gender expressions in these languages, we do not say she is married to (a *hombola*) as this is the right expression in English. The 'lwa or nwa' ending gives a different meaning from the 'la ending that is applied to a man. A man is said a *hombola/ahokana* to his wife, and this implies that he is the subject, grammatically in the active voice, while the woman is put in the passive voice, 'married by' as expressed by 'lwa/nwa'. Therefore she, as well as other properties her husband has, will remain under his control. A husband to his wife is expressed in this way; He is *omunyeumbo wange* = my house owner, and *mwene wange* literally my lord or owner. This sense of ownership is also applied by young men to their girlfriends. When a girl has accepted the proposal to become a partner to him then it is said she got an owner, (*okakdona oke na mwene*). This expression does not apply to women in relation to their partners. The reason behind this is that man is always owning, but not owned by someone, unless he is made a slave by somebody. A man in our culture is therefore understood as a leader, a head and a ruler. If he found himself under control then this control must be by the other man who has defeated him, but not of a woman.

Traditionally, the king of a tribe (*Ovawambo* tribe) as he is always a man, is the owner of the country, (the traditional society he is ruling). All things that are dwelling in the particular area he is controlling ( animals, people, trees, and the land) are said to be his. It is believed he is the owner of the country *mwene woshilongo*. Under his supervision he appoints headmen entrusting them with districts. They are called *omalenga oovene voikandjo* (plural), *Mwene woshikandjo* (sing), lords and district owners. Under the headmen's supervision there are village owners *oovene vomikunda*, (*mwene womukunda* in singular). The word "mwene' owner or lord implies the ownership. The person to whom it is applied is considered the superior over others or things. He is considered having power to possess, rule, control, etc., over every thing applied to him. So this applied to kings

in relation to the country, a headman in relation to his district, a village owner in relation to his village and the same applies to the father in relation to his household. In the same way of understanding the father possesses the household and rules over everybody in it.

### **2.3.1 Inheritance of properties**

I have already indicated above that the powerful properties in Owambo society are cattle and millet. These are the major properties for inheritance according to our tradition. There are also small properties such as weapons, clothes (traditional ones), and garden implements such as hoes, axes, charms and utensils which were also inherited.

Oshiwambo culture is a matrilineal one as far as property inheritance is concerned. A person is counted on the side of the mother but not on the side of the father. According to Oshiwambo (our culture) the wife has got no right to inherit from her husband. Children as well have got no right to inherit from their father. When we talk about the word family we do not mean father, mother and children as this is the understanding of nuclear families in the West. By the family, we mean being a clan in which the mother, her children, her brothers and sisters and the children of her sisters are included. The wives, and the children of her sons and of her bothers do not belong in such a family. They are aliens. As the father is the owner of properties in the house, this means that they have got no right to inherit their father's properties.

If the father dies, his properties will be inherited by his brothers (the eldest brother) on behalf of the clan. If he has got no brothers, the eldest son of his sisters he chose, while alive, will inherit it on behalf of the clan. In this way cattle and granaries of millet were taken by the clan family. In olden days it was worse because even the cattle that the father has given to his children were taken away, if he did that without the knowledge of the clan. The fathers who are generous and want to leave something with their children sell cows to them for a small amount of properties. To avoid problems in the future the father has to tell his relatives about it. Quoted by Loeb, Tonjes writes:

Only clan mates can inherit. The wife and children get nothing; The

inheritance falls to a man's mother and to his sisters, brothers, uncles, and nephews on his mother's side. Everything that a wife has received from her husband during his life time, such as clothing, decorations, and tools must be returned to his clan mates upon his death. If some possessions are missing, substitution must be made. If a husband has slaughtered an ox for his wife during an illness she has had, she must return an ox to his clan mates. Wealthy men, however, often sell their cattle to their wives for small sums, with the knowledge of their clan relatives. In this way women are able to obtain some wealth.....Sons, daughters, a wife, or her mother has no right to touch any part of the inheritance. If a father has given any cattle to a son before his death, the clan mates will take them away. During his life time, however, with the clan's approval a father may sell his son cattle at a low price, and this the son is allowed to keep. (Loeb, 1962.109)

Until now many Ovawambo people are keeping this law of inheritance, though there are no longer polygamous marriages practised. Before the Namibian independence in 1990, women were chased away from the houses after their husbands died. They were chased either by the village headmen or by the brother or uncles to their deceased husbands who want to occupy the houses.

During our youth time fathers used to buy modern implements like ploughs, bicycles, blankets, cars and modern utensils like pots, baskets, cups and spoons, all these things are taken away from the wife and children. Even the blankets they used to sleep on are usually taken away from them. I have observed this kind of habit since I grew up in our village, and while I was in the parish as from 1988-95. As a parish pastor I had no say whatsoever to help those widows who were chased away from the houses.

Moreover, these problems were not attended by the colonial government in its courts. They were regarded as traditional matters that should be dealt within traditional "under tree courts". To make things worse the traditional leaders are the observers of these laws. It is only after independence that

the new government has challenged this traditional ways of life. Couples who have agreed for their marriage to be in community of property were not benefiting from it after one spouse has died. What I have observed is that if the husband was a bread winner in the house, who used to get a monthly salary, his relatives will claim every thing in the house to belong to them. The same applied to both sides. The relatives to the wife, if she was a bread winner, may take everything they think belonged to their relative. As I was told by my mother, in olden days, if the wife died, the relatives will take everything that belongs to the wife at the kitchen place. By this way the kitchen will be destroyed to make place for the new wife who does not need to use utensils of the former wife.

I have observed women who were forced to give the properties of their deceased husbands. Cars were taken away, bicycles, and even the money that widows received from companies, where their husbands worked for children insurance. Until now some women are experiencing this problem from this inheritance system. Some do not know what to do if such happens to them in Namibia. Others are afraid to take steps against their in- laws to the courts of justice because they are afraid the traditional belief that some people may be forced to look for and request witches to bewitch them for not giving the properties “to the rightful owners” according to the tradition, and because of keeping what traditionally do not belong to them. Because of keeping the tradition they have to suffer the traditional burden that this system is causing, while there is now help on the side of the present government. The challenge from the present government to this system is one of the things that are confronting the patriarchal understanding of Oshiwambo men.

#### **2.4 Mission and its contribution to the Oshiwambo patriarchal tradition and culture.**

The Finnish missionary Society (FMS) is the mother of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN). This missionary society was established on the 19<sup>th</sup> of January, in 1859. (Munyika, 1997.243)

In 1862 a mission school was established and officially opened on the 17<sup>th</sup> of November the same year. According to the information of Tirronen used by Munyika, the first teachers in that school were Rev. K.J.G. Sirelius (principal), C.G. Totterman and A.W. Lucander, who succeeded

Totterman after his death (Munyika, 1997.244). Five students who were enrolled since the opening of the school on the 17<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1862 are not mentioned. Tirronen has only mentioned the two men, Botolf Benhard Bjorklund and Martti Rautanen, who joined the others the year later. (Munyika, 1997.244)

Later five of the students from the mission school were ordained. Their names were B.B. Bjorklund, P. Kurvinen, K.L. Tolonen, K. A. Weikkolin and Martti Rautanen. The ordination took place during the mission festival on the 9-11<sup>th</sup> of June 1868, and it was from this festival that the first missionaries from the F.M.S were sent to Africa. (Tirronen, 1977.18)

Travelling through Germany they arrived at Cape Town in 1869. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of February they left for Walvis Bay, Namibia. After ten days of travel they arrived at Walvis Bay on the 14<sup>th</sup> February 1869. Hahn, the German missionary in Namibia came to welcome them at Walvis Bay on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March the same year and sent them to his mission station in Otjimbingwe. They stayed there a year learning Otjiherero, Dutch and English. They left Otjimbingwe on the 27<sup>th</sup> May 1870 to Owambo (Munyika, 1997.246-247). On the 9<sup>th</sup> of July the same year they arrived at Omandongo, close to the palace of King Shikongo sha Kalulu (Nambala, 1994.81).

After a couple of years of doing mission in Namibia and in Owambo in particular, the first four Owambo men were baptised at Omaruru by a Rhenish missionary on the 6<sup>th</sup> of March 1881. Their names were; William Amutenya, Martin Ipinge, Gustav Iithoko and Gabriel Nangolo. They were sent to Omaruru to get baptism there because the Finnish missionaries were not permitted to baptize in Owambo (Nambala, 1994.83).

The first public baptism in Owambo took place at Omulonga on the 6<sup>th</sup> of January 1883. Six men were baptized in public for the first time (Nambala, 1996. Vol.2, 29). According to the information given to Nambala, “*(Aandongga oyendji-yendji nayo oyi ile ya tale nkene Aangolo taafukike aalumentu. Oyendji oyathikama kokule ya tale nawa oshinima.)*” = Many people of Ondonga came to watch how the whites were initiating Owambo men. Many of them were standing a distance to

carefully watch what is happening (Nambala, 1996. Vol.2 29). The names of those who were baptised that day were; Iimene yaKodhi (Moses), Shikongo shIlilonga (Abraham), Angula yIindongo (Jakob), Negonya IyaShilunga (Tobias), Nangolo dhIlilonga (Elias) and Nangombe dhIlilonga (Johannes) (Nambala, 1996. Vol.2. 29). The names in brackets are their Christian names they have received that day.

In 1922 training school for pastors was established at Oniipa. First candidates to be admitted there for pastoral training were men. In 1925 seven of them were ordained first as indigenous pastors on the 27<sup>th</sup> of September (Nambala, 1995. 10). Their names were Paulus Hamutenya, Sakeus Iihuhwa, Obadja Iihuhwa, Gideon Iitula, Juuso Ngaikukwete, Nabot Shiyoma and Simson Shituwa (Nambala, 1995.19). They were ordained to help the missionaries in the ministry, because I suppose the number of Christians was growing very well that time. So they were working under the missionaries' supervision because ELCIN was still a mission field.

In 1954 this mission field became an independent church. The first name of it was *Ongeleki onkwaEvangeli paLuther yomOwambo-Kavango* (ELOC) = The Evangelical Lutheran Owambo-Kavango Church. In 1961 Bishop Leonard Awala was elected to be the church leader. He was the first indigenous pastor to get that position. In 1963 he was elected as the first bishop of ELOC (ELCIN now). He led the church until 1978 (Nambala, 1995.58). He was succeeded by Bishop K. Dumeni in 1979 who is still the presiding bishop of ELCIN. In 1992 ELCIN was divided into two dioceses, the Western and the Eastern diocese. In 1996 Rev.Appolos Kaulinge who was elected leader of the Eastern diocese was elected as a third bishop of ELCIN. He is now leading the same diocese as a bishop. This year 1999, we are waiting for the election of the bishop who will succeed Bishop Dumeni. The church synod will take place in December 1999. Candidates for this position are Dr. Tomas Shivute, Rev. Set Son Shivute and Rev. Hosea Iiyambo.

According to the old constitution of ELCIN women were not allowed to be ordained as pastors. Until 1991 in which the constitution was revised, the resolution no.86 was stating that; 'the one to be ordained should be a man.....' ( *Ou ta yapulilwa oufitaongalo e na okukala omulumenhu...*)

(Ekotampango nomaufomhango, sec. ed. 1978.50). It was because of this constitution that the first two female theologians in ELCIN who were graduated in 1972 were excluded from the 15<sup>th</sup> ordination of their male colleagues. Instead they were blessed as preachers and theologians in the church (Nambala, 1995.23). In 1990 the constitution was revised and the resolution changed in the church synod. The resolution no. 79 which substituted no 86 reads as follows; 'the one to be ordained should be a person' in stead of 'a man'. It was in 1992 that women were included in the ordination of pastors for the first time. Four female theologians were ordained on the 17<sup>th</sup> of May 1992, together with other males. As from 1978 the researcher has been an eyewitness to much of the information given.

It has become evident from the information given above that the mission work was mainly for men. The first missionaries in Owambo were men. Though they had wives, nowhere is it mentioned that their wives were also trained as missionaries like them. They had accompanied their husbands as their wives, but not as missionaries. We have noted that the first indigenous people to receive baptism were men. Also the first public baptism involved men only. It was because of the patriarchal system that the missionaries had to convince men first, in order for them to succeed in their job. That is why the first indigenous pastors were men, and this became the tradition of ELCIN that a pastor had to be a man, until 1992.

The first church leaders were men as from the late Bishop Awala up to Bishop Kaulinge. Even up to today women who are ordained as pastors do not qualify for leadership positions e.g. for becoming deans. There is no doubt that the system of father rule has played a great role in the church for quite a long time. It is clear that women were allowed for baptism as well, but they were not allowed further than that. They were denied the right of serving in the church, as this is the same in the society. I have no fear to state that the patriarchal system was also the tradition of the missionaries. Because there is no evidence that they were extricated from it. They were part of it, and they were promoting it in the church as well. This illustrates that the missionaries have contributed much to the patriarchal system in the church (ELCIN).

## **2.5 Conclusion.**

This chapter was an attempt to give a picture of how Oshiwambo man is perceived in his Oshiwambo society. As we have seen, he is trained to be hard, tough, so that he may get more respect in the society than a woman. The process of training explained, highlights how the patriarchal system functions in our culture and how deeply it is rooted in a male person of this culture as from childhood up to the time of maturity.

It also highlights how the system has structured the society. We have noticed that under this system women and children are exploited and abused by men. They do not own properties. They laboured and produced what does not belong to them. Men are the property owners in which women and children are included.

We have also noticed how the missionaries have contributed to this system with its mission activities. We learned that the first missionaries were males, and the education institutions they established were meant for the training of male people first. That is why in the history of the establishment of ELCIN, males were the first to be trained in the society for the ministry. Women were not recognised in the ministry until in 1968 when the first women theologians were sent to Paulinum to study theology (Nambala, 1995:52,186). Since their theological education which they finished in 1971, they were not ordained until 1992, when ELCIN has changed her constitution.

Patriarchy, as shown in this chapter, is the prevailing system in which many Oshiwambo males were brought up. Should one introduce the necessity of change will they agree or not? Will they come to realise that the system in which they grew up is wrong or outdated? The answer of this question is not easy to suggest. But before I come to this point let us see how patriarchy has been challenged in the Namibian society and the church in general.

## **Chapter 3.**

### **Literature review**

#### **3.1 Introduction.**

Patriarchy is not only a domestic problem. Here I mean a home or family problem between husband and wife and children. It is, as I call it, a national as well as an international problem. It is a national problem because it is not only found in one of the cultures (Oshiwambo culture) in Namibia, but in most of the cultures in the country. It is an international problem because it is found in many world wide cultures. In Namibia, as in other countries, it is recognised as a social, economical, political as well as a religious problem.

Socially, it is a problem because it strengthens one gender and weakens the other. It is also an economic problem because it gives one gender the right to property and neglects the other. Politically, it is a problem because it favours males only to rule and lead while it denies females to serve in the same services. Religiously, it is a problem in the sense that it denies females into religious services. In Christian religion women are not fully placed in positions and services equally with men.

This system has been challenged now by both women and men who are liberated from these patriarchal cultures, and who understand the total liberation of humanity. This chapter tries to focus on some of the challenges that I came to learn during my studies, and some which I have observed in my country. I will explain how patriarchy has been challenged as a political, economical and social problem by the government in the country. Then I will come to highlight some challenges from the feminist theologians on the side of religion. I will touch some male views that I found negative as well as those I found positive to these challenges.

### **3.2 The challenge from the secular government.**

The former South African government under the leadership of the National Party was not only an apartheid, racial and colonial government, but it was also a so-called Christian but patriarchal one. Both black men and women as well as the white females were discriminated against and robbed of their freedom and human dignity. It was promoting this system of patriarchy through out government structures, such as offices and institutions where men were offered more rights than others, as well as in the societies.

