

Exploring Figurative Language in Mutendas' Contemporary Song 'Vhutshilo Vhu a Mona u Fana na Vhili' (Life Turns Like a Wheel)



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ABSTRACT

Mutendasi, a prominent Tshivenda folk musician, is renowned for his profound use of poetic language and his commitment to cultural preservation. This paper examines the role of figurative language in one of his most linguistically and philosophically rich compositions, “*Vhutshilo vhu a mona u fana na vhili*” (“Life turns like a wheel”). Anchored in the Cognitive Linguistics framework, particularly Conceptual Metaphor Theory, the study employed qualitative textual analysis to unpack metaphorical and rhetorical devices in the song. The analysis reveals how these devices serve as tools for cultural expression, philosophical reflection, and social commentary. The paper underscores Mutendasi’s work as both artistic expression and a vessel for indigenous knowledge, contributing to the broader discourse on Tshivenda oral literature and music.

Keywords: Tshivenda music, Mutendasi, figurative language, metaphor, cultural identity, oral literature, Conceptual Metaphor Theory.

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INTRODUCTION

Mutendasi, a celebrated Tshivenda folk song performer, is widely recognised for his invaluable contributions to the preservation and promotion of Vhavana cultural heritage. Through his music, he gives voice to traditional values, social norms, moral teachings, and lived experiences of his community. His songs are not merely artistic expressions; they serve as oral repositories of indigenous knowledge, societal observations, and communal memory.

According to Mafela, a folk song is music that is passed down orally from one generation to another.¹ It is often composed and shared within tightly knit communities and functions as a mirror reflecting the values, beliefs, and emotions of the people. These songs are deeply rooted in communal life and are used to commemorate significant events, offer moral instruction, celebrate traditions, and, at times, comment on societal issues. Green highlights that popular musicians often learn informally by ear and within social contexts rather than through formal notation or structured education.²

Procter explains that folk music includes songs that either replicate traditional forms or have organically developed within rural communities as a reflection of their way of life and geographical environment.³ Folk songs are closely intertwined with the everyday experiences of the people who create and perform them. This proximity to daily life is what gives folk songs their authenticity and emotional

¹ M. J. Mafela, *Tshivenda Literature* (Pretoria: Khande Publishers, 2005).

² L. Green, *How Popular Musicians Learn: A Way Ahead for Music Education* (London: Routledge, 2002).

³ P. Procter, *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (Harlow: Longman Group Ltd., 1978).430.

depth. Often, they serve as oral narratives, delivering history, local news, ancestral stories, and even social criticism. As such, folk songs may be likened to the newspapers or oral archives of traditional societies, fulfilling both informative and expressive functions. It is supported by Akesson, who discusses the roles, functions, and limitations of traditional singing in modern society, highlighting how such oral expressions serve as a medium for transmitting cultural knowledge and values.⁴ Consequently, Mutendasi's music not only reflects the everyday realities of the Vhavenda people but also functions as a cognitive map of cultural values, transmitted through layered poetic devices.

This paper explores the significance of figurative language in selected Tshivenda songs, identifying various forms of figurative expression and analysing their interpretive and aesthetic functions. This paper focuses on how his use of figurative language in *Vhutshilo vhu a mona u fana na vhili* captures complex ideas and reflects indigenous epistemologies, thus contributing to ongoing scholarly conversations on oral literature, cognition, and cultural continuity.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

The theoretical framework guiding this analysis is rooted in the Cognitive Linguistics paradigm, more specifically, the Conceptual Metaphor Theory as proposed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in their seminal work *Metaphors We Live By*.⁵ This theory posits that metaphor is not merely a stylistic device used in language but is fundamental to the way humans conceptualise and understand the world. According to Lakoff and Johnson, conceptual metaphors structure our thoughts and influence how we perceive abstract phenomena by mapping them onto more concrete, familiar experiences. In the context of song analysis, Conceptual Metaphor Theory offers a powerful tool for exploring how artists use figurative language, including metaphors, similes, personification, and other rhetorical devices, not only to enhance aesthetic appeal but also to communicate complex emotions, cultural values, and cognitive schemas. The use of metaphor in song lyrics allows for a rich layering of meaning, enabling listeners to engage with themes that might otherwise be difficult to articulate directly. This is supported by Sofian and Sawardi, who posit that “metaphors provide contextual meaning, allowing for varied interpretations and deeper engagement with the song's themes.”⁶