The new government of Namibia under the leadership of Swapo (and of South Africa under the leadership of ANC) has established new laws that challenged this system of patriarchy of the colonial government. These governments are secular because they are giving no favour to any particular religion, and because they permit freedom of religion to be practiced in the countries. However, according to their constitutions, they sound more responsible and positive towards the understanding of human rights and dignity of every human being, including those who were formerly deprived and marginalised.

According to the declaration of Amnesty International, human rights for all (women included) are protected by the international law. It is declared that steps have to be taken against governments who will fail to protect fundamental human rights. It is written:

steps have been taken for documenting human rights violations (women rights included) and to press government authorities end these abuses. 'Governments which fail to protect fundamental human rights should be confronted with the full force of international condemnation (Amnesty International. 1995: 117).

The law has declared that women should receive equal treatment in law, and that their evidence in courts should be approved and valued the same as a man's in all judicial proceedings, and that women should not receive more cruel penalties than men would receive who commit same

offences.(1995.119) It is also further written that:

Government should guarantee that women activists and non-governmental organisations working peacefully for the promotion and protection of women's human rights, enjoy all rights set out in the universal Declaration of human rights and the ICCPR (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights) (1995. 127)

Before independence, the Swapo organisation was already influenced by this culture of International human rights, I suppose. As a movement that was committed to the liberation of humanity and total human dignity, Swapo members were keen to show what Swapo was all about in bringing freedom and liberation. In their respective speeches during Swapo rallies Swapo leader Dan Tjongarero and Idda Hoffman shed light on what Swapo's liberation struggle was meant. Tjongarero explained that what Swapo aimed for was a "double liberation on the day of liberation, not after" (Cleaver, 1990.79). He said that Swapo has accommodated the sacrifice of women in combat and will not force them to revert back to the traditional roles, as it was done in Mozambique (1990,79).

Idda Hoffman expressed the following words during a Swapo women's rally:

liberation of women is a prelude and a precondition to victory. The struggle is not between men and women. Nevertheless, we want our own presidents and our own place among the leaders. We want total liberation, not piece reforms. We are part of the leadership (1990,79).

After Independence, the Namibian new constitution article 10 has put discrimination against people to an end. It is said that no one is to be discriminated against because of, "sex, race, colour, ethnic origin, religion, creed or social or economic status" (The Constitution of Namibia 1990.8). This has brought racial discrimination between blacks and whites and between males and females in the country to an end.

Job opportunities are made available for both who qualify for it. Education is made open for all. According to article 21, on fundamental freedom, people are given freedom of thought which includes academic freedom in institutions of high learning (Namibian Constitution, 1990.13). It is under this government that we have got women ministers, town mayors and councillors for the first time in the Namibian history. The same applied to the new government of South Africa, where a woman serves as speaker in the Parliament.

Property ownership is made free to any person who can afford to own it, article 16. Everybody in Namibia has the right to have his/her own property and also the right to make a will of who will inherit what. It is under this article (no.16) that widows and orphans are protected to live in their houses after the husband died. It is also here where the new government is ready to pursue those who will continue to acquire inheritance in a traditional way.

Slavery and any form that is related to slavery is not allowed in the new Namibia, according to article 9. The government does not allow women and children abuse to happen in Namibia , and is ready to take action against those who will do it. Under article 8 it is said that “no person shall be subjected to torture or cruel inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment” (1990.7). The human dignity of everybody (rather than male dignity only) is made to be recognised by every one in the country by the government.

According to the constitution of South Africa every person has the right to be free “from all forms of violence from either public or private sources”( The Constitution of the Rep. of South Africa, 1996.7).

This year after the successful elections in South Africa, President Mbeki made a speech that confirms the guarantee of human dignity of every person in the country. He stated:

Our society must guarantee the dignity of every citizen on the basis of a good quality of life for every woman, man and child, without regard to race, colour or disability.

Whatever the sickness of our society, none should be driven to levels of despair that drive them to the fringes of the mainstream. None of us should feel a sense of alienation. Nor should we allow that those who were denied their identity continue to exist in the shadows. We consider the work of restoring the pride and identity of all our people of vital importance to the task of advancing the human dignity of all our citizens and ensuring the success of our efforts towards national reconciliation and national building, (From a short published pamphlet of president Mbeki's speech in parliament 25Aug, 1999.).

All this information from the new constitutions are the evidences that reveal how the new governments have challenged the old systems of ruling and governing which was influenced by patriarchy. One can see that under these constitutions the father is no longer considered the only ruler and governor in the society. He is no longer considered to act in the public sphere alone while women are in the private sphere. This is the challenge to men of our time who used to place and keep women in the private and domestic life. Especially for the educated women of our time it is hard to force them into a domestic life which tradition prescribes for them.

As modern men who are walking with the time that is changing, we need to be up to date with what is happening in our life. We need to study and learn these challenges and see what benefits are they bringing to us as men, or what damage are they leading us to. The more we study them together as men the more we will find out how fruitful or fruitless the policies of the new governments can be.

### **3.3. The challenges from feminist Biblical scholars.**

#### **3.3.1 To the church**

As women were politically active in bringing about change in the governments, they are also active in transforming the church. Many women theologians have shared their views by writing books that challenge the churches against their structures that are discriminating them against their God given

freedom in the service of the church. Some are questioning the church hierarchical structures that are made based on the system of patriarchy. They feel there is a need of liberation of humanity in the church. Women have believed that the discrimination that women have fought against is happening in the church, the liberated body that was suppose to take a lead when it comes to the understanding of the liberation and freedom of all humanity in Jesus Christ. Therefore they are challenging the church leaders for allowing church laws and regulations to be discriminating.

Dobash challenges the belief that women have no legitimate means of changing or managing the institutions that define and maintain their subordination. She argued that:

confining women in the house, banning them from meaningful positions outside the family and excluding them from the bench and pulpit is to deny them the means of bringing about change in their status. The best they can hope for is a meaningful master both inside and outside the home.... It is the patriarchal ideology that serves to reinforce this acceptance (Dobash and Dobash,1980.43).

In addition to this she further states that Christianity has contributed much with its ideology and moral support for patriarchal marriages. According to her, in Christian teaching men and women are taught to fit into this form of marriage. The history of the patriarchal family reveals the impact of this system in the society and the way in which “the family itself, the church, the economic order, and the state each has influenced and supported one another in maintaining their own hierarchies” (1980.44). This is a good challenge for us to see how patriarchy has shaped the church’s moral teaching. And unless we understand seriously what patriarchy is all about, we will keep all the church’s moral teaching in a holy and never changing tradition.

Another challenge is provided by Njoroge. Firstly, she states that patriarchy is a “destructive powerhouse, with systematic and normative inequalities as its hallmarks”. According to her, this affects the rest of created order. Its roots are well established in society as well as in the church. And

to tackle this problem we need well equipped and committed women and men to bring patriarchy to its end (Njoroge,1997.81). What I find meaningful here is the point that both men and women are needed to be equipped to fight for the betterment of the church and society as a whole. Secondly, she made a remark that reminds the church of misusing the Bible in their interpretations. She writes:

We are reminding the church that for too long the Bible and especially the Pauline writings, has been misused and misinterpreted to subjugate and exclude women. We are reclaiming the fact that Jesus Christ is the sole authority and head of the church and that through baptism, women and men are equally called to repentance and new life. In Christ, we are equally commissioned to share our God-given gifts and to reclaim our God-given identity as female and male created in God's image (Njoroge,1994.66).

This is a very interesting dare that I have got no objections against.

Phiri is concerned with what she calls a contradiction in the way the gospel has been preached in Africa. She cannot understand the meaning of equality the church is preaching and that which the church is denying for women. She insists that:

There is a contradiction in the way that the church in Africa has preached about the equality of all humanity in Christ Jesus while in practice excluding women from the Eucharistic ministry. Women demand that the church return to a Christ-like understanding of authority and ministry - a demand for inclusiveness in ecclesial ministry and authority that is a quest for human development, a search for wholeness in the church of Christ (Phiri,1997.74).

In her experience, Oduyoye said that Christianity as manifested in the Western church in Africa does little to challenge sexism, whether in the church or in the society. She believed that the experience

of women in the church in Africa is contrary to the Christian claim of promoting the worth of every person. For her Christianity reinforces the “cultural conditioning of compliance and submission that depersonalise women” (Oduyoye,1995.9) .

Another challenge is made by Fiorenza who stated that Christian feminists call the church to open up its structures, to unmask the thinking that sets up patriarchal hierarchies and to enable the divine plan for full human relationship between women and men to develop. (Fiorenza,1995.184) She further says:

A truly democratic society would necessarily presuppose not only a radical transformation of a patriarchal church into community of equality and mutual independence, since not only the family but also the Christian churches have socialising function in American society. The early Christian ethos of coequal discipleship in community could provide a model for the ‘new family’ as an adult community of equality, mutuality and responsibility for the home and for the ‘world’. It would provide a model for the restructuring of the patriarchal household of God into a kinship community without clerical fathers and spiritual masters, a community not patterned after the patriarchal family. A feminist critical hermeneutics of liberation seeks to reactivate this early Christian ethos for today so that it can become a transforming historical model for the ordering of interpersonal communities, society and the churches (1995.90-91).

Though she is speaking in the American context, I find her ideas meaningful in our context too, where the church is also structured and shaped by the same systems as in America. We are living in a so called democratic society, but we are still keeping our patriarchal traditions that we have inherited from the past. We still continue to preach women’s obedience to men and fail to understand liberty and freedom in a democratic Namibia. From her statement it is clear that for many of us theologians, we failed to understand or imagine the situation at the very beginning of the church. We failed to understand that the church at its origin was a community of mutuality and

of equal responsibility of both men and women,(coequal discipleship). And this is the challenge that unless we allow ourselves, as men, to understand and accept this idea of coequal discipleship in the church as well as in the community at large, it will be hard for us to admit and accept what she calls “ a new family life model” in the church that replaces the old patriarchal family life model where clerical fathers and spiritual masters are not the only ministers and leaders of the church.

She also argues that most of the African churches with Western roots have women’s groups growing actively. On the contrary men’s groups are rare. She is concerned about why Christian men seem to have little need to talk to each other in organised groups. For her women and children need organised groups to survive, and she concluded that men of the church do not “need to group because they are the church..... sit on the official boards to direct the affairs of the body” (1995.186).

I really support her when it comes to grouping of men in our context. Men’s league members are few especially in our church. Men are coming together occasionally. We do not attend regular meetings for men in the parishes. What I have experienced is that when we call men for a weekly men’s group, only two to three out of fifty men come. The rest have got excuses. Many men in our church parishes are disorganised or I do not know what to say. In 1995 one man was speaking through Oshiwambo radio program saying; “men are hard to group nowadays, but where you can find them grouping freely is at the shebeens or when they are digging the grave”. That is why (speaking in my context) I said that we need to reorganise ourselves as men, we need to encourage one another to come together, to be able to study the challenges that are directed to us as men in the church, socially and spiritually.

Furthermore, she expresses the need of women and men to study the Bible together, guided by a historical critical methods that go deep into the time of original writers/hearers as well as their own cultural, political and economic situation. By doing so, she presumes, people will go to what the church should be about in Africa, “with its economic quandaries, political instability, poverty, oppression, and pretended innocence of sexism”. Then they shall begin to build a community of

interpretation that breaks all old habits of treating the Bible as the answer used by priests and preachers who tell them the will of God (1995.186-87).

Studying the Bible for men and women together is the second step of my approach that leads towards understanding the Bible together. But this has to be done after men have re-organised themselves and at least are ready to discuss the Bible together among themselves. Otherwise it will not work if one calls them together with women to discuss the challenging issues. The coming together will not develop a mutual understanding. It will create an unending and uncontrollable debate and a perpetual conflict between men and women.

According to Sydnie the negative consequences of cultural arrangements are not only confined to women. Men are also affected by the fact that they are forced into dominant behaviour that leads them to denigrate the female sex (Sydnie,1987.136). This is a very awaking challenge to us men. Because if we go back to the cultural history of the upbringing of boys and men in my culture, one can see that there is a force involved for making a boy into a man as he is expected to be in that particular society. One is forced not to cry like a girl. One is forced to show oneself brave. One is forced to particular circumstances, to face certain hardships that could prove he is a man. There is no choice, as Cohen also explains:

when I was a boy I was often told to be a man. When my marriage was breaking up my mother told me to be a man. But this, she seemed to mean that I shouldn't go back to my wife. Being unforgiving and hard was the proper posture for a proper man her curious harshness made me to remember times when, as a boy I was told to be a man. Sometimes I was crying. I cried quite often since my parents bickered, shouted, and fought most of the little time they spent together. Sometimes being a man ... meant standing up to my father. This was necessary, she (his mother) said since he was for ever unfaithful, stingy or acting as a barbarian (Cohen,1990.1).

The moment you choose to escape those hardships you show that you are a coward, a woman or a

homosexual. This means you are nothing, in the male society. You are outcast and forced to live at the edge of humanity. This is similar to what Moyana meant when she said:

We must realise that....it is not only the women who feel oppressed by the patriarchal system..., other 'lesser' men feel the oppression acutely, particularly when they find it difficult to fulfil their masculine gender roles (Moyana,1994.38).

So I find that this is a good challenge for us men to really rethink the way culture has taught us to be as men. Are we not forced to be males and behave more than we are suppose to behave, especially as Christian liberated men. What impact does the gospel put into us that liberated and transformed our male cultural identity? We will not realise this unless we have organised ourselves as men within our communities and ask these questions together. We really need a contextual way of approach as a tool that I suppose will help us to deal with these type of questions together. This leads us to the need of contextual Bible study group for men.

Sydie again argued that the patriarchal family is not a universal system. It is contradicted by the structures in some cultures whereby the family descent is through the maternal line, and maternal uncles rather than from the biological fathers. (Sydie, 1987.137) This is also a good challenge, but I wonder if Sydie is fully aware of what is happening at the other side of the coin.

Yes, the understanding of the patriarchal line is based on the patrilineal line whereby the son is succeeding the father only. If this is the understanding then she is right so far to give this challenge. Our culture is a matrilineal culture. But it does not mean that in this culture women are in power and therefore succeeding their mothers. It is matrilineal by the fact that the clan family is counted on the side of the mother. We have got clan names that are named after many things in nature, animals, birds, insects, plants etc. We have got clans like Ovakwanangobe= cattle clan, Ovakwanambwa =dog clan, Ovakwamahalanga =antelope clan, Ovakwanime = lion clan, Ovakwanekamba= hyena clan, Ovakwaluvala = Zebra clan, Ovakwanangadu = crocodile clan, Ovakwnyoka = snake clan, Ovakwashidila = bird clan, Ovakwanambuba = ombuba clan, an insect

found inside the wild figs, Ovakwanaxungi = named after a certain plant, Ovakwaneidi = grass clan, Ovakwanilya = millet clan, Ovakwahongo = named after a certain tree called omuhongo, Ovakwanayuma = clay pots clan, Ovakwanyika = torch clan, Ovakwananghali = funeral rite clan, Ovakwahepo = poverty clan, etc.

A child is a two sided clan product. There is a side clan of the father which the child is called in the way of respect (if she is a girl). There is the side clan of the mother where the child belongs, that retains the future of the clan. This side is not openly called with permanent members, but it is recognised. It is only used with children who do not legally belong to that clan.

Traditionally, they are referred as "*ovadalwa*" (born by that clan), but not members in meaning. For example on my father's side I belong to a hyena clan. I will not be called with that clan name of my father's clan because I am a man, but my sisters are called with it as a way of respect. In this way my father's clan is revealed from calling my sisters with that clan name. The same applied to my maternal side. There I belong to a snake clan. My daughters if I could have any, were suppose to be called with that clan name. My sons will not retain my clan family name. They are not called with it, and their children will not use it. It has ended with my daughters if I would have any. They will use their mother's clan family name. So what is important here is which clan family name is playing a role. Yes, women occasionally inherits their uncles if there are not grown up male persons in that clan family. But in reality they inherit for the sake of their sons.

What I suppose Sydie is not aware of is the fact that still on this maternal side line men are dominating and women are suffering. Men are given priority over women. It does not mean that where the family descent is through the maternal line, women are suffering any less. Wives are those who suffer most the consequences of this patriarchy. They are suffering because the other women on the side where their husbands belong are the cause of their suffering, unlike patrilineal society where women, I assume, do not contribute anything when it comes to the suffering of others.

Patriarchy on the maternal side is backed by women. This is the only difference that I have

discovered. As a man my identity is not only for the benefit of myself, but it is also the pride of my mother and my sisters. If I have to be honoured my honour has to be extended to my mother. That is why mothers have the right to exercise power over their daughters-in-law which is another kind of oppression that, I think, women have to address when it comes to the question of oppression women are facing in societies. This is what Hunter has confirmed from what Laretta Ngcobo and Flora Nwapa have indicated in their writings that “mothers in-law are exercising a kind of tyranny over their sons’ young wives” (Hunter,1994.51). In a similar way Mager also writes:

But women were not all equal. Older women acquire power through control over their juniors. They regulate the language of daughters-in-law by ensuring that they observed *hlonipha*, the rules of language and behaviour avoidances expected of young wives. *Intlonipho* ..., was a sign of difference and subordination. It prevented disruption of the authority of husbands and their mothers. A woman expected punishment if she did not follow her husband’s orders (Mager, 1994.52).

She also added that:

young wives complained of husbands, mothers- and sisters-in-law to cohort enclosure. Some talked back to men and older women refusing to avert their eyes. Many were beaten. When they could take no more, they ran away to town. Women who openly defied authority, however, typically acted in isolation, undermining the power of mothers-and sisters-in-law as much as that of men. They could expect little support from other women (Mager,1994.53).

This is what is happening in situations where patriarchy is playing a role. It is much worse in situations like ours where, after being married, the couple have to stay in the bridegroom’s father’s house for couple of years. Imagine what the young wife will face in the absence of her husband who works on contract labour for months. The relationship between her and her mother- and sisters-in-law sometimes ends in a perpetual hostility. On the other hand husbands do not take complains of their wives any more seriously than their mothers and sisters. As a result you find that the wife has to suffer this double oppression from her husband and her mother- and sisters-in- law. Traditionally,

women are for marriage. To become a wife one has to be ready to show respect to her in-laws or to face all the consequences after the husband died.

Barnhouse has another challenge that I find very interesting to hear. She is against the cultural belief of allowing boys to be wild in order to become what is considered real men. She argued that there are many of those who believe this idea that “boys will be boys. To grow into men they must be tough, rough, competitive, must fight, dominate others, and at least go through a period of showing contempt for women”. This belief was confirmed by theology students whom she was researching. An example of a mother who has a 15 year old boy who, she was afraid, was on the way to juvenile delinquency was demonstrated as a case study. She said that though the students agreed that such a belief needed modification, they could not imagine any other way to bring up a boy that he would become a real man than to let him go through in such a way (Barnhouse,1994.66-67). She challenged this belief saying:

To raise a boy with the idea that he can be in charge all the time, and that unless he is, he is not a “real man”, is to invite both personal and social disaster. This puts men in an intolerable position of constant pretense which is one of the primary sources of ulcers, heart attacks, high blood pressure and other stress deceases. We are used to hearing about the oppression of women, but what is the most extreme form of oppression? It kills you. And men in our culture die on the average, 5-10 years before women, mostly because we have raised them to think they are not suppose to have problems. On the social level, men are encouraged to be destructively competitive, and to project all of their own faults and weaknesses onto others (Barnhouse,1994.73).

This challenge is really touching the real truth that we men do not see and realise in our respective upbringing. It is true because most of the crimes committed in our societies are done by men, such as sexual abuse, thefts, robbery, killings, etc. Also when it comes to social problems, men do not realise that we are the most to suffer the consequences of denial and we are not able to open up and

speak out and confess to be relieved. We see, as Barnhouse has said, that patriarchy cannot allow a man to look for help from others. Therefore most of us are committing suicide because we/they cannot handle the problems by our/themselves. My question is how can we expect men to behave in a proper way if from childhood they are trained like that? How can we change the society if those who are committing crimes are trained in such a way that they have to be wild to become real men? I think we need rehabilitation centres where we can bring these type of people to be rehabilitated. I do not know how. We need also to set up a new way in our cultures that should replace this wild kind of way. We need an alternative solution otherwise people will continue with this way of bringing boys up and suffer. To say that there is a need but there is no other way to bring up a boy than to go through the old way, is to deny change. And if we (men) deny it who will bring it to us? We are accountable for the damage that is prevailing and therefore we are responsible also for bringing about the change that is needed.

### **3.3.2 To the society**

For Keen the important question is no longer ‘What do women want?’, because the answer has already been given that what they want is what they were denied, such as justice, equality, respect and power. Today’s question which, according to him, “is the yeast in the social dough is; ‘What do men want?’” He stated that the traditional notions of manhood are under attack and men are being called upon to defend themselves, to change, to become something other than what they have been (Keen,1991.5). In his society, Keen views the attitude of men to be as he puts it:

too aggressive. Too soft. Too insensitive. Too macho. Too power-mad. Too much like little boys. Too wimpy. Too violent. Too obsessed with sex. Too detached to care. Too busy. Too rational. Too lost to lead. Too dead to feel? Exactly what we are supposed to be is not clear (Keen,1991.6).

These are attitudes that many men in our society also are showing. The aggressiveness, macho-ness,

power-madness, lost to leadership-ness, dead to feeling, busyness, obsessed to sex, etc. Because if one is not showing one of these behaviours then one is not regarded as a man in the society.

Quoted by Eagleton, Heath concluded that men's relation to feminism is one of impossibility, because first, men are the problem that feminism seek to solve, and secondly because men can never speak authentically about women's experiences (Eagleton,1992.64).

Here I agree with the last point that men cannot speak genuinely about women's experiences. Women have to speak for themselves. But to say that men's relation to feminism is one of impossibility, here I do not agree with her. For me there is a possibility to create a good and new relationship between women and men. And this is what we are trying to do. If we have to believe that this relationship is impossible then our endeavours will be in vain. And there is no need for us to speak about or demand change and transformation in the society. Therefore it is very important that men should admit the guilt and responsibility. They should also strive for the newness of life in which both men and women are strive to establish together.

In the similar way Fouche argues that men have been guilty of the androcentric fallacy, in that they have believed their experience, their viewpoint and their ideas to represent all of human experience and thought. This androcentric fallacy, according to Fouche "cannot be rectified simply by adding women. Its rectification required a radical restructuring of thought and analysis which accepts that both sexes must be represented in every generalisation made about human beings" (Fouche,1987.113).

This is true if we really want a society in which people are equally recognised, and human right violations no longer exist. Both sexes have to be equally recognised, respected and admired. We should also refrain from being a problem in the society, which the others are trying to solve.

The other problem that needs to be tackled with in the society is language, which according to Vahed is manipulated to entrench patriarchal power. She also mentioned that the language is sexist,

and it will not change until the society does. Therefore it is equally important to change language and society. As language structures a sexist world, language and society need to be changed. Given that language is a cultural artefact invented by human beings, it can be changed, especially if it is offensive and dis-empowering to women (Vahed,1994.69).

Language is the vehicle that carries all the expressions that people are conveying to each other. Therefore it is true that if the society is patriarchal then the language is the medium of expression. Our Oshiwambo language does not have many identifications of male and female words that distinguish males and females. We do not have expressions like He/she, etc. But we have other expressions that dehumanise women. For example, as I have already indicated, in the case of marriage a woman is married by, not to, or the other expression that regard a woman as a little or small being. Her house, if she has got no husband is called "*okaumbo*", a little or small house, while the house of a man who does not have a wife is called a normal house. The other way is to regard women as nothing. If a man is regarded as a woman that means he is nothing, a possession etc. So being a woman in our society a person is not somehow enjoying her humanity. She is a slave. Therefore it is true that if the society needs to be changed the language must also be changed from these bad expressions.

The other problem that is related to language is the construction of body movement and expression. Loots has discovered that there is a problem in constructing male and female body movements. She writes:

....female and male body language and movement is related to gender divisions in work and tasks that men and women are expected to perform. The social construction of gendered division of labour not only defines 'women's work' but further is constructing how 'learned "feminine" and "masculine" movements and body uses are being defined as "normal" and appropriate (Loots,1995.54).

In our culture, when a man is proposing to a girl, she has to be watched by secret clan members, to

check her movements and her behaviours. I was told that when she walks, because there were no shoes, and her toes are pushing sand forward, this implies that she is not able to gather and keep wealth that a man might have. But if her toes are pushing sand backward, then she is a preferable one. She will be able to keep wealth. She is watched even to see how she eats, sitting down, speaking, looking, smiling and laughing. But this does not happen to men. We are not watched like them. Therefore I really agree that these kind of variations have to come to an end if we want to build a new democratic society.

Vahed is also not happy with the way surnames are used in our society. She therefore is arguing that

only men have permanent names. Women are often obliged (legally or because of family pressure) to change their surnames in marriage to continue the male line and be seen as the property of their husbands (Vahed,1994.66).

Changing of surnames is not a traditional thing in our culture. It was brought and left by a colonial government. In our tradition a woman retains her father's name, and is called with it her whole life. Therefore I think that it will not be difficult to do away with this colonial policy and instead make it flexible for couples to decide what surnames they will use during their marriage life.

Women in Namibia, according to Gawanas, were obliged to obey two laws as dependents in the society. She stated that there has been and "still is the dual legal system, i.e the general law and the traditional law which has the result that women never know exactly what their legal status is" (Gawanas,1992.4). Gawanas is right to discover this dual system in the society on the side of women. She then has provoked me to think also on the side of us men. I came to also realise that men had and still are having a double responsibility which means that they too do not know exactly what their legal status is, because of this dual legal system, which according to my own understanding is brought by a combination of patrilineal and matrilineal structures. The patrilineal and matrilineal patriarchal structures in our society do not socially and economically agree.

Oshiwambo father has got no full responsibility economically to his children as this is the case with a patrilineal father. His children have got no rights to his properties and vice versa, while in the patrilineal line the father is responsible and is inherited by his sons.

I have come now to realise that Ovawambo men are centring between these two systems, the general patriarchal one which, in our context, is from Europe, and the traditional matriarchal one which is the cultural one. Generally, the fathers are obliged to behave, perform and fulfill the obligations the patriarchal father is expected to do. On the other hand they are expected as traditional men to fulfill the obligations they have there as well. For example, legally, as generally accepted, the father is regarded to have power over his family, (wife and children) and be responsible to legally support them. Gawanas has a good explanation here which says:

The law of support obliges the husband to support his wife and children during and after marriage; taxation law provides him with a tax rebate for his dependents which are the wife and children. The pension laws are such that the husband is required to provide for his wife after his death but not vice versa. Wives are readily put on husbands medical aid schemes as dependents but also not vice versa (Gawanas,1992.4).

Here we see what Gawanas meant as reflected on this quotation, the problem of dependence which is not applied to men. But this is not what I am focussing on now. What I want to reveal is the general responsibility that we cannot detect easily.

On the other hand, traditionally, the wife and children are not supposed to be involved in the father's economy or properties. Compensation has to be paid to the father's family if the father has used his property for redeeming or saving the life of his wife or child. If the husband dies, the wife has to suffer double because she is legally permitted to get her husband's pension, but traditionally, it is not her's. Therefore the clan family members will pursue her to claim it from her. So one can ask, how can the father support his wife and children while in his culture it is not acceptable. There is

a conflict in the understanding which we (men) are not aware of, and that this dual system is a burden to us that we don't have to carry alone.

Let me include Ryan's ideas here that I think are relevant, because they reveal to us how the colonial system was utilising the already existing patriarchal structures and social inequalities. She argues that:

..it is equally important that we take into account that colonial states make use of already existing patriarchal structures and transform already existing social and gender inequalities into their own hegemonic practices. This is evident in property rights which are granted to men and not women, marriage laws which empower men and not women, the patriarchal household in which the head of the house may beat his wife and rule over his daughters....(Ryan,1993.61)

Although Ryan is concentrating on gender discrimination here, it is quite important to use her ideas to reveal how this dual system was trying to put pressure on us men, rather than simply to think that it empowered us. The property rights which were granted to men did not solve the problems that, according to men's mentality, it was suppose to solve. Instead it created more problems, especially in our society. It brought a perpetual problem between the general and traditional understanding of property rights. The fact that it was a one sided gender policy could not solve the problems of the other gender with subordination. To my mind equal rights of every person will solve many of the problems if it is appropriated with mutual understanding of every human being.

### **3.4 Men responses to the challenges**

#### **3.4.1 Negative responses**

For Goldberg a non patriarchal society, or as I call it, a patriarchy free society, is a dream that never comes true. He stated that one should imagine a society that "lacked hierarchies altogether, and therefore lacked the environmental cue and the environmental arena necessary for patriarchy." But,

as he argues, no such a society existed. He further says that he could not see a free hierarchical society,( a non-hierarchical society as he calls it) that could demonstrate the possibility of a society that did have hierarchy, but whose hierarchy was not patriarchal. He states clearly that “ once there is hierarchy, the hierarchy will cue dominance tendencies more strongly in the male”(Goldberg,1977.74).

I wonder how many men believe in this ideology of Goldberg. This implies that we need hierarchy in the society. And the more we need hierarchy, or cannot avoid hierarchy, the more we cannot avoid the system of patriarchy. I find this statement very problematic and a male centred idea that does not look and care for others. This is one of the irrelevant ideas for our time of transition to freedom of humanity. Goldberg, I suppose, could not imagine what humanity and freedom of humanity is all about.

A patriarchy free society does not mean a hierarchy free society. Patriarchy does not mean hierarchy, though patriarchy incorporates hierarchy. They are not one and the same thing. Neither should we say that hierarchy presupposes patriarchy, nor vice versa. Hierarchical positions, whereby all genders are included, refutes the domination of patriarchy. I, therefore, am not against hierarchical structures, as long as these structural positions in the society are not discriminating to any person because of his/her sex, gender, race etc. Therefore a patriarchy free society does not mean a hierarchy free society. If any given hierarchy presupposes patriarchy, then that hierarchy is questionable.

Moreover, the end of patriarchy does also not mean the beginning of matriarchy as Goldberg has insisted, and claimed it never existed. If the feminists or the African womanist are striving for a matriarchal society that is also questionable. If their struggle is for the betterment of all humanity then this is what I support.

The advent of women into powerful positions and in the decision making bodies is a threat to some men in our society. This is similar to what one of the Tswana man has expressed, when he could not

hide his resentment towards female intrusion into the public life by swearing that the women had started the disturbance by forcing their way into the “kgotla”(the centre for the administration of power) (Mager,1992.122).

Traditionally, men are in charge of these places, and it is really a threat for them to see women enter, because they regard their presence as a taboo. It is true that many men in our society could not accept women in such positions. Many are showing resentment to some of these women. They do not accept them and some do not want their service, especially the service of women pastors, ministers, etc. They (men) need to realise that it is too late now to show these resentment feelings. Because no one will support their resentment, nor could it be approved by holding a referendum.

### **3.4.2 Positive responses**

Despite that, not many men have responded to the challenges that feminists are posing to them in the society, especially African men, though some white men have reacted positively to these challenges. The first one I find is Cohen who discovered the change that is happening in the society which is brought about by women. He writes:

Despite many setbacks and disappointments, feminists have succeeded in making clear the justice and necessity of equal rights and opportunities for women. Slowly, the attitudes of many men are changing. I am not suggesting some Panglossian scenario, but what is clear is that there have been large changes in the way women think of themselves and in the way we all view relationships between the sexes (Cohen,1990.191).