This theoretical perspective is particularly relevant to this study because it provides insight into how the songwriter conveys abstract ideas such as love, struggle, identity, and spirituality. By interpreting these figurative expressions through the lens of conceptual metaphor, the analysis reveals deeper cultural and cognitive patterns that reflect the lived experiences, beliefs, and worldview of the community to which the artist belongs. Thus, Cognitive Linguistics and Conceptual Metaphor Theory in particular serve as a valuable framework for understanding the interplay between language, thought, and culture in the artistic domain of music.

METHODOLOGY

This paper employed a qualitative research approach, specifically using textual analysis to interpret the content of the selected song from the album *Nthonifheni*, which comprises ten tracks in total. Textual analysis was deemed appropriate for this study because it enables a close examination of language, symbolism, and thematic structures within cultural artifacts such as song lyrics. Through this method, the analysis revealed the deeper meanings embedded in the lyrical content, particularly focusing on figurative language and metaphorical expressions.

DISCUSSION

Defining Songs

A song is a form of music that consists of words sung vocally, either a cappella or accompanied by instruments. Mafela and Raselekoane state that songs are considered tools used to praise individuals such

⁴ Ingrid Åkesson, “Oral/Aural Culture in Late Modern Society?: Traditional Singing as Professionalized Genre and Oral-Derived Expression,” *Oral Tradition* 27, no. 1 (2012).

⁵ G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

⁶ Ela Sofiarti Sofian and F X Sawardi, “Analysis of the Metaphors in the Song ‘All Too Well’ by Taylor Swift as a Tool for Storytelling,” *Jurnal Lingua Idea* 13, no. 2 (2022): 234–43.

as kings, heroes, or anyone who has performed commendable deeds, and they reflect people's thoughts.⁷ Blacking reinforces this by saying: "Songs are poetry that has been shaped tonally, and words and music come into the singer's mind as one and like poetry."⁸ This suggests that songs are artistic expressions combining melody and lyrics, emerging as a unified creation in the singer's mind.

Mphaphuli examined the significance of traditional Vhavenda songs and highlighted that different songs are performed at specific times and during activities. The Vhavenda people use traditional songs to express their thoughts, resolve problems, communicate, and articulate their life experiences. Her study also explores the various instruments used and the types of songs performed in different contexts.⁹ This illustrates the important role of songs in conveying emotions and facilitating communication about the community's cultural and social realities.

Figurative Language

Different scholars have written extensively on figurative language, describing it as the use of expressions that convey meaning in an indirect or non-literal manner. Such expressions often evoke emotional responses, allowing listeners or readers to feel moved, delighted, or provoked. Yeibo emphasises that figurative language reveals different interpretations in literary works. Writers or speakers employ various styles. Figurative language is more commonly used in poetry than in other writings.¹⁰ Arifa discusses that figurative language is not only used in dramas, poems, or stories but also in linguistic studies, song lyrics, and daily conversations.¹¹ Many perceive figurative language as a literary term because it's used in analysing literary works. This underscores the power of figurative language when applied to song lyrics or speech. He also emphasises that figurative language encompasses various figures of speech. Arifa's observations highlighted the significance of figurative language in song lyrics, demonstrating its importance.¹²

Azwardi notes that figurative language is prevalent in literary works such as poems, songs, and books.¹³ In songs, artists often use unconventional words. Comparing the language used in songs to everyday conversations reveals differences. Artists employ figurative language to enhance the beauty of their songs and to convey profound meanings. This is supported by Sutrisno and Putri, who say these devices are used to emphasize points, express emotions, and add comic effects, thereby enhancing the song's overall beauty and depth.¹⁴ Effective words and phrases carry significant interpretations, depending on the artist's ability to express their thoughts through figurative language. Some believe that figurative language can be challenging to interpret, as seen in poetry. According to Azwardi, in figurative language, artists or writers aim to convey specific messages.¹⁵ Figurative language should encompass elegance, credibility, and the ability to captivate interest. Even though some poets may not use figurative language, it often enhances the clarity and appeal of poems. Figurative language is also beneficial in songs.