Hearn also has a positive reaction when he says:

Again we need more than just one of these. Both the structural rigour of Marxism, socialism, radical feminism .....and the personal tolerance of liberal feminism and

libertarianism, are necessary in being against and actively dismantling patriarchy (Hearn,1987.186).

Mandew has also reacted by saying that the women have reappropriated the Bible for their struggle and the dominant forces of patriarchy will no longer be able to use the Bible against the challenges that the black women have demonstrated (Mandew,1991.142).

### **3.5 Conclusion.**

Patriarchal structures in the Namibian society is not only to be considered a problem, but it is evil like other evil thoughts and deeds that are considered social evils. In this chapter I have tried to show how this system has been challenged from a political level down to the religious level in our context.

Politically, I have pointed that the new governments, of Namibia and South Africa, have not challenged this system only, but they have brought changes and transformed the old policies of the previous patriarchal government. This change is revealed in the new policies that replaced the old policies which were discriminating against humanity in any form in the government structures. I have indicated how the new governments have introduced women into leadership positions in the society.

I have also pointed out how women have challenged this system of patriarchy, (1). in the church, where they also demand change and transformation to take place. (2) in the society where they challenged the patriarchal cultures, and show how necessary transformation is needed in these cultures.

Lastly, I have shown how some men have reacted with negative attitudes, and others with positive attitudes to these challenges. I think it is time now for men to organise themselves and discuss these

challenges very serious. Men do not need to resist any more, because they no longer have got that power to do so.

As I have already indicated, we need to show a positive attitude towards the changes that are happening in our society. We need to support these other few men who really see the need of change and who appreciate what women are trying to come up with as very important. Working together is better than denying what others are demanding. Therefore being positive towards changes will help us to understand one another fully and be tolerant to the new things that we are not used to.

## **Chapter 4.**

### **Exegesis of chosen texts from a liberated male perspective.**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

In chapter 3 I have shown how patriarchy has been challenged by the new governments of Namibia and South Africa and feminist. I have also shown how some men have react negatively and some positively to the challenges posed to the system. However, this is not the first time for patriarchy to be challenged. I have discovered that Jesus was also one of the first men to challenge it during his ministry. This may not have been taken serious by his successors. In this chapter I will deal with how Jesus has challenged the patriarchal attitude of the Pharisees. I will also show how the Apostle Paul attempted to show this perspective of his perceptive unity in Christ during his ministry to the gentiles.

This chapter comprises of two texts one from Matt.19:1 - 9 and the other from Gal.3:19 - 29. An exegesis will be done to each text. This will be done from liberated male perspective. This perspective will show how patriarchy was dealt with:

- (1.) By Jesus, on the question of divorce, how he challenged this freedom of the Jewish men for divorcing wives according to the patriarchal law, and what the answer of Jesus meant to them. I will also try to apply this answer into our context. The reason for choosing this text is to examine why Jesus has challenged this patriarchal traditional law of divorce which was the right of the Jewish men, how it was oppressive over women, and how he restored the right relationship of husband and wife which was meant for marriage at the beginning the creation of male and female.
- (2) By Paul, what he means by this phrase “in Christ there is neither male nor female”, and how possible it could fit in his patriarchal community. I will concentrated on the text itself and explore what others say about it.

These two texts will reveal how a good relationship between the oppressors and oppressed, masters

and servants, Jews and Gentiles, males and females (husbands and wives), free and slaves has been restored in Christ.

First I will give a brief explanation of divorce concerning the legal systems of the ancient Near Eastern people in which the biblical Hebrew are included. Then I will explain how divorce is done in Oshiwambo culture. The conclusion will be done after the exegesis of the texts is finished.

## **4.2 And a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife.... Matt.19:1-9**

### **4.2.1 A brief explanation of divorce**

The first part of this chapter conveys to us that the answer of Jesus was provoked by the pharisees' question about divorce. The main theme is therefore divorce. Before I focus on what the text is all about, let me first bring a brief historical background of divorce that Patai writes concerning legal systems of the ancient Near Eastern people including the biblical Hebrew. He said that the right of divorce was accorded to the husband in a patriarchal society such as these. He writes:

The home, the house, belongs to the husband and the wife, is under his effective rule. When he for any reason becomes dissatisfied with his wife, he can send her away from his house, thereby dissolving the marital bond between her and himself. In practice, however, we find that a wife, too, was (and still is) able to leave the home of her husband on her own initiative, and to return, in most cases, to the home of her father or brothers. When such a situation developed, unless the husband was able to persuade her to return to him, the marriage was dissolved. Also, instances are recorded in the Bible in which marriage was dissolved upon the initiative or the pressure of powerful outsiders.(Patai,1959.113)

According to this information divorce was not only initiated by the husband. Although the Jewish law has stipulated clearly that divorce can be initiated only by the husband, this was not always the

case according to some biblical recorded evidences. For instance, the case of divorce between Abraham and Hagar was initiated by Sara (Gen.21:8-14), Samson and his Philistine wife was initiated by his wife's father (Judg.14:19-20), the prophet Ezra has induced the men who had married foreign wives to divorce them (Ez.10:3,9,17,44)

On the case of the wife taking initiative Patai writes;

If a wife gets angry with her husband, or feels that she can no longer remain living with him, she can go back to her parents or her brothers and refuse to return to him. In such a case, all that a husband can do is to go after her, or send a trusted emissary to her parents' home, and try to persuade her to return. Such attempts at reconciliation are usually accompanied by promises of presents. If she refuses to return, he has to divorce her. (Patai,1959.116)

According to Patai's information, divorce was not something cheap to do. There were codes, like the Hammurabi code, which are hundreds of years older than the biblical law which stipulated that certain financial arrangements must have accompanied divorce. According to this code when a man divorces his wife he must compensate her financially.(1959,119) To avoid this payment husbands were no longer taking initiatives of divorces. They instead purposely made the lives of their wives miserable, for example, by physically and verbally abuse them in order to cause them to run away. If the wife leaves the husband's house and returns to her own related family, if the husband divorces her, he does not have to pay her the financial compensation. (Patai,1959.119)

Unfaithfulness of the wife was another factor that leads to divorce in biblical times up to now. According to the Torah, though, it will lead to death by stoning.

#### **4.2.2 Divorce in Oshiwambo culture.**

In our tradition, Oshiwambo tradition, divorce was not something that was only applied to men. It was allowed for wives to leave their husbands, if they misbehave towards them. Like in the Near

Eastern and Hebrew culture, a husband may go after his wife to persuade her to return, or send a trusted person to her parents. Because there was nothing that declares official divorce, the refusal of a wife to return signifies a divorce from herself. Moreover, this does not happen so much on the side of women. Those who leave their husbands behind were many times induced by their husbands to do so.

Maltreatment, cruelty and neglect of some husbands to their wives were some of the behaviours that induced wives to leave their husbands. We call this kind of leaving *ehengano* (divorce). Poverty and elderliness was also another contributing factor. Wives were to give respect and obey the orders and laws of the head of the house. “If you don’t, you go” was sometimes a remark a husband may tell his stubborn wife. If the husband is the one who dismissed her then it also declared divorce from him. So the question of who divorces is applied to both.

What is similar is also that the Oshiwambo traditional house belongs to the man. Wives are just accommodated in their husbands’ houses. So they can leave it if they feel so, or be dismissed, because they only belong there by the permission and favour of the husband.

In today’s context, there are still many men who are keeping the traditional understanding of a man as the head of the house. Many wives are also behaving the traditional way of submission to their husbands. During my eight years experience in the parish I have discovered that some of the Christian men, especially young couples, are tempted to divorce their wives. I have observed that separation of couples play a great role in our Owambo context.

The divorce rate in ELCIN members is also going high now. The church minutes record the approved names of couples who, after being legally divorced, sought the affirmation of their divorce from the church. Divorce was not happening to the first Ovawambo Christians, because they were few in number and were devoted to Christianity. Divorce was not even a big issue in Oshiwambo culture, because any spouse was able to initiate it, with either the influence from outside, or inside from the inducement of the husband to his wife.

Adultery was not the main factor of divorce in Oshiwambo tradition as it is the case nowadays. Traditionally, if a married wife is caught with her outside lover, compensation has to be paid to the owner (the husband) of the wife. This payment is called *oukodi*, a jealous compensation. Today adultery is one of the major recognised factors that causes divorce. In our present time it is not only a husband who can apply for divorce but also a wife, if she knows that her husband is having affairs with other women, she can divorce him. The fear of acquiring HIV and Aids is the greatest fear, especially among the educated women. But the main question is, who brings the tension of divorce in the house? The husband's unfaithfulness to his wife, who is free to have affairs with other women.

Women's emancipation is another contributing factor that leads women to run away from their cruel husbands and live a single life. Equality, according to Rip, has entered married life and is very often the cause of conflict between husband and wife, especially where a husband wants to maintain his traditional understanding as a man. (Rip, 1993:23) However, it is still early for the majority of Oshiwambo wives, who are still clinging to the tradition, to understand this change. Traditionally, it was not easy for a woman to divorce her cruel husband without the support from outside. She has to do so if with the recommendation of her clan family.

#### **4.2.3 An exegesis of Matt. 19:1-9.**

In verses one and two Jesus is on a journey doing his ministry, and he was just finishing preaching and continue His journey from Galilee entered Judea at the other side of Jordan. During His journey many people followed Him and He cured them from their sickness.

It is not mentioned that He provoked the Pharisees with his teaching or accused them with His preaching. However, we can not deny their presence among the crowds that followed Jesus. I suppose, they were touched by hearing His messages and by witnessing the healings that Jesus performed.

In verse 3 the Pharisees approached Him with a question. “Is it lawful to divorce one’s wife for any cause”. This question was a test to see what he will answer. They knew his teachings were challenging the law they were keeping. Therefore the question is linked with what is in the law. “Is it lawful to divorce one’s wife for any cause?” In other words, Do you know that the law has made it possible for a man to divorce his wife for any reason? The question clearly stated who should take the initiative for divorce. “To divorce one’s wife” implies for a man to divorce his wife. There is no provision for a woman to divorce her husband in the Jewish culture. This means that the law of Moses permits only men to divorce and women to be divorced.

This question is similar to what is recorded in Mark.10:3, except that Matthew has added “for any cause”, at the end of the question. There is only a slight difference in their conversation, which is noted by Schweizer. He said that in Mark, Jesus’ opponents asked what is permitted and Jesus asked what is commanded. Here on the contrary, the opponents asked why there is a commandment of Moses v.7 which Jesus evaluates as a permission. (Schweizer1976.381).

It is somehow confusing as to which is the right interpretation of Jesus’ argument. Because for Matthew, Jesus’ answer does not speak a command but a permission. “He permitted them because of the hardness of their hearts”v.8. While in Mark Jesus is asking a command, “What did Moses command you” Mark.10:3. Also in the answer v.5 Jesus is speaking of the command not the permission. “For the hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment”. The Pharisees are speaking of the permission here, “Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to put her away” v.4. The question that still need to be answered is: Is divorce a command or a permission from Moses?

The text reveals also that Jesus was regarded as a violator of the law by the Pharisees, with his teachings. These type of questions were intended to prove whether Jesus was really in compliance with the given law as a teacher, or whether his teachings were contrary to the law. Fortunately Jesus answered their questions by quoting from the same law. “Did you not read” meaning, “Is it not written in your law that you do not understand?” His answer was a proof that he was obedient to the law.

The answer of Jesus in v.4 reveals, to my mind, the following ideas. Firstly, it reveals that though the pharisees were keeping the law they did not understand it fully. They did not understand what the phrase “from the beginning the creator made them male and female” meant for the social and marital relationship of males and females. So this is what Jesus is making clear at this point. He therefore taught them a new lesson that the union of marriage was meant to last as long as the couples live.

Secondly, it reveals that each spouse in marriage is equally important in this bond of marriage v.6. No one is more important than the other. This brings the importance of men only to an end. It also reveals that divorce is unjustified in the eyes of God. Men were allowed to divorce their wives because they demanded it from Moses. It was not the intention of the creator to be like that v.8.

Thirdly, Jesus revealed that the marital relationship of man to a woman is joined by God. It is not joined by a man, let alone Moses who gave them a command. Therefore the join-ness means that they become one flesh. The intervention of a third party is not allowed. Nor does it permit any party to take initiative to break this union v.6. The direct challenge here is to men. Jesus did not say ‘let not man or woman put asunder, because the strong position was on the ‘man’s’ side. It seems to me that Jesus was not at peace with some of the patriarchal laws that the Pharisees were keeping. The Pharisees also have discovered that, sometimes in Jesus’ speeches he was talking about them, Matt.21:45. This brought a conflict between him and them.

According to the explanation in verse 7, a man was commanded lawfully to give her a divorce certificate and put her away. The purpose of a certificate for a women is to be able to be married again. It is not like in our time where the divorce certificate has to be issued by the judge in a court of law, to both parties ( a man and woman) husband and wife, and the judge is the one to take a final decision of separating them. In this case (of man giving certificate) a man is acting as a judge, given full authority to write a certificate, give it to his wife, separates from her and send her away. Here the man does not need a certificate, only the woman does.

This implies here that this law was mainly for man, only for the priority of men. It does not care about the other gender. Therefore if we read this part critically, we find out that men were active in keeping it, and therefore it was a male centred law. Men were benefiting from this law, because they were free to divorce their wives and marry other women as they wish. On the other hand women were suffering the oppression of their husbands, because of the law. I assume that, this law could not give a woman freedom of expression before her husband. So they were abused by their husbands like other women in our society.

In v.9 Jesus challenged this freedom of a man. I call His answer as a challenge of patriarchy. This answer condemns the giving of certificate of divorce to wives. He call this practice adultery. According to Luz *πορνεία* can mean only sexual misbehaviour, and as a rule means - “with a married women- adultery”. It is also a word of every kind of illegitimate sexual intercourse. (Luz, 1989.306)

Luz gave another word *μοιχεία* which could apply for men in this sense. But it was never used in this sense. This implies that the word stem *πορν* is only applicable for women not for men.

Therefore *πορνεία* = adultery was normally applicable on the side of women rather than the side of men. Men were ruled out of this practice. But in this answer Jesus is challenging their freedom from adultery as a lie. He condemned their exercise of divorce as adultery to themselves. “Whoever divorces his wife ... and marries another one, commits adultery. In Chapter 5: 32 Matthew also said: “whoever divorces his wife makes her an adulteress, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery”.

This means that it is this practice of giving certificates of husbands to their wives that establishes adultery. This also means that men are the one to initiate adultery and they are also the one who commit adultery with the divorced women they marry. That is why I call Jesus’ answer as a challenge of patriarchy in this Jewish culture.

Luz has suggest that Jesus liberates the woman from her dependence as an object of this law, and as a possession of the husband, and uncover “the reality of the inter-human relationship of

marriage”. For him the prohibition of divorce by Jesus is an expression of “the love of Jesus and God for the disadvantaged women” (Luz,1989:302).

I support his idea by emphasizing that this is a true liberation Jesus has in this challenge. A liberation of both men and women if it is understood correctly. Jesus is not only liberating the poor and marginalised women from this manly practice, but he is also liberating men from it. For if this practice brings sexual misbehavior which is an illegitimate sexual intercourse to both men and women ( adultery) then the liberation is also for both.

Πορνεία in this verse (9) is made the only exception for divorce. The word παρεκδοτος is to be understood in this sense of exception. Divorce should only take place if one of the party involves him/herself in adultery. This implies that adultery is prohibited by Jesus with the giving of certificate that causes it. If adultery and its causes is prohibited, then what remains is just marriage union which no one can separate. A man has to leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, be faithful to her and her to him and live together.

#### **4.2.4 What this mean in our context.**

Jesus’ quotation from the Old Testament confirms that from the beginning God has created male and female at the same time as recorded in Gen.1. This answer is a true understanding of equality of all human beings before God that offends some male Christian believers who support the other creation story. But this empowers us to understand the meaning of equality of both sexes before God. The marginalised gender is liberated from being neglected and divorced, by this answer. Their right of being fully human being is restored. I do not think that they are freed to be able to divorce their husbands, as this answer of Jesus does not give any gender such right. But together with their husbands they are liberated to maintain the married union.

The reason for a man to leave his parents and be joined to his wife,v.5 shed a new meaning in our tradition. The traditional understanding that a man belongs to his maternal clan family, even though

he is married, is challenged here. In contrary, a man is not to be counted with his clan family. Nor does this answer allow women to belong to their clan families. It provides the new idea of starting a new family, the immediate, biological or the nuclear family.

We also tend to think, as Africans, that a nuclear family is a European type of family. Therefore it is not an African type of family. I do think that this is true, but I doubt if there was a culture that existed without practising polygamy. However, this does not mean that a nuclear family is only European. It is also a Christian family in the sense that Christ has confirmed it to be in accordance with the intention of the creator.

Furthermore, the Jewish patrilineal, patrilocal and patriarchal type of family is also challenged here by Jesus. That is why the Pharisees were not at peace with him. This means that a man is not to be counted to belong to either of these families after married. He has to leave either his clan family or his extended family and joined to his wife and start a new independent family. I came also to realise that the traditional way of running away of young wives from their husbands simply because they become poor or old is not recommended by this answer. They should stay with their husbands and be faithful to them as they have promised during their marriage vows, that they will love them for good for worse.

#### **4.3 In Christ there is neither male nor female. Gal.3:19-29(27-28)**

What I would like to find out in this text is how we can understand that this text is really expressing the language of inclusiveness, and if it is so, how and where should we find this sense of inclusiveness. Bearing in mind that the author is a male person, lived in patriarchal context, how was it possible for him to express that? I will also try to see how the text was constructed and the message it delivers to the readers.

### 4.3.1 The exegesis of the text.

A close reading of this passage reveals to us that in verses 23-26 with the Greek and English expression and language construction, the address sounds exclusively for men. Women are not included in this address of the message, because the gender is playing a role here.

In v.26 πάντες γὰρ υἱοὶ θεοῦ ἐστε is translated sons of God in English which is the right translation into English. The translation of these words in my language is completely different. Our language has got no s/he differences and therefore the emphasis is not put on gender variations. That is why v.7. οἱ ἐκ πίστεως is translated ‘those of faith’ rather men of faith, and οὗτοι υἱοὶ εἰσὼν Ἀβραάμ is translated ‘children of Abraham’ rather than sons of Abraham as in other translations. If a literal translation was applied in my language, this could have created a problem that would comply a literal exclusive faith for men only, but not for women. It could have created the understanding that women were not supposed to be baptised.

I wonder how the Greek and English people, as well as those of other languages with these variations, have understood these words. My doubt is whether they feel there is a sense of inclusiveness of both men and women in this message if the translation is ‘men of faith’ rather ‘those of faith’ and ‘sons of Abraham’ rather than ‘children of Abraham’.

However, as far as Paul was concerned his message was meant to avoid these kinds of variations for those who are in Christ through faith. I understand that the word “man” may mean a human being, so it possesses a sense of inclusiveness. But what about the word “sons” in v.26? To my mind I feel that the language is male centred. The writer, though, has this inclusive meaning in mind but could not extricate himself from expressing it in male centred language. Also if we look at the symbolic example he used as a tool for his interpretation, he is bound by the situation. He brought a “male heir child” who is enslaved in the hands of the guardian because he is not grown up, ch.4:1-2. The spiritual growth is associated with the male heir child which sounded appropriate in that context.

I think also that this message was not necessarily addressed to both males and females equally. It was meant for male audiences because of the language expression itself. Chapter 4:5 ended with a word 'υιοθεσιων' meaning adopted sons. I have got no idea as to whether the word adoption was applied to both boys and girls in the Jewish culture. But according to the information from the Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology, the Jews did not originally practise adoption. It was not legally prescribed in the Jewish law. It is also mentioned that the word does not occur in the Old Testament. Adoption was part of both the Greek and Roman societies. It was associated with their laws and ceremonies. (Elwell, 1996. 11) So this adoption metaphor was meaningful to those people. If the meaning of the word adoption is taken away from its male centred understanding and put into a collective and inclusive understanding then it will be sound meaningful and this will meet the demand of equity in our time.

Moreover, I assume that this text is a male centred text. It uses androcentric symbols for explanation and clarification in its message and therefore sounds exclusive to me. This was not something to be bothered with in the situation where the text was produced. I hope female hearers were used to these patriarchal expressions of exclusiveness. Therefore, I assume, if they were offended they could not resist it.

I think also that Paul was right in addressing this message to the authorities of that time first. It is not easy to proclaim the message that violates the cultural understanding of the people. Culturally, he was bound by the patriarchal language, but spiritually and according to the conviction of his faith his message has got an inclusive meaning to those who believe in Christ, which he could not clearly express because of the male centred language.

#### **4.3.2 How to apply this message in our context**

V. 28. Creates a tension with those biblical passages that divide human being according to gender roles (MacDonald 1987. 2). I suggest that this tension is also a challenge to those texts in the Bible that humiliates and subordinates others, like 1Cor. 11: 3 - 6 where Paul commands women to cover

their heads for the honour of their husbands, Eph.5: 22 - 23 where women are ordered to be subject to their husbands etc.

According to Fiorenza:

a Christian ought not to look at other Christians as sex objects, as a males or females, but as members of the same “family of God”, as brothers and sisters.... Men and women in the Christian community are not defined by their sexual procreative capacities or by their religious cultural or social gender roles, but by their discipleship and empowering with the spirit ( Fiorenza 1983. 212 - 13).

If we take v.28 as the core and centre of Paul’s message then we will understand what he was trying to bring about to his audiences. To my mind he meant to say, in Christ racial discrimination (neither Jew nor Greek), status discrimination (neither slave nor free), gender discrimination (neither male nor female) is ended, as it is proclaimed ended by the present governments of today, i.e of Namibia and South Africa. To express it in our present political terms, this means that in Christ no one should be or is to be discriminated against because of his/her colour, race, gender, disability, ethnic origin, social or economic status. I must also add here that not even in Christ one is to be discriminated against because of his/her denominational church affiliation. Fiorenza also said:

While the baptismal declaration in Gal. 3:28 offered a new religious vision to women and slaves, it denied all male religious prerogatives in the Christian community based on gender roles. Just as born Jews had to abandon the privileged notion that they alone were the chosen people of God, so masters had to relinquish their power over slaves, and husbands that over wives and children. Since these social-political privileges were, at the same time, religious privileges, conversion to the Christian movement for men also meant relinquishing their religious prerogatives. .... The legal- societal and cultural-religious male privileges were no longer valid for Christians (Fiorenza,1983.217-218).

I suggest also here that we must understand this point of Fiorenza very well that this verse denies all male religious prerogatives in the Christian community based on gender roles. As Ovawambo men, we should understand that to be able to fit in this Christian community we should be relinquished from our traditional knowledge of being a man in the society. We should be relinquished from our patriarchal power over women and children. Because as the Jews, masters and those born free's privileges do not fit in this Christian community, so also our traditional male privileges.

In verse 19 the presence of the law and its effect is questioned. According to Hassen, the addition of the law increases sin and imprisons all under sin. For him, the law was not given with the power to make alive. That power is absent from it which is the cause of making life, and there is the absence of the effect which is righteousness. Therefore the law cannot produce life (ζωη). Because it cannot produce life, it is also unable to produce righteousness, and it leads to imprisonment under sin, condemnation under curse and death. (Hassen, 1989. 130,31)

In relation to this argument I suggest also that the male centred and patriarchal laws have the same effect upon those they are imposed on. They humiliate and imprison all the marginalised under cultural subordination. They fail to save people from the disadvantageous and marginalised conditions of life. There is no justice, equality and respect of human rights in them. The way of escaping from this prison of humiliation is to put on Christ.

In verse 26 to put on Christ is similar with putting on the 'new nature which is being renewed...' Col. 3: 9. This new nature is symbolized with Christ. Putting on Christ presupposes putting off the old nature which includes the patriarchal system that colonizes others (women and children). Because in Christ there are no male prerogatives based on gender roles, patriarchal privileges no longer exist. All human being are clothed with the same privileges and share the same rights. This life has to be experienced now by all who are in Christ, not later or after death. Therefore, the slogan of the women of our time who are demanding their freedom and rights from patriarchy are to be taken very serious. Even the challenges the government posed into the society to protect human right

violations should be valued. This discloses that in Christ a man is not more important than a woman, even if we agree that he is the head of the wife. He is not the head of the wife in Christ, as it is understood. For a woman will be saved by her faith in Christ, not by the faith of the man.

This text reveals to us that the language of exclusion is no longer relevant in our context. Nobody can tolerate words like chairman, spokesman, businessman, headman, etc. These words are offensive because they express titles that were exclusively for men. So we have to be careful now when we speak or deliver our speeches and sermons to our audience. Words like chairperson, spokesperson, etc. are constructed to avoid that exclusiveness.

This text gives the message of liberation, a total liberation the church has to speak about openly and clearly, more even than the politicians are trying to do. But the problem will be here: if the church is the source of gender discrimination, how can it speak this message clearly to the world? If the church (ELCIN) is keeping the traditional patriarchal cultures and male centred text of the Bible without carefully and critically exploring them, it will be hard for her to proclaim this message.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

This chapter conveys to us first, that in Matt. 19:1-9 Jesus does not condone the patriarchal law of divorce and the issuing of certificates of Jewish men to their wives. It shows that this practice is male centred and therefore cannot fit into the new community of Christians that Christ has established.

Secondly, the statement of apostle Paul in Gal. 3: 19-28 reveals that the unity that Paul is talking about is a liberation of humanity, the total liberation of every human being. It conveys that this is the new relationship every Christian is supposed to live in this new community of Christ, the church. It is not supposed to be considered as a spiritual life, but it has to be a life that has to be experienced now in this life in the community of believers. Any form of discrimination and any exclusive male privileges have to be relinquished in order for one to fit in this community.

However, I wonder if this is really what is happening in Christian communities. How do men, especially, Ovawambo men read and interpret these texts in their Christian communities?, is the question they will answer themselves. The next chapter will show us how they do that.

## **Chapter 5.**

### **Reading the Bible texts with Ovawambo men.**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section is about a description of the area in which men I have done Bible study with live. Also, it describes the people themselves. I will also describe how I collected my data. In addition to that the author explains the constraints that he came across during conducting Bible studies. The second section will deal with the summary of the reading responses of the two Bible study groups that I have done, and the debate held with the students at Paulinum Theological Seminary. I will also analyse their responses after summarising what they said. (The Bible study questions will be in details in the appendix). Lastly, I will give a description of how these men interpret the Bible texts and what the Bible seem for them, and examine the impact their responses had.

#### **5.2 Section one: The experience encountered in the Bible study groups.**

##### **5.2.1 Description of the area.**

The two groups that I made Bible study with are both from Okalongo community. Okalongo is a big area situated at the far north close to the Namibia/Angola borders. This community has been there for quite a long time now. The estimated period the second immigrated people have been there, since the first indigenous people have been chased away by war, is about more than seventy years now. Okalongo Lutheran Parish was established in 1940, according to the parish history that I read when I was a pastor of this parish. The first minister to serve this parish the retired Rev. Lukas Dama was placed there in 1942. He is still alive. Because the area is very big, about forty kilometres long, now there are three Lutheran congregations, one Catholic congregation and one Anglican

congregation. The name Okalongo Parish has changed to Onandjaba congregation in 1986 for the fact that there are other two Lutheran congregations in the same area.

I was born in this area and in this congregation. My father and mother are members of this congregation since their youth. They are still alive. I served this congregation for eight years after I was ordained in 1988. Onandjaba men are familiar to me because I was their pastor for the last eight years. They do not come together regularly. They are hard to organise. One can get few on sundays if one plans to discuss something very important.

In 1994 the government has built a Secondary school in the area. In 1995 it was officially opened by the President Sam Nuuyoma. I was one of the members of the first school board of this Secondary School, and I was re-elected at the end of 1995 before I came here in South Africa. My membership ceased in 1997 as I am in South Africa. The first principal of the Secondary School was my relative. He died in 1996, June, while I was in a school holiday in Namibia. The new principal is not familiar to me. He came there at the beginning of this year 1999. Some of the staff teachers I was familiar with are no longer there. The school has got just grade eleven (11) and twelve (12). This means that even the students I left there after four years are no longer there. Students who are not part of Onandjaba community do not know me, no I to them. To organise these two groups, therefore, was not easy for me.

## **5.2.2 Description of the groups.**

### **5.2.2.1 Group one: Onandjaba adult male group.**

Before I went to Namibia for this research, one of my colleagues who is studying in America sent me an E-mail telling me that the pastor of Onandjaba congregation, my successor, is with him there in U.S.A. He will spend three months there for a workshop. There was no pastor in the congregation. I had to phone the congregation secretary Mrs Hilaria Hamushila to inform men within two weeks that I need to have Bible study with them on the 18<sup>th</sup> of July, 1999. She has to announce this message

two sundays in the service because it is where she was able to get them. I am familiar to her because she became a secretary during my time of service in the congregation.

It was not easy for her to organise men in the absence of the pastor. Another thing is that once the pastor is absent the attendance of the congregants to the service is very poor. This came to affect those I met after the Bible study giving excuses that they did not hear the invitation. The organisation was very poor. I managed to get 27 men in that sunday. Seven of these men are teachers, our old retired pastor, 3 of them are businessmen and the other twelve are contract labour workers. Five of them are just ordinary males who do not get monthly income. The language people speak is Oshiwambo. The Bible study discussion was conducted in this language. All men were literate or semi-literate. They can read and write Oshiwambo, despite the difference in their education level. Most of them, their age is below sixty (60), except four of them who are beyond sixty, the retired pastor who is about 81yrs of age according to his I.D., one retired teacher who is 67yrs and two ordinary old men whose age is beyond seventy (70)

We met on Sunday after the service at about 2 o'clock. The place was the church building. The service was too long, as we know black services can take three to four hours long. Started at about 10'o clock we spent about three hours in the service. For this reason I was forced to spent only one hour with them, because they could not cope if I could keep them longer than that.

#### **5.2.2.2 Group two: Male students at Okalongo Senior Secondary School.**

To organise this group I again asked Mrs Hamushila to take a message to the circuit inspector in the area Mr. Uusiku. Communication with him was not possible for me, because there is no telephone in his office. There are just few telephone lines in the area. Even the Secondary School does not have a telephone. I could not communicate with the new principal there before, to organise the students for me. Mrs. Hamushila took the message to the inspector and he organise this for me. The Bible study was held on Monday the 19<sup>th</sup> of July, 1999 at 2 O'clock. When I got to the inspector's office

I could not find him there. He was visiting schools in the area. He left the message with his secretary that I should go to the principal, he expected me.

The receptionist of the school Mrs Tuyenikelao Nashipeta is well known to me. She introduced me to the new principal Mr. Daniel Damian. The welcome was good though he is so strict with students. He gave me 10 grade 12 students. He offered us a place in the school library. The students were also starting their afternoon study time at that time. We spent also one hour, because I was not allowed to spend longer than that with them.

Their age, I suppose, are between 18- 23yrs. It was my first time to meet all of them. They were not from Onandjaba area. The language we communicated is still Oshiwambo as this is the common language spoken in the whole Owambo area. The discussion was very good. Students were little bit shy at the beginning, but became very open towards the end of the session, especially after the report back of small groups. They were very open with commends at the end.

#### **5.2.2.3 Group three: Male students at Paulinum Theological Seminary.**

I use to communicate with the Seminary principal Dr. M. Nelumbu through E-mail. I requested him to allow me to have a discussion with male students at the Seminary in June. He told me students will be on holiday from the beginning of June until the beginning of July. Then we postponed the schedule to mid July.