According to Peter, "Figurative language is language which has figurative meaning and incorporates the speaker's desire to touch the emotions, to cause shock and persuade into action."¹⁶ This implies that figurative language carries interpretive meaning and aims to affect the listener, prompting action. Cuddon further explains: "Figurative language is language which uses figures of speech; for example, metaphor, simile, alliteration."¹⁷ This indicates that figurative language employs various figures of speech, such as metaphors, similes, and alliteration. This paper is significant in that it explores the use

⁷ M.J. Mafela and N.R. Raselekoane, *Traditional Songs and Praise in Tshivenda Culture* (Thohoyandou: Venda University Press, 1994).

⁸ J. Blacking, *Venda Children's Songs: A Study in Ethnomusicological Analysis* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1967).155.

⁹ M.S. Mphaphuli, *The Role of Traditional Songs in Vhavenda Culture* (Thohoyandou, 2013).

¹⁰ Ebi Yeibo, "Figurative Language and Stylistic Function in JP Clark-Bekederemo's Poetry," *Journal of Language Teaching and Research* 3, no. 1 (2012): 180–87.

¹¹ F. Arifa, "The Use of Figurative Language in Song Lyrics," *Journal of Language and Literature Studies*, April 2016.

¹² Arifa, "The Use of Figurative Language in Song Lyrics."

¹³ A. Azwardi, "Figurative Language and Its Role in Conveying Meaning in Literary Works," *International Journal of Linguistics and Literature*, 2016.12.

¹⁴ B. Sutrisno and A. Putri, "A Figurative Language Analysis of the Song Lyric 'Mirror,'" 2019.

¹⁵ Azwardi, "Figurative Language and Its Role in Conveying Meaning in Literary Works."

¹⁶ L. Peter, *Language and Emotion in Communication* (New York: Sage Publications, 2002).

¹⁷ J.A. Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, 3rd ed. (London: Penguin Books, 1991).343.

of figurative language in selected Tshivenda songs, demonstrating how such expressions enhance both meaning and emotional resonance.

Yeibo emphasises that figurative language reveals different interpretations in literary works.¹⁸ Writers or speakers employ various styles. Figurative language is more commonly used in poetry than in other writings. Yeibo asserts: "What distinguishes poetry from the other two major genres...is the emphasis it places on the imaginative use of language...it is the common practice of the poet to use words figuratively and hence the proliferation of figures of speech, collectively called imagery in poetry."¹⁹ This means that what sets poetry apart from other writings is its focus on imaginative language, with poets frequently using figurative expressions and various figures of speech, collectively known as imagery.

Yeibo further states: "Figurative language is... a form of picture language." This suggests that figurative language is a way of creating mental images through words. He further explains that figurative language not only beautifies poetry but also conveys significant interpretations with varied implications.²⁰ Using figurative language allows poets to express ideas concisely, making their work more impactful and meaningful. He also points out that in poetry, everyday words can have altered meanings. Yeibo highlights that employing figurative language enables poets to be succinct, and similarly, singers can use a few words with profound meanings. His insights on figurative language will support this research, as it will analyse different songs to uncover their meanings through figurative expressions.²¹ Radita also mentions that the role of figurative language is to express the experiences or thoughts of the singer, enabling the listener to visualise the song's message. Different types of figurative language are discussed.²² Yeibo again emphasises that figurative language allows for multiple interpretations in literary works and is most commonly used in poetry.²³ Writers and speakers employ various stylistic devices to enhance meaning and aesthetic value. Arifa further notes that figurative language is not limited to dramas, poems, or stories, but is also prevalent in linguistic studies, song lyrics, and everyday conversations.²⁴ While often viewed as a literary device, its usage extends to diverse communicative contexts, thereby demonstrating its versatility and power. Arifa also points out that figurative language encompasses numerous figures of speech.