Dr. Nelumbu is one of our church pastors who teaches at Paulinum Seminary. He also graduated his PhD here at the University of Natal in 1992. Students who are accommodated in the Seminary are from two Lutheran Churches in the country, my church ELCIN and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN). The medium instruction at the seminary is English, but we were forced to speak Oshiwambo because the other ELCRN students refused to join us. I was alerted by the principal before I met them that I should not expect all of them to come.

The debate was held on Tuesday the 13<sup>th</sup> of July, 1999, after the first morning periods. I was given the final year students. They were released between tea break and lunch. We started at 11h00 up to 12h30. Some female students joined us in the first discussion, but could not come at the second session. Students were very open to show their views. Because the debate was very much challenging, they decided to continue with the discussion with me in the afternoon from 16h00. We continued from 16h00 up to 18h00. The debate was in a good spirit. Students were very open to respond to my challenges, as well as other challenges from their fellow students.

### **5.2.3 Methods used to collect information.**

I conducted a Bible study with the two first group which took the form of a workshop. I had to make an introductory questionnaire first with them, in which I divided the questions of the Bible study into two sections.

Section A) Questions which are text orientated and section B) Questions which are contextual orientated questions.

The first section was done as an introductory section by me. First I read the questions before discussion to all two groups. Thereafter the group choose the secretary. I facilitated by asking questions and allow each and every response to be recorded.

The second section questions were divided to small groups which were formed according to the questions of this section. This worked well with the Secondary School students. However, the adult males at Onandjaba congregation decided to answer all questions of section B in each of the three small groups they have divided themselves. They choose their facilitator and secretary. I was just serving as a monitor and at the same time checked with them if they encounter a problem with the questions.

I had also a tape recorder with enough cassettes. Most of the information was tape recorded. I had to ask one member of the group to help to be closer to those who were responding, especially the

first section of the discussion people were little bit far from each other. But before I recorded them I had to ask their permission to allow their views recorded and to explain why I need them.( And explain the need of them been recorded) I managed to take some notes concerning the responses I heard.

The third group session was conducted different from the other two. There I was acting as a facilitator, as well as a challenger. I facilitated the group with the questions that I wanted them to answer. Then I challenged some of their answers to make them aware of what theological debates are about. This was not an intimidation to them as this did not create a feeling of being dominated by me. I allowed them to accept me as an equal student as they are and feel free to challenge me too. That is why the debate has to be continued because students were eager to ask lots of questions and share their views.

But when it comes to recording I have to confess that I was unfortunate because I was not able to tape record this debate. The tape recorder I used was at home far north where I scheduled the Bible study sessions. There was no one I can borrow a tape recorder from. The information I have are the one I have managed to write in my note book during the debate.

Despite the third group which is a theologian male group, the other two group men are not skilled readers of the Bible texts. I can mention only two men in the first group who are preachers in the congregation. The retired old pastor whose theological education was taught in Oshiwambo by the early missionaries and the retired teacher who was also taught by the missionaries. I do not underestimate their education and faith, but they do not read the text critically.

How do these men perceive the Bible? Men perceive the Bible as the Word of God. They do not differentiate between the Bible as a text and as a Word of God. They accepted everything written in as ordained by God, and correct. This understanding contributed much to the literal interpretation of texts of the Bible.

They do not realise that there are contradictions in the texts of the Bible. Some who realise this are not able to question why there are contradictions. Some may consider it as a taboo to question the Bible which is perceived as a holy book with holy writings. This feeling is confirmed also by the cover of the Bible which is written holy. Another thing is that many of the pastors who came into the ministry first were taught by the missionaries the manner in which they interpret the Bible texts. I call this as a chain of interpretation. The missionaries have much influence to these pastors' interpretations. The pastors' interpretations also influence ordinary male readers of the Bible.

#### **5.2.4 Constraints**

I have to confess here again that the time I planned to do my research was very much limited by the following factors:

The first thing is the family problem. My wife had an accident which took her annual leave to be a sick leave, and some extra weeks to recover. She was broken on her right arm. This had happened at the end of April. She had a plaster for six weeks. In mid June the plaster was taken off but still she was not totally recovered. I had to organise children for school and do everything in the house.

During June holiday she had to start working. She is on permanent night duty. I was not free to go for research to Namibia because there was nobody to stay with the children at night. All students were gone for holiday. I had to wait until one lady student comes from holiday. She is doing part time studies and she had one week session at the beginning of July. After finishing her session I asked her a favour to stay with the children for one and half week while I was gone away for my research. So I had to limit my research for only five days excluding the days I had to travel from Pietermaritzburg to Okalongo which takes three days to go and three days to come back (6 days).

The second thing is funds. I have a problem of funds since 1998. I have got no scholarship and funds for this research. It depended entirely on my family ( my wife in particular). We cannot even afford to hire somebody to stay with the children. I wanted to spent at least three to four weeks doing this

research, but I could not afford even to pay for the travelling. That is why my research was limited to one place Okalongo.

The above mentioned problems have affected my research plan. I could not conduct somebody to organise the other places I planned in Oshakati town 60km from Okalongo. My plan has failed on that part. I wish I could go for my research again for another two weeks, but due to financial constraints I am not able.

In spite of all constraints mentioned above, I managed to go to Namibia and did the Bible study and debate with Ovawambo males. As I have indicated earlier the focus of this study was on the specific gender in a specific community the Ovawambo men in Owambo society.

### **5.3 Section two: The summary of the reading responses of the Bible studies and the debate.**

#### **5.3.1 Reading Matt.19:1-9 with adult male group at Onandjaba rural congregation.**

Section A).

Question 1,2 and 3 are dealing with the role a man plays in the society. They are introductory questions just to provoke these men to explain how a man is considered to be a man, a father and as a husband without a wife in the society.

This group of males said that a man has to be "*Oshilumenhu*"( to be manly) showing what is expected for a traditional Oshiwambo man is to be, which is to be brave and strong. They listed all the qualities a man has to have in order to be considered a man in the community and the society as a whole.

On being a father they said that the father must have a house, a wife, children, a field, cattle and goats. He must show that he is the head of the house, able to supply the needs of the house. They have also acknowledged that this has become difficult for fathers now, because some have lost their

jobs by being retrenched, particularly the young fathers. Therefore they cannot provide all the needs of the household.

On the question of “*oupombolume*” (house husband-ness) they said that it is not easy, and traditionally, it is a humiliation for a man. Those who live like that were regarded as abnormal, because they cannot stay with people in their houses. They are nothing in the society. Nowadays there are men who live without their legal wives in their houses. They said that this happened because of Christianity. As Christians they are not allowed to marry more than one wife. To avoid staying alone in the house and be humiliated, some are together with their relatives, such as sisters and brothers who are not married.

It is clear that these men knew their tradition very well. They know the roles a man has to play in the society as a man and as a father. They also acknowledge that the time has changed where a husband can no longer marry as many wives as he can, and that he can no longer afford for all the responsibilities of the house. What they do not realise, I suppose, is that as time has changed and many things have also changed, they need also to be changed from the old customs to the new customs. What I have observed is that they are still covering themselves as possibly as they can.

On what the text is about. They suggested that the text is about testing, the pharisees tested Jesus; marriage, Jesus was teaching the value of marriage before God; divorce, why divorce was done; adultery, what Jesus meant about adultery.

I have noticed that none of them was able to suggest that this passage has something to do with men as I have suggested in my previous chapter.

On the main characters in the text.

They agree that the Pharisees were the main characters because they have initiated the test to test Jesus. They said that the Pharisees wanted to find him guilty in order to be able to kill him. One of them has added that they were jealous at his teaching because he was attracting more people to him

that they do. Another answer was that Jesus has also to be considered as the main character in the text because he was involved in the conversation with the Pharisees. He has a new teaching to teach them that proved he was not a false teacher and therefore they could not find him guilty.

Still at this point no one could suggest that because the main characters were the Pharisees and Jesus, the text is about men. I could not even suggest that because I wanted them to find it by themselves. But at this point I have added a question that I thought will enable them to grasp what was in my mind.

#### On what the text is all about.

They struggled for a while with the text to get an appropriate answer. However they came up with the answer which says that the text is talking about the pharisees with the old teaching of Moses and Jesus with his new teaching to them.

I could not challenge them more than that. I had just to leave it like that and continue with the next question which was done after the break.

These men were able to grasp the themes in the text, and were very well in doing so. They were also very good on finding who the main character of the text are. What I find they do not realize is that the text has something to do with men as nobody was able to suggest that, as I have even tried to direct them to the answer. This shows how ordinary readers are limited in thinking. They cannot think more deeply because they are not trained to do so. This shown to us how poor the poor and marginalised people read the Bible texts.

#### Section B)

##### On whether divorce is still practised in our context

All three groups have agreed that divorce is still in practice in our context.

### Who are the most to divorce others and the motive behind divorce.

The first group indicated that, women are the most who divorce their husbands. The reason they brought is that women are divorcing their husbands because they want to be free, to be independent. The other reason is that they want to rule over their husbands and be head of the household, the thing that never happened from the beginning of creation. Because men in the community do not tolerate this behaviour, they divorce them.

The second group said that divorce is brought by lack of cooperation between the spouses. Adultery is one of the causes but not so much. (I had a big question here as to why not so much? Is it not that because women do not have affairs with outside lovers as most of men do? I did not raise this question.) They said also that many women or wives are tempted to steal their husbands' property and money their husbands sent home while they are at work, i.e, while their husbands work in urban areas they used to sent money home to their wives to the rural areas. They explained that some wives misuse the money and, after the husband comes back home, could not explain how she spent the money as well as the other property. Because this property does not belong to the wife but to the husband, the wife has either to pay back the missing property and stay or go. This leads to broken marriages and divorce.

They argued that for economic reasons a woman agreed to marry a man who is rich or has reasonable property. But the moment he becomes poor, she divorces him and goes to another one who has something. What those women were interested in is only property that that person had. Once that is finished she is also finished with him. ( This reminds me of what I read in one of the books which says: "My mom used to say, when the money stops coming in the door, the love starts going out the window". (Farrell, 1993.44) This is what is referred here).

Gossiping: If the husband was gossiping with somebody about his wife and vice versa, sometimes this can bring tension in their relationship and cause mistrust, quarrelling and instability, that leads to divorce. To avoid breaking of marriages and divorce this group recommend that there must be peace, cooperation and forgiveness in marriage.

The third group said that mismanagement of the property is one of the causes that leads men to divorce their wives. They complained that women also divorce their husbands because they want to have their own houses in townships and cities where they will be independent. Lack of perseverance from some of them to the marriage problems leads them to leave their marriages behind. Some argued that many wives divorce or leave their husbands after their husbands have lost a job or become bankrupt.

They said also that some women misunderstood the policy which says that, for those married in community of property, if one dies, the property belongs to the one who is left behind. What they say is: "if the husband dies the property belong to the wife and children". This interpretation became a threat to some of the husbands who are the bread winners in the houses. Suspicion has been developed between some husbands and their wives, thinking that as many husbands are dying it is their wives who murder them in order to get their properties. According to Oshiwambo traditional belief, they are bewitching them. One man said that they even are praying for their husbands to die in order for them to get the properties.

I have already indicated in chapter 2 that the traditional Oshiwambo property belongs to the husband and the clan family. This is still the case here. The husband may have heard rumours from his friends and clan family members that his wife is trying to bewitch him, and this brings many marriages to an end.

I do not fully agree with their answers. What I observed as a problem is that men do not accept that the time has changed. They want to treat their wives in a traditional way in which a wife lives in subordination, to respect and to obey. Some marriage problems take place when a woman cannot cope with the traditional burdens she was supposed to bear, especially those women who are educated. What brings divorce on the side of men is small things, like disagreements between him and his wife. Traditionally, the wife has no right to suggest something directly to her husband or to answer her husband when he is angry. But nowadays this is no longer the case. The wife who does

not behave like that is to be dismissed from the house . This is what brings separations between the couples, if not a legal divorce.

On the side of the women, it is not true that women are divorcing their husband more than men do in our society. I know very few who have left their husband because it was really a hell for them to stay there. They were beaten and abused together with the children. The real present problem I have discovered when I was in Namibia is the fear of acquiring HIV/AIDS . Women, especially married women, are really faithful partners. Many of the husbands, especially those who go for contract work are not faithful. They have outside affairs with other women. When they come home some got HIV/AIDS and they transmitted it to their wives. Many faithful wives acquired this disease in this manner. The problem now is that many wives are demanding their husband to be tested for the disease, when they come back home, before they have sexual relationship. This became a great problem.

But during discussion those men did not bring it as a major problem and as one of the reason that brings separation between husbands and wives. They are hiding it because they knew they behave like that. It sounds normal for a man to have many affairs with outside women, because according to the tradition “*omulumenhu ombwa*” (a man is a “dog” who does not care).

#### On how they justify divorce with Jesus’ answer.

All groups could not justify the major causes of divorce they have mentioned as appropriate to the answer of Jesus. Nevertheless, they emphasised that what brings divorce and separation in marriages today is property rights. Some women whose husbands have got properties, pray for their husbands to die to get their properties. One man in this group stated clearly that because some pray like this their husbands died. That is why men are dying more that women are. The men who are clever enough divorce these wives beforehand when they realise that this is what they are trying to do to them. They have also suggested that culture should be respected by the people concerned. It is not right to adopt others’ cultures and make them theirs.

Some suggested that women should stay in their houses with their husbands and work together. They must also accept any situation they will find themselves in whether prosperity or bankruptcy. The others suggested that culture is the right way to solve this problem. People must keep their own cultures.

I found it very hard to listen to this statement and belief. However I also came to realise what causes them to talk like this. Before the independence of Namibia, those couples who married during colonial era did not have marriage certificates. Women whose husbands died were asked by companies where their husbands were working to produce marriage certificates in order to get the pension of their husbands. Many wives came to realise this and have started to look for marriage certificates beforehand. We recommend this during marriage ceremonies too. Because women took this more seriously than men, this has brought suspicion now between them. Women who are implicated in trying to murder their husbands are those who asked their husbands to get marriage certificates. They think that they want marriage certificates to be able to get a legal access to their properties when their husbands died.

These men did not see anything wrong with their attitude towards their tradition and culture. No one was able to blame men in the society who abuse their wives. It is quite evident that they do not justify reasons of divorce with Jesus' answer, but nobody has come up with a suggestion of self criticism. This is a traditional way men behave. They do not accept their fault easily. I have also learned that it is hard to convince a man to accept his mistakes if one is not stronger than him. This is regarded as manly behaviour, and this is how patriarchy has influenced men in our society.

### **5.3.2 Reading Gal.3:19-29 with the male students at Okalongo Senior Secondary School.**

#### Section A)

On the question of what the text is about, they said that the text is talking about the function of the law of Moses, justification by faith, children of God, baptism in Christ, unity in Christ.

### On the relationship between the law and the promise.

They agreed that there is a relationship between the law and the promise in the sense that all are working together to keep people in the right way. They said that the law serves as a mirror, and a reminder for the transgressors, while Jesus who is the promise, forgives the sins that the law has revealed to a transgressor.

On the difference between the law and Christ, they agree that there is a difference, in the sense that the law reveals sin, but cannot save from sin, as Christ does. They said also that the law does not give faith like Christ. They all agree that Christ is the only one who gives faith, saves and forgives sins.

It is quite clear that these young men could follow the text very well. I was impressed by their knowledge of being able to differentiate between the law and Christ. They also show that they have faith which is from Christ but not from the law. It seems to me that some of these grade 12 men are leaders of others in the school, such as SRC ( Students Representative Council) members, or S.C.M (Students Christian Movement) leaders at the school.

### Section B) Contextual questions

On whether there are still laws in the community, this group agreed that there are laws.

On who made them, for whom and why, they all agree that men are responsible for establishing laws to be obeyed by all people in the community. They said that if there are no laws in the community there will be chaos. The laws are made to prevent disorder in the society. They emphasised that the man is responsible for establishing laws because he was created first and he is the head in the community. It was very interesting to watch them blaming the government for allowing women to leadership positions. They oppose women leadership saying it is untraditional.

It comes clear here again in the answers of this group that patriarchy has much influence in their minds. They confirm that men are responsible to establish laws. They were against the new policy

of equality which the government has introduced in the society. They perceive it as a mistake which will lead people into trouble. It is quite clear they do not accept women leaders in the society. I was eager to hear positive reactions, when one student said things have changed nowadays. I thought he will say that new policies have come and should be accepted . This was not the case. They are blaming the government for introducing the new policy of equality. This is what I am really looking for in my research, how the system of patriarchy has influenced males in our community and society as a whole.

On the question whether Christ has established any law, the second group confirms it. However, they were confused by the Old and New Testaments. They could not distinguish between the law of Moses and the law of Christ. They perceive both as one and the same thing. Here they confused the law and Christ. They consider Christ to be the law, and at the same time as the one who gave the law to Moses, and again as the one who gave the law to men in the society. This group is also against democracy and equality. They also do not trust women leadership, and they said that women are betrayers, who are used by the devil to betray men.

My head was hard to listen to their answer, though I did not show it to them. They misunderstood the question. They could not remember the law of love Christ has established and gave it to his disciples, the new commandment that sets everybody free and unites Christians in faith. What happened with the first group is also appearing here again. This group is also against democracy and the policy of equality in the society. They regard women as betrayers, who should not be given their rights. The very shocking point they made is the belief that women are used by the devil to betray men. This agrees with what men perceive women in our culture that one cannot trust them fully, and that women are very dangerous, they bewitch men. This group did not trust women leadership too. Again this shows how patriarchy is dominating their thinking and their belief.

On what it means to put on Christ, the third group men see baptism as the cloth for putting on Christ. Baptism is considered a ritual for clothing people with Christ. To be born again through baptism is to wear Christ.

On what it means there is neither Greek, nor Jew... this group perceive this unity as a spiritual unity. They do not think it in terms of happening in this life. They cling on the differences of genders in the culture.

What I have noticed in both Bible study groups is the deeply rooted patriarchy that one cannot convince them in one day. Bible study groups like this cannot be liberative if the facilitator did not train these people before hand to accept criticism and be critical. There is a need to explain where there are misinterpretations like the creation story. This creation story in Gen.2 has created much problems in the minds of men because they believe the man was created first and the women later. That is why I said that we (men) preachers are accountable for these beliefs we have planted into the minds of the people, and we are responsible for correcting these mistakes as liberated theologians. We cannot expect these ordinary males to change unless we have changed first from preaching these kinds of sermons.

That is why my first priority group in the church is the pastors. I would like to have Bible study discussions with them, and symposium debates, so that we can have a clear understanding of what the gospel is saying. This is what I did when I visited the Paulinum Theological Seminary students in July 1999.

### **5.3.3 A debate on the question of patriarchy with male students at Paulinum Theological Seminary.**

On the definition of patriarchy, I had to give a short definition because nobody was able to define it.

On how they understand the system of patriarchy, they said that the father is perceived as a leader, in the society, and as the head of the household as from creation. They all agree on this point with the exception of four ladies who were there from the beginning of the debate.

On the question as to whether they knew that this system has been challenged.

They were all aware of the challenges posed against this system. They knew that the government has challenged it with its new policies for accommodating women into leadership positions. They were also aware of the women movement, especially the feminist theology which is taught in their Seminary, which challenges this system in the church. However, many of these male students were not happy with the challenges of feminism. They were very much against them. They showed it by complaining that the feminists are wrong because they want to change the Bible.

They were not aware of the fact that there are many groups of feminism. I had to explain the four groups of feminism that I quoted from the book of Schneiders and explain which branch of feminism want to change the Bible.

During the course of the discussion some students were still defending patriarchy by giving references from the Bible. One student came up with the argument that if patriarchy means father rule, then it is right and there is nothing wrong with it. He referred to the creation story emphasising that Adam was created first before Eve, and therefore he was made to rule all the things on earth, the woman included.

Again here I had to challenge this belief of the creation story. I had a book of Gerald West (Contextual Bible Study, 1993) with me where I have quoted his ideas on this creation story, which are not supporting this belief that a male human being was created first before the female human being. His interpretation gave another perspective which shows that the first human being was without sex, and that it is from the event and process of the creation of a female human being, the two sexual beings came into being. I also realised that they were not aware of this interpretation of West.

Another challenging question from one of them was, why the apostle Paul had to quote this creation story in his letters? This student had a belief that Paul was holy, full of the holy spirit and could not do mistakes. I had to challenge him for this belief, and make him aware that all human beings

without exception of Bishops and Popes, can do mistakes. They lived and were influenced by their own contexts and interests that caused them to speak or write. I had also explained that the Bible does not fall from heaven. It was produced by human beings who were from different contexts, and who had different interests and experiences.

At the end of the debate many students were showing positive attitude towards the challenges of patriarchy. One student mentioned that they were not taught that there are many different groups of feminism. He was not even aware of the new interpretation of the creation story. Many also confirmed his reaction, saying, if they have heard this before I came to them they could have no problems with the challenges of feminism. I think the debate was fruitful for me to watch these reactions, and it strengthened my courage to challenge this system of patriarchy.

## **6. Final Conclusion**

Patriarchy in Oshiwambo society is not recognised by many men as the problem that needs their attention. It is not considered as the problem that humiliates and suppresses others, like apartheid. The emergency of challenges against patriarchy in a Namibian context is not welcomed with open hands by all Namibian men, especially Ovawambo men. They are uncomfortable with the changes that are introduced in the Namibian society. Some consider these changes as a threat to their traditional male dignity and privileges.

In my first chapter I have shown how patriarchy should be considered a problem in the society and in the church. I also discovered the necessity to organise men in the church to discuss this issue, which call the need of establishing contextual Bible study sessions for men in the church.

In my second chapter I gave a cultural historical background of how Oshiwambo man is perceived and trained in this culture. I have shown how tough and difficult he is expected to be, not only against the problems he will encounter in nature, but against other human beings as well. We have learned how he can be unfaithful to his wife and children. We have also learned how more important he is to his clan family rather than to his wife and children. I have also pointed out how difficult is this manly life to a man himself, how destructive this manly behaviour is for him. Because sometimes the unspoken problems of men according to manly behaviour, ends with self destruction. At the end I have indicated that this system of patriarchy is still prevailing in our society, and there is a need of change which is not realised yet.

In chapter three I dealt with the challenges that the government of Namibia (and of South Africa) has posed to this system of patriarchy. I have explained the changes that took place in the government policies that abolished all forms of discriminations against humanity in the society. I have explained how the government has introduced women into leadership positions for the first time in the Namibian history.

I also highlighted some challenges from feminist perspective. Though many Namibian women did not write their challenges towards patriarchy, I encountered two had who said something on the question of patriarchy. This explained to us that Namibian women are also aware of the problem of patriarchy and they are fighting for its eradication in the society, in a political as well as in a religious level. I have observed how they embraced this freedom of expression in the society.

At the end of this chapter, I have also highlighted some male responses towards these challenges in general, how some are positive and how negative others are to the challenges. Though *Ovawambo* men did not write any of these responses, they do not hide their negative attitudes towards the challenges in the country. Their reaction are explained in chapter 5.

The patriarchal system of the Jewish law was challenged by Jesus during his ministry. This is one of the reasons that contributed to the hostility of the Pharisees towards him. In the fourth chapter I have made an exegesis on the two texts that I have chosen for contextual Bible study. This exegesis was done from a liberated male perspective. This is the perspective that I suggest will open up man's conscience.

In the text from Matthew I have demonstrated how Jesus has challenged the problem of divorce. I have pointed out how it functions for the male privileges, and neglect the women. I clearly have stated that Jesus's answer reveals that this law is mainly for men. Men benefited from it by having freedom of divorcing their wives, while women suffered from being divorced and sent away. One can imagine the situation in which the children of the divorced wife had gone through. They suffered too.

This applies even to children of our time who find themselves in these conditions of separated or divorced parents. It is not an easy situation to deal with. Jesus has challenged this freedom of men. I suggested that his answer was not only a liberation of the women and children from this kind of oppression. His aim is also to liberate males from this oppressive system. This has not been realised

by many of us, especially African men, who still want to keep our tradition and claim that culture is static. But the static of patriarchy in culture is no longer to be tolerated.

In the other text (from Galatians) I have pointed out how the apostle Paul was trying to demonstrate the unity of every human being in Christ. This unity has reflected the freedom that Christ brought into the world for every one who believes in him, irrespective of his/her colour, race, sex or disability. I have suggested that any form of discrimination, whether racial, gender, status, etc do not fit in Christ. If it does not belong to Christ, it does not belong in the community of the people who believe in Christ and church.

I have also suggested that to put on Christ through baptism, presupposes putting off the old being or life which includes the traditional way of life that discriminates others. Patriarchy as a form of discrimination has to be relinquished by all males who belong to this group, and those who want to fit in this group, otherwise we will be like a foolish man who came into the wedding ceremony without the wedding dress.

A reading of a text from a liberated male perspective should not be expected to be welcomed by all males in the society. For it intended not to bring new things that people are not aware of, but it will create a tension for those who do not want to give up their manly tradition, while at the same time liberates those males who recognised how oppressive patriarchy is.

The aim of chapter five was an attempt to see how far patriarchy has influenced *Ovawambo* men in their interpretation of the Bible texts. This has been demonstrated by what they have answered on the chosen texts and given questions. Patriarchy is really dominating males in the society. This has been proven by the reading responses they have made from group one up to group 3 of the male theologians. This illustrates again to us that as long as the reading and interpretation of the Bible texts are only in the hands of the preachers, who the majority are males, and who are influenced by patriarchy, and there is no Bible study sessions for both ordinary males and females, the ordinary readers will continue to be dis-empowered by the readings. But as long as the trained readers of the

Bible are committed to motivate people to attend Bible study sessions and facilitate their readings, change will be discovered and people will be empowered to fight against all dominating forces in the society including patriarchy.

I have also suggested that these people read the Bible pre-critical and they accept the Bible as a holy book without mistakes. They do not know how the Bible was produced. They do not even know the distinction between the Bible as a text and as a word of God.

Reading the two texts with *Ovawambo* men proved that they do not understand how patriarchy is wrong and how oppressive they are to others. It was even difficult for them to question their roles because they believe are from God.

Their responses do not sound oppressive to them because they use to read the texts in a patriarchal way. Men who are questioning patriarchy are looked with big eyes. There is no doubt that the Bible is produced by males and many texts are patriarchal. Therefore men who were brought up in a patriarchal culture find it (patriarchy) useful to confirm their culture. This applies to Oshiwambo culture. There is no clear reflection of men being liberated from a patriarchy culture.

The responses made by these two males Bible study groups proved that these people need trained leaders who can help them and facilitate their readings. It is a call for New Testament theologians to help both males and females to realise what the true freedom in Christ really is.

Doing this Bible studies to these males my intention was not to challenge them. I was not even trying to convince them. My aim was to explore how far patriarchy is rooted in them and how they interpret the Bible texts. But if I would have a chance again with them, I would introduce the critical reading method to them and challenge them as I did with the Paulinum male theologians. I was encouraged by their challenges and their concluding responses which indicated to me that the debate was fruitful.

I want to conclude with some suggestions made by others, that I find very helpful and encouraging, especially for those of us who are striving for the well being of everybody in the church. Family relations are so important because families are the backbone of the healthy society. If the family life is unhealthy, then the society is also unhealthy and the church as well.

The changes that we need in the church as well as in the society and the challenges posed to the system of patriarchy are not meant to disrupt family life, but are meant to strengthen families in a new way.

There is a need of mutual respect and appreciation as Barnhouse writes:

For the derivation of both principles to be applied appropriately to life's challenges, there must be a relationship of mutual respect between men and women.

They must learn to know about cherish the difference in their outlook, but also to recognise and cultivate the similarities of their common goals. As men and women they may differ considerably in the style and technique of approaching those goals.

They must learn not to let those differences be a source of contention, but to appreciate the fullness of their complementarity. (Barnhouse 174:74)

Masyena also said:

There is a need for men and women to cooperate on the basis of mutuality. God's plans of differentiation of God's creatures was not meant to disadvantage others but that each sex will enrich the other. (Masyena 1995: 191)

"It is true that when the world view of a particular society changes, existing moral instruction may cease to be appropriate and may need radical reworking." (Draper. 1989:39)

Our world view today does not allow moral instructions that oppress women and children. The old moral should be done away with by every person in Namibia.

But the need of radical reworking of the old moral instruction is very crucial in this time where change is needed in every aspect of life whether social, economical and spiritually. It is also true that culturally, initiation for boys and girls has been always a time for moral instructions of the youth, as they are prepared to enter into adulthood (Draper 1989:40).

Baptism was the moment of transition for the new members of the Christian community. But what symbol will provide a time of probation and a moment of transition for males of our society to be able to understand the change from old moral instructions of colonial and patriarchal era to the new era?

We need a time of liminality according to Turner's model and of in-betweenness according to Draper. (1989:40) Men of our time are at this time of in-betweenness I suggest. They need the instructions and the liminal place, as I view it. My suggestion therefore is that a contextual Bible study will serve as a place of liminality for this purpose.

## **7. APPENDICES**

### **7.1 APPENDIX I**

#### **Bible Studies In Workshop Design**

**Male group at Onandjaba rural congregation.**

**Section A) Reading And a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife Matt. 19:1-9.**

**Question 1: What does it mean to be a man?**

**Answer:** A man is suppose and expect to be "*Oshilumenhu*" i.e. to be manly showing the expected traditional qualities of a man. A man should be brave enough and not coward, strong, not weak and should be able to face difficulties.

**Question 2: What does it mean to be a father?**

**Answer:** A father must own a house. He must have a wife and children (if it is possible) He must have a field to plough in order to produce enough food ( enough millet ) for the family. He must have enough cattle and goats. He must be the head of the house. As a Christian father you have to attend Sunday services regularly and make sure all the inhabitants are following you and obeying you. You should supply the needs of the household. You should assist them financially, which is a problem nowadays because many fathers have lost their jobs, especially the young fathers who have been

retrenched. The old fathers have retired and they rely on the small pension they get to support their relatives.

**Question 3: Is it easy for a husband to be a “*Omupombolume*” ( to live alone without a wife in his house)?**

**Answer:** No. According to our tradition and culture you are nothing and your house is not recognised as a house. Once you do not have a wife you will stay alone, people will not come to stay with you or even visit you. You suffer all the burdens of life, you cook for yourself, you do all the house work yourself which a man in our tradition are not suppose to do and are not even brought up to live in such a life.

One “*omupombolume*” man said, we are forced by circumstances to stay like this. As Christians we are not allowed to marry more than one wife as traditional was the case. My wife has left me and refused to come back. I cannot afford to have a legal divorce. I cannot afford to have and to pay a lawyer. Therefore we are forced to live like this. Fortunately, I have got my sister who is not married and has agreed to stay with me. She stays with her children in my house. This help to show that there are people in my house.

**Question 4: What is this text about?**

**Answer:** The text is about testing, the pharisees tested Jesus; marriage, Jesus was teaching the value of marriage before God; divorce, why divorce was done; adultery, what Jesus meant about adultery.

**Question 5: Who were the main characters in the text?**

**Answer:** The Pharisees were the main characters because they have initiated the test to test Jesus. They wanted to find him guilty in order to be able to kill him. They were jealous at his teaching because he was attracting more people to him than they do.

The other answer was: Jesus has also to be considered as the main character in the text because he was involved in the conversation with the Pharisees. He has a new teaching to teach them that proved he was not a false teacher and therefore they could not find him guilty.