Azwardi has observed that figurative language features prominently in poems, songs, and other literary texts.²⁵ Songwriters often use unconventional words, setting their language apart from ordinary speech. This stylistic choice not only enhances the artistic appeal of songs but also enables the expression of complex, layered meanings. Effective use of figurative language depends on the artist's capacity to communicate thoughts succinctly and symbolically. Some listeners may find such expressions challenging to interpret, especially in poetic contexts. Nonetheless, Azwardi maintains that the primary goal of figurative language is to communicate specific messages with aesthetic and emotional depth.²⁶

Figurative language, according to Peter, is 'language which has figurative meaning and incorporates the speaker's desire to touch the emotions, to cause shock and persuade into action.'²⁷ This highlights its interpretive nature and its intent to move the audience. Cuddon similarly defines it as 'language which uses figures of speech; for example, metaphor, simile, alliteration', thereby acknowledging its rhetorical diversity.²⁸

According to Balogun, 'What distinguishes poetry from the other two major genres... is the emphasis it places on the imaginative use of language... it is the common practice of the poet to use words figuratively and hence the proliferation of figures of speech, collectively called imagery in poetry.'²⁹ This underscores the centrality of figurative language in poetic composition, where imagination and symbolic

¹⁸ Yeibo, "Figurative Language and Stylistic Function in JP Clark-Bekederemo's Poetry."

¹⁹ Yeibo, "Figurative Language and Stylistic Function in JP Clark-Bekederemo's Poetry."

²⁰ Yeibo, "Figurative Language and Stylistic Function in JP Clark-Bekederemo's Poetry."

²¹ Yeibo, "Figurative Language and Stylistic Function in JP Clark-Bekederemo's Poetry."

²² I. Radita, "The Impact of Figurative Language in Song Lyrics," *Journal of Language and Communication*, 2016.

²³ Yeibo, "Figurative Language and Stylistic Function in JP Clark-Bekederemo's Poetry."

²⁴ Arifa, "The Use of Figurative Language in Song Lyrics."

²⁵ Azwardi, "Figurative Language and Its Role in Conveying Meaning in Literary Works."

²⁶ Azwardi, "Figurative Language and Its Role in Conveying Meaning in Literary Works."

²⁷ Peter, *Language and Emotion in Communication*.12.

²⁸ Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*.343

²⁹ A. Balogun, "The Poet's Imaginative Language," in *Figurative Language and Stylistic Meaning in Selected Poems of J.P. Clark-Bekederemo*, ed. E. Yeibo, 6th ed., vol. 2 (International Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 1996), 197–205.

expression converge. Ogunsiiji describes figurative language as ‘a form of picture language’.³⁰ This implies its capacity to generate mental imagery and convey layered meanings. He further contends that figurative language not only beautifies poetry but also conveys interpretations with significant cultural and emotional implications. It enables poets and singers alike to express profound ideas succinctly, often imbuing everyday words with new significance.³¹ Radita asserts that figurative language allows singers to express their experiences and emotions in a way that enables listeners to visualise the song’s message. Different types of figurative language, metaphor, simile, personification, and others, are employed to achieve this effect.³²

Figures of Speech

Figures of speech are expressions employed when a speaker seeks to make their language more effective and emotionally resonant. They enhance songs and poems, rendering them more vivid and meaningful. According to Bradford, “Figures of speech are speaking in language symbols.”³³ This implies that figures of speech involve using symbolic language. Wales adds that: “Figures of speech are popularly associated devices of language as metaphor and simile, by which images are evoked through comparison of one with another.”³⁴ This means that figures of speech are linguistic tools, such as metaphors and similes, that create imagery through comparisons. Figures of speech have been defined in various ways. Some of the figures of speech relevant to the song have been listed below:

Proverb

A proverb is a short, commonly known saying that expresses a general truth, piece of advice, or cultural value.