**Question 6: If the text is about marriage and divorce, and the main characters are the Pharisees and Jesus what does this say to us the text is all about?**

This was a question that allowed them to struggle for a while with the text to get an appropriate answer. However they came up with the answer.

**Answer:** The text is talking about the Pharisees with the Old teaching of Moses and Jesus with his new teaching to them.

Section B)

This section is a contextual questions section, where I had asked the participants to relate the text into their present context. It was discussed in small groups. I have asked the participants to feel free to bring what they think the text is saying in the context. I had also to facilitate them with two questions that each of the three groups has discussed.

**Question 7:(a) Do we still have divorce practices in our contexts? (b) If yes, who divorce others and why?**

**Question 7 ( a):**

**Answer:** All three small groups have agreed that divorce is still in practice in our context.

**Question 7 (b):**

**Answer:** The first group said: Women are the most who divorce their husbands. The reason is that they want to be free, to be independent. The other reason is that they want to rule over their husbands and be head of the household, the thing that never happened from the beginning of creation. Because men in the community do not tolerate this behaviour, they divorce them.

The second group said: What brings divorce between the husband and wife is:

1. Lack of cooperation between the spouses when they discuss something.
2. Adultery is one of the causes but not so much.
3. Stealing or theft: Many women or wives are tempted to steal their husbands' property and money their husbands sent home while they are at work, i.e, while their husbands work in urban areas they used to sent money home to their wives to the rural areas. Some wives misuse the money and, after the husband comes back home, could not explain how she spent the money as well as the other property. Because this property does not belong to the wife but to the husband, the wife has either to pay back the missing property and stay or go. This always leads to broken marriages and divorce.

4. Economic reasons: For economic reasons a woman agreed to marry a man who is rich or has reasonable property. But the moment he becomes poor, she divorces him and goes to another one who has something. Those women were interested only in property that that person had. Once that is finished she is also finished with him.

5. Gossiping: If the husband was gossiping with somebody about his wife and vice versa, sometimes this can bring tension in their relationship and cause mistrust, quarrelling and instability, that leads to divorce. To avoid breaking of marriages and divorce this group recommend that there must be peace, cooperation and forgiveness in marriage.

The third group said:

1. Mismanagement of the property is one of the causes that leads men to divorce their wives.

2. Women also divorce their husbands because they want to have their own houses in townships and cities where they will be independent.

3. Lack of perseverance from some of them to the marriage problems leads them to leave their marriages behind.

4. Many divorce or leave their husbands after their husbands have lost a job or become bankrupt.

5. Some women misunderstood the policy which says that: For those married in community of property, if one dies, the property belongs to the one who is left behind. What they say is, if the husband dies, the property belong to the wife and children. This interpretation became a threat to some of the husbands who are the bread winners in the houses. Suspicion has been developed between some husbands and their wives, thinking that as many husbands are dying it is their wives who kill them in order to get their

properties. Oshiwambo traditional belief is that they are bewitching them. One man said that they even are praying for their husbands to die on order for them to get the properties.

**Question 8: How do we justify divorce or broken marriages with Jesus' answer?**

**Answer:** The first group said: We do not justify the major causes of divorce we have mentioned as appropriate to the answer of Jesus. Nevertheless, we emphasise that, what brings divorce and separation in marriages today is property rights.

Mr. Gebhard said: Some women whose husbands have got properties, pray for their husbands to die to get their properties. Because some pray like this their husbands died. That is why men are dying more that women are. Men who are clever enough divorce these wives beforehand when they realise that this is what they are trying to do to them. Culture should be respected by the people concerned. It is not right to adopt others cultures and make them ours.

The second group said: We, like Jesus, do not support divorce. But to avoid divorce taking place, wives should behave in a proper way before their husbands and work together. They must also accept any situation they will find themselves in whether prosperity or bankruptcy. They should always remember that the husband is and will be always the head of the house.

The Third group said: It is clear that what causes divorce and separation today is not related to the problem Jesus has mentioned in the text. But the reasons we have mentioned earlier are the major causes of divorce nowadays, which are not right and were not suppose to cause divorce. Culture is the right way to solve this problem. People must keep their own cultures.

## 7.2 APPENDIX II

**Male students at Okalongo Senior Sec. School.**

**Gal.3:19-29 In Christ there is neither male nor female.**

**Question 1: What is the text about?**

**Answer:** The text is talking about the function of the law of Moses, justification by faith, children of God, baptism in Christ, unity in Christ.

**Question 2: What is the relationship between the law and the promise?**

**Answer:** Responses were: The law was given first to discipline people and guide them in the right way. One says that the law was given first like a mirror so that people may watch themselves if they are in the right path or not. The law functions as a reminder when you transgress it, it reminds you that you have cross the borders. They said also that Christ who is the promise did not abolish the law but he fulfills it. Christ reveals faith, the law reveals sin. But both are good. When the law reveals sin to you, then you run to Christ to be forgiven.

**Question 3: Is there a difference between the law and Christ?** (This question was just provoked in the discussion. It is where it came into my mind.)

**Answer:** One student said: There is a difference, because the law kills but Christ saves. The law was unable to save people. The other one said: According to v.23. There was not faith under the law because the

verse said, “before faith came..” which means before there was only law, and before Christ came into the world there was no faith. Faith came with Christ. The other one supported this by saying: I want just to confirm what my brother has said that before Christ came there was no faith in the law, because in v.23, it is said that we were under the discipline of the law waiting for faith to be revealed. And after Christ has come faith has come as we confess that we believe in Christ. We do not say we believe in the law.” Then I said to sum up: The law does not bring faith but it is only Christ who bring faith into the world, they all agree.

### **Section B)**

This section was also a contextual section and was done after the break. The group was divided into three small groups. Each group was given a question to discuss. The last two questions were done with the whole group.

#### **Question 4: Do we still have laws in our communities? If yes, who made them and why?**

- Answer:**
1. The first answer was a confirmation of the first sub question. “Yes we do have laws in our communities.
  2. Men or males are responsible for establishing them.

To the question for whom, they said: For all the people in the community to obey what is right and avoid what is wrong. Then I said; why do we need laws if Christ has set us free from the law? They said: Yes, we need laws because if we do not have laws there will be chaos in the community. Everyone can do whatever he wants because there is no laws. The government has to establish laws to

protect people and prevent chaos. In the scripture it is said that the law was given to show the people what sin is all about. So the law put people together to work together.

**Question 5: Why men are responsible for establishing the laws?**

**Answer:** They said: A man is the head of the house. He was given power to rule everything on earth. That is why he is responsible for the well being of the society.

They have also added saying: Things nowadays have changed. Men became irresponsible. They allow women to have authority and rule, the thing that never happened at the beginning of creation. One student said: To give a woman the right to rule is inapplicable and it is just human mistake like other human mistakes. Because from the beginning a man was given the right to rule, not a woman. The governments of today are doing these mistakes, because they are not devoutly Christians.

**Question 6: Did Christ establish any law? If yes, what kind of law and how does it work? If no, why not?**

**Answer:** Yes, Christ has established laws and gave them to Abraham and his children and there is a promise which says; “to Abraham and his offspring. This law is revealed in Christ, and Christ gave to men to be mediators between God and people. Like as it is said that from the beginning God created a man and gave him authority to rule over creation, so the law is given to a man to rule over his family.

Democracy and equality is against culture and is not acceptable. A woman was deceived in the garden by the snake and therefore betrayed her husband. This is similar to what is happening now. Women are betraying men on top by asking their rights, and if men are not clever enough they will find themselves in the same problem in which Adam found himself in the garden. The devil uses women to betray men. Their question was: Why did the snake not go to Adam, but to Eve? I could not argue here with them, I allowed them to be free to express what they think.

**Question 7: What does it mean to put on Christ at our time?**

**Answer:** It means that all of us who are baptised into faith in Christ have put on Christ. We have to keep this sign within us as the law of Christ. It is through baptism that we came to believe Christ as our redeemer. Christ is given to us as the door for our salvation, as he himself has said that, no one goes to my father except through me. Therefore we are a new creation, born again Christians.

**Question 8: What does it mean to us: In Christ there is neither male nor female?**

**Answer:** What it means there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female in v,28 is that all those who are baptised in Christ are united in one body which is Jesus Christ. ( I wonder how they understand this unity. They understand it as if it is unity above not here. I, as usual, accepted the answers.)

### 7.3 APPENDIX III

#### **A debate on the question of patriarchy with male students at Paulinum Theological Seminary.**

The first question I asked was: **What is patriarchy, or what does the word patriarchy mean?**

Nobody was able to give a definition. Then I explained that the term means 'father rule'. It is also related to the ancestors, like in the Old Testament God is called God of the fathers, of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who are the ancestors of the people of Israel.

The second question was: **How do we understand the system of patriarchy?**

The answers were: The father is a leader, ruler, governor, instructor or commander in the society. He is the head of the house. Everybody agreed, except the four ladies who were there just observing, they were not happy about the answer. They came up with a challenging question, How can one justify this system biblically? I welcomed their question, and I promised them it will be answered in the course of the discussion. There are similar questions coming up.

The third question was: **This system has been challenged now. Who has challenged it?**

Responses were:

1 The government of Namibia has challenged it by introducing women into leadership positions in the government. Now we have got women ministers, town mayors and councilors which was not the case in the past.

2. Women or feminists have challenged it, especially in the church where they are still fighting for their rights to be recognised by the church leadership to be placed in decision making bodies and leadership positions. ( This answer provoked many questions that led to the hot debate. But before I got to these questions, the related question to the last question was:)

**What makes ELCIN church to ordain women into ministry?** Were there internal pressures, external pressures or was it from the church itself? In other words what makes ELCIN to change her constitution?

I said I had got no idea as to what made them to do that. What I know is that before 1992 the constitution did not allow women's ordination. I have to find it out from the church office. I believe they have got the answers. But I suspect there was something. When I went to the church office I could not get the general secretary because they had a church board meeting. I sent a questionnaire to him which he refused to answer. Then I leave it like that because I do not have the answers.

The question that led us into the debate was on feminists. Many male students at Paulinum Seminary were unhappy about the way feminism was taught at the seminary. They argued that feminist theology is trying to change the Bible and culture which is not acceptable.

I said there are many different kinds of feminism. **How many of them have you learned, that challenge patriarchy?** They said they do not know if there are many. What they have observed is only that the feminist are trying to change the Bible, they want God to be called mother God etc. Then I said what I learned is that there are four groups of feminism: the liberal feminism, cultural feminism, socialist feminism and radical feminism.

Then I explained for their request the four feminisms. The liberal feminism are mainly concerned with the political and legal situation of women in the society, and they are striving for equal rights for women in a socio-political system.

The cultural feminism is concerned with the idea that women have special contribution for a better world. They argue that women have certain potentials like moral superiority to men, they are peace makers, egalitarians less ambitious and driven, more person oriented, more cooperative, less competitive, more nurturing etc. than man are. They consider patriarchy as predominantly for male

values in culture. Their aim therefore is to influence both women and men for cultural transformation.

Socialist feminism is concerned with the economic class structures which are based on the means of production. They define patriarchy as a set of social relations among men, supported by their control over women. This control of women united all men beyond race and class.

Radical feminism defines patriarchy as the basic dominative social system which is the ground and paradigm for all forms of social domination. They regard patriarchy as the social system of father rule which is the basic form of social organization in every historical society. Catholic radical feminism has emerged from this movement. (Schneiders, 1991. 6-25) I said this is the branch that is most concerned with religion. It is also from this branch that some feminists, not all, want to change the Bible. Not all feminists are radical and not all of them want to change the Bible. Some have vowed to remain in the church, endure the pain and struggle until the church becomes the discipleship of equals which Jesus initiated. ( Here I referred again on Schneiders' argument on page 34, and the emphasis Teresa Okure has made during the feminist course I attended.)

One student came up with the argument that if patriarchy means father rule, then this is related to what has happened from the beginning of creation of man. Adam was created first and then Eve from Adam. So Adam was given the right to rule not Eve.

I said hang on. We are theologians here and I am glad that we all are students and still studying. But we have to be careful when we make our references. Do you remember that there are two creation stories in the Old Testament? Do you remember which one did Jesus quoted when he was asked divorce by the Pharisees?

I am not an Old Testament student but I have got a very good interpretation of one of our Old Testament lecturer of this creation story you have just raised. It says that Gen.2; does not say literally that God created a male person first. What it says is that God created *ha-adam* of the dust

of the *ha-adama*. The literal translation is needed now for these two Hebrew nouns. *Ha-adama* is literally translated as **the earth**. How about *ha-adam*? It does not mean a man or a male person. The correct translation as suggested here means **the earth creature**. The better translation of this verse should be: "And Yahweh God formed the earth creature of dust from the earth and breathed into its nostrils the breath of life and the earth creature become a living being".(West,1993.55)

The creation story of a woman Gen.2:21 is translated:

And Yahweh God build the rib which he took from *ha-adam* (the earth creature) into *issa* (woman) and brought her to *ha-adam*, V.22-23. And *ha-adam* said: This finally, bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh. This shall be called *issa* (woman) because from *is* (man) was taken this.(West, 1993.56) We have to take note that it is only at the creation of a woman that the two different sexual beings came into being, *issa* a female person(woman) and *is* a male person (man). They all are from one undifferentiated being *ha-adam* the earth creature. The I said if this is the literal translation of this passage how was a male person created first? An then a woman? What took place here is just a process of separation that brought about two sexual beings at the same time. Nowhere in the Old Testament is it mentioned that a male human being was created first. Unless one quotes the misinterpretation of this passage that the apostle Paul has made in one of his letters.

One student asked: Do you say that the apostle Paul was wrong by quoting this passage in his letter? Before I confirm my answer I asked him; How do you understand apostle Paul? Was he a special man? He said; He was an apostle who was guided by the Holy Spirit.

Then I said; You are right he was guided by the holy Spirit, but this does not made him half human being. He was a full human being who was able to do mistakes, as we all do. I am not convinced that a person like apostle Paul, a bishop or a Pope is mistakes free. The other thing to be in one's mind when doing exegesis is the situation where that particular text was produced. Each and every interpreter of the Bible stands in a situation and has got his/her own interests in mind and needs. The Bible itself is shaped by the interests and experiences of those who produced it.(West,1993.20) It does not fall from the vacuum. It is therefore our responsibility as theologians to find out during our

studies what where the situations in which the writers of the Bible texts were, and what makes them to write or speak like that.

One student said: Times are changing and situations are also changing. We do not have always to relay on what is in our cultures only. We are defending patriarchy because of our traditional background. But if we find ourselves in other situations we will accept those situations and do the work that men in our culture never did.

I said I have got experience now where I am in South Africa with my family. I never cooked for myself until I went to the university. There we have self catering. It was a shame of many of us, because we never knew how to cook. My wife is working night shifts. We have got no one to cook and do the washing. I have to do that for the whole family and cook for my wife and my children. But if I was at home I can talk like you. But what I came to realise is that these activities did not break our marriage. It strengthened it. I came to judge myself because when I took food to my wife, she really showed me the appreciation I never showed her when she gave me food. So I do not feel humiliated by cooking. Our love is just strengthened. If patriarchy is wrong, it is wrong. We are wasting our time by defending it. Let us accept the change and work together for the betterment of our future.

Though the discussion was so long it became very fruitful at the end. One student explained that they were not taught feminist theology like what I explained to them at the Seminary. It was like a kind of accusation between males and female students. That created a tension between them. What makes me happy was to hear that if they had an explanation like that in the past they would not have had problems with feminism.

My last commend was : Patriarchy is men's problem. It is not only women's. We need to discuss it and understand it so that we may be able to solve it together with women. And unless we are clear as to why this system is questioned, especially we the theologians, this problem will take more and

more years until we realise it is wrong, or may be forced to be changed like what happen with the ordination of women in our church.

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