Example: *Mmbwa nzwimi phindulela, lufu lwa mmbwa a luho kule.*

'Mmbwa' is a domestic animal not typically consumed. This proverb warns that someone who habitually engages in harmful behaviour will eventually face dire consequences.

This suggests that proverbs are accumulated experiences, some of which were learned through challenging circumstances.

Simile

A simile is a figure of speech that establishes a comparison between two dissimilar entities through markers such as “like” or “as”.³⁵

Example: *U na maanda sa ndau*” (She is as brave as a lion) exemplifies how the simile draws on culturally embedded symbols of power and bravery. The lion (**ndau**) is not merely an animal but a metaphorical anchor within the Vhavanḁa cosmology, symbolising leadership and courage.

Metaphor

A metaphor is a figure of speech that describes an object or action as if it were something else, without using *like* or *as*, implying a symbolic resemblance. According to Lakoff and Johnson, metaphors are not just poetic expressions but are fundamental to human thought.³⁶

Example: *Tshifhinga ndi mbava* (Time is a thief).

Idioms

An idiom is a phrase or expression whose meaning cannot be understood from the literal meanings of its words. Fernando defines idioms as “conventionalized multiword expressions whose meaning is not

³⁰ Y. Ogunsiiji, *Literature and Stylistics in Nigerian Secondary Schools* (Ibadan: Y-Books, 2000),56.

³¹ Ogunsiiji, *Literature and Stylistics in Nigerian Secondary Schools*.

³² Radita, “The Impact of Figurative Language in Song Lyrics.”

³³ R. Bradford, *Stylistics* (London: Routledge, 2002).

³⁴ K. Wales, *A Dictionary of Stylistics*, 2nd ed. (London: Longman, 2000).

³⁵ H.G. Tarigan, *Prinsip-Prinsip Dasar Puisi* (Bandung: Angkasa, 2013).09.

³⁶ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*.

predictable from the meanings of their components.”³⁷

Example: *U raha bakete* (To kick the bucket). This proverb figuratively means to die.

Hyperbole

Hyperbole is a deliberate and obvious exaggeration used for emphasis or effect. Perrine (1974:61) defines hyperbole as “a figure of speech in which exaggeration is used for emphasis.”

Example: “I’ve told you a million times.”

Repetition

It is the literary device that involves deliberately repeating words, phrases, or ideas for emphasis, rhythm, or rhetorical effect. Leech explains that repetition is used in poetry and rhetoric to emphasise a point or to create rhythm.³⁸

Example: *Nga i ne, nga i ne, nga i ne.* (Let it rain, let it rain, let it rain).

Figures of Speech in Mutendasi's Song

Figure of Speech	Tshivenda Expression	English Translation	Meaning	Example / Explanation
Simile	<i>Vhutshilo vhu a mona u fana na vhili</i>	Life is like a revolving wheel	Compares life to a wheel to show its constant motion and unpredictability	Life changes unexpectedly, much like a spinning wheel
Proverb	<i>Maña a mutukana a si vhumatshelo hawe</i>	Today’s hardships are not necessarily tomorrow’s reality	Suggests that suffering is temporary	Struggles today don’t determine your future
Metaphor (Proverb)	<i>Tshi no hula tshi tshi lwa ndi nngwe na ndau</i>	What grows up fighting is a leopard and a lion	Greatness is built through hardship	Fierce animals symbolise strength born from struggle
Repetition	<i>Mangalani yo! Ni songo nkolela... (repeated)</i>	Mangalani! Don’t mock me...	Emphasises a warning and emotional plea	Builds rhythm and enforces the central theme
Idiom	<i>Ha ngo ri kovhela u fana</i>	God did not divide gifts equally	All people have different talents and circumstances	Reflects theological belief in divine diversity
Metaphorical Proverb	<i>Ni songo vhona tsimba yo naiwa na ri ndi lukhohe</i>	Don’t mistake a wet genet for a slender mongoose	Don’t judge based on temporary appearances	Encourages caution before judging others
Proverb	<i>A hu na tshi sa fheli shangoni</i>	Nothing lasts forever	Everything (good or bad) is temporary	Encourages humility in times of success
Imagery	<i>Na iwe zwi do fhela na tou sinḁa nga ṅayo</i>	Your riches will end, and you will walk	Paints a visual image of reversal in fortune	Warns the proud that wealth is not permanent

³⁷ C. Fernando, *Idioms and Idiomaticity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

³⁸ G.N. Leech, *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry* (London: Longman, 1969).

Proverb (Patience)	<i>Ŋwana a bebwa na u tshimbila na zwenezwo zwi a tula</i>	A child cannot walk soon after birth	Good things take time; patience is vital	Teaches life's natural, gradual process
Hyperbole	<i>Na n̄nevho ndi ɔ̄o pfuma!</i>	I, too, will be wealthy!	Exaggeration to express hope and determination	Expresses optimism despite hardship

Analysis of the Song “Vhutshilo Vhu A Mona U Fana Na Vhili”

This analysis of Mutendasi's song sheds light on the profound moral lessons embedded in its lyrics, centered on empathy, humility, and the unpredictable nature of life. Through an exploration of the song's use of figurative language, including *similes*, *metaphors*, *proverbs*, *idioms*, *hyperbole*, and *repetition*, it becomes evident that the artist employs these devices to convey a message of humility, resilience, and the transient nature of success and hardship. The song serves as a compelling reminder that no one should boast in their current position, as life can change swiftly. It calls for a collective shift towards empathy, urging listeners not to mock others who are currently struggling, as they too might rise again in the future.

The thematic essence of the song becomes evident upon attentive listening. The artist, Mutendasi, masterfully constructs his message through lyrical storytelling. He opens with a solemn invocation of Jehovah, acknowledging divine sovereignty and positioning his message within a moral and spiritual framework. The phrase: "*Vhutshilo vhu a mona u fana na vhili*" (Life is like a revolving wheel) functions as a *simile*, comparing life to a wheel to emphasize its unpredictability and constant movement. This phrase sets the reflective tone of the song, warning that the conditions of life are impermanent and prone to reversal. This aligns with the Tshivenda proverb:

"Maña a mutukana a si vhumatshelo hawe"

(Today's hardships are not necessarily tomorrow's reality)

Here, *proverbial language* is used to highlight the transient nature of suffering and success. The message is that present struggles do not determine future outcomes.

In the second line, the singer deepens the theme using another proverb:

"Tshi no hula tshi tshi lwa ndi nngwe na ndau"

(What grows up fighting is a leopard and a lion)

This implies that true strength and growth come through struggle. It reflects the idea that hardship is part of the path to maturity and greatness. This is an example of *metaphor*, where animals known for their fierceness and survival in the wild are used to symbolise human resilience.

The song continues to echo the theme of life's ever-changing nature, reinforcing it through *repetition*, which serves to emphasise the message and create a rhythmic pattern that appeals to the listener's memory.

In the second stanza, the singer directly addresses an individual named Mangalani:

"Mangalani yoo! Ni songo nkoleta na ri ndi tshisiwana. Na n̄nevho ndi ɔ̄o pfuma, a ri ɔ̄ivhi ɔ̄a matshelo."

(Mangalani! Do not mock me for being an orphan. I, too, will be wealthy; we do not know what tomorrow holds.)

The repetition of this phrase serves as a *warning* and a *plea* for compassion. It also underscores the unpredictability of the future, reminding listeners that today's vulnerable individual may become tomorrow's success story. The use of *direct address* creates an intimate and urgent tone, drawing the listener into a reflective space.

In the third verse, Mutendasi shifts focus to broader societal behaviour:

"U kola a zwo ngo luga namusi, Mudzimu ha zwi funi, ngauri Mudzimu ho ngo ri kovhela u fana"
(Hurting others is wrong today; God does not approve of it, for He did not distribute gifts equally).

This section introduces an *idiomatic expression*:

"Ha ngo ri kovhela u fana" (God did not divide people equally),

which conveys the idea that everyone has unique gifts and circumstances. This idiom reflects theological and philosophical beliefs about diversity and divine intention. The line that follows:

"*Muñwe na muñwe o ñewa mpho yawe*"

(Each person has been given their own gift)

serves as a *parallelism*, a repetition of structure to reinforce meaning, emphasising individual dignity and the need for mutual respect.

Later in the song, Mutendasi recounts personal rejection, using the phrase:

"*Ndi khou shengela*" (I am suffering)

This *colloquial expression* captures the raw emotion of hardship. It personalises the song's message and encourages empathy from the listener. The condemnation of Mangalani continues with:

"*Mangalani yoo! Ni songo nkolela na ri ndi tshisiwana*"

(Mangalani! Do not hurt other people's feelings by calling me an orphan).

Here, the term *tshisiwana* (orphan) becomes symbolic of powerlessness and poverty. By confronting this label, the singer reclaims his dignity and expresses hope for change.

A key proverb employed is:

"*Ni songo sea vhuhole ni tshie ñwana, vhu nga ña vhuhulwaneni*"

(Do not mock disabilities when you are young; they may come to you when you are old.)

This line is repeated *three times*, creating a *tricolon*, a rhetorical device that enhances persuasion through repetition. It acts as a cautionary tale, promoting humility and foresight.

Further illustrating this idea, Mutendasi uses a vivid proverb:

"*Ni songo vhona tsimba yo naiwa na ri ndi lukhohe*"

(Do not mistake a genet, wet from rain, for a slender mongoose)

This metaphorical proverb teaches those outward appearances, especially in times of misfortune, can be misleading. A person's true nature or potential may be hidden by their temporary suffering.

Another proverb affirms the impermanence of both wealth and hardship:

"*A hu na tshi sa fheli shangoni*"

(Nothing lasts forever)

This is reinforced by the phrase:

"*Na iwe zwi ño fhela na tou sinða nga ñayo*"

(Your riches will also come to an end, and you will walk to your destinations)

Here, *imagery* is used to paint a picture of a future where even the wealthy may lose their possessions and face the same hardships they once mocked.

The final proverb used in the song is:

"*Ñwana a bebwa na u tshimbila na zwenezwo zwi a ñula*"

(A child cannot walk soon after birth; it would be a taboo)

This expression reflects the value of *patience* and the *natural progression of life*. It suggests that greatness or success takes time to develop and should not be rushed.

Discussion Summary

The artist's strategic use of *proverbs and idiomatic expressions* rooted in the Tshivenda cultural context enriches the song's moral teachings. The *similes and metaphors* convey the dynamic nature of life, while the *repetition* reinforces the importance of empathy and patience in the face of adversity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Tshivenda Moral Songs be integrated into Educational Curricula.

Educators and curriculum developers should consider incorporating moral songs like '*Vhutshilo vhu a mona u nga sa vhili*' into language, life orientation, and cultural studies syllabuses. These songs can serve as effective tools for teaching values such as humility, empathy, and respect in a culturally grounded and emotionally engaging way.

CONCLUSION

Using richly layered figurative language and vivid cultural references, Mutendasi delivers a song that is both artistically compelling and morally enlightening. He employs proverbs, idioms, similes, and

metaphors to explore the themes of empathy, humility, resilience, and the unpredictability of life. His lyrics are not only poetic but also serve as moral teachings deeply rooted in Tshivenda wisdom and worldview. The song transcends entertainment: it functions as a vehicle for cultural education, emotional reflection, and communal guidance.

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