

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY  
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AND LITERATURE  
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**MAJOR LANDMARKS IN THE EVOLUTION  
OF ETV AMHARIC DRAMAS: THE CHANGING  
SOCIETY AND ITS STORIES**

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OF ETV AMHARIC DRAMAS: THE CHANGING SOCIETY  
AND ITS STORIES**

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## DECLARATION

I, the Undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university.

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## ABSTRACT

*Television has turned out to be the predominant medium of contemporary storytelling. In its brief history the making of its dramas across time is being affected and influenced by various factors. Notably social factors constitute the lion share of the reciprocal influence. Television drama in Ethiopia, from its inception, has evolved under the influence of social changes together with important changes brought by introduction of new technology.*

*This project was preliminary sets out to inquire the evolution of Ethiopian television (ETV) dramas in the context of the changing societies and its stories. It then reflected on the interconnectedness between the shifts in the shapes of television drama and the patterns of the socio-historical conditions that changed from time to time according to the social and political administration system.*

*In order to assure the analysis was properly grounded in the condition of drama production, an attempt was made to devise a historicist methodology. For that purpose, strong theoretical and conceptual claim of television drama study is employed. Access was granted by ETV to watch the dramas which is barred by only the loss of some of the dramas from the catalogue as well as the audio-visual library.*

*The discussion of the study mainly rests upon illuminating the evolution of ETV dramas along side major social changes and the flow of television in Ethiopia since its arrival. To that end ideological and aesthetic criteria was employed to illustrate particular dramas. Then the study reveals that ETV dramas in the 1960's were the first experience for the country and reflected the wealthy social classes. In the 1970's, after the revolution, the dramas began to reflect the social life of the nation under new social order. In the 1990's dramas began to take new direction in a more liberal atmosphere as it cultivated new writers that work on various issues. Then it was indicated that while the dramas reflected the society of each period, they were forced to represent the dominant view hold by the coming and gone ruling classes.*

*Given the findings- conclusion is drawn to illuminate what has been discussed along with an implication and future prospects. In general it is stated that ETV has been used to reflect the changing societies in the dramas created in various forms which itself changed from time too time.*

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background of the Study

Any form of art is primarily an experience shaped by using the stuff of life. As Slot (1964:2) points out a work of art embodies social relevance and the way artists see or what they see in the social events may affect the form of art itself. Besides, literary works are the expression of the social systems that portray the society of the age in which the works are produced. Thus, literary works affecting and being affected by socio-historical processes define the changing circumstances in the society which foreshadow and reflect the order of events.

The external circumstances, notably social ones, have been explained frequently as having a bearing on the literary works in all their various forms. In this regard, Escalprit (1971; 4) states, an emphasis on social observation through literary study has been drawn from Marxist approach. Escalprit, then, forwards an attitude defined by Vladimir Zhdanov (1956) as follows:

*Literature must be considered in its inseparable relation to social life, the background of those historical and social factors which influence the writer....It is founded on the Marxist method of perception and analysis of reality, and it excludes the subjective and arbitrary point of view which considers each work as an independent and isolated entity. Literature is a social phenomenon, perception of reality through creative imagery (1971; 4).*

This approach provides an anti-formalism approach which bears the Marxist influence whose methodological approach is obvious:

*The principle of the historical research method which is at the base of Marxist literary has as its primary criterion for all works of art the degree of fidelity with which it represents reality in all its complexity (Escalprit, 1971:4).*

Taking these approaches and methods as spring boards, the study focuses on television drama grounded in the context of the social function of Ethiopian Television (ETV). Taking into account the fact that television is the predominant medium of storytelling in the contemporary world, the study examines evolution of ETV dramas. In doing so it involves the analysis of particular stories in terms of their structure to put them within the context of the patterns of television and social experience.

One way of dealing with the stories, therefore, would be to discuss the societies' systems of belief in terms of the existing doctrines and the imposition of these doctrines in social and political life. In this respect, according to Longman (1986:5), since television tends to be more of an expression of social practice, its discussion needs to be explained in terms of the socio-historical condition of the period.

This study of the evolution of ETV dramas was not carried out in the larger context of drama production or social history. Rather focus was placed on the major landmarks that brought changes on the patterns of the dramas from ideological and aesthetic point of view that are appropriate to evaluate the dramas. As a guiding principle to understand the changes, the researcher has spotted radical social changes that signaled new political and social life in Ethiopian societies. Thus, beginning from the coming of television, the study traces the major changes in the evolution of ETV dramas along with the social changes that prompted them.

The evolution of the drama, in this case, carried out within the central concept of signifying the developments and patterns experienced by ETV dramas in an orderly succession. As any historical process dictates, the study follows the linear sequence of events from early period to the contemporary era to mark out the developments and shifts of patterns in the production of the dramas.

## **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

Artistic production, according to Lantricchia (1983:102), takes its place in the social history. Thus, as social systems shifted from time to time in a certain socio-historical condition, the stories and forms of artistic works produced would also be changed.

Television drama as a means of storytelling has drawn materials and methods from other sources such as literature, theatre, cinema, radio and others that have shaped and influenced its production. In its increasingly varied and hybrid forms, television drama is usually considered in relation to the conflicts of history as well as to shifts in story, ideology and representation (Thornham and Purvis, 2005:x). In such a case, there is reason to believe that television drama is shaped and being shaped by the changing circumstances and the period's consciousness, in ways that are crying out to be inquired.

Therefore, the attempt here is to study the evolution of ETV dramas from the societies and stories angle. Thus, the various stages of ETV dramas are studied manifesting major social events in an orderly succession. Since social changes have impacted the dramas of this particular media, the dynamism between these relationships will be examined by adopting a historicist approach. What are those changes, how has the dramas evolved since the arrival of television, what world view was produced,

what were the distinctive features of the period are major questions the study put an effort to suggest plausible answers. The key to them is sought in the evolving relationships among different regimes television has gone through. It is then the researcher's belief that studies such as this one would be invaluable if undertaken at this level.

### **1.3. Purposes of the Study**

The major purpose of this study is to demonstrate an understanding of the distinctive forms of Ethiopian television dramas as they have evolved in the context of various developments within the society since inception. Therefore, by employing a historicist approach the discussion part intends to develop awareness in some of the main aesthetic and ideological influences that have shaped the dramas and production practices in different periods. In this respect, the researcher looks into the distinctive features of each period, the portrayed world view or the ideological conflicts of the era and the extent to which the life of the society in each period was effectively dramatized.

Apart from the above major purpose, the study also has the following specific objectives:

- To look at ETV drama in terms of the prototypical stories a society tells about itself.
- To articulate the implicit world view underlying the production of each period.
- To draw a picture of ETV dramas at various stages of its evolution; and
- To trace the assumptions underlying those stories through the dominant flow of image, structure, setting,

themes, resolution, modes of characterization and patterns of change emerging in them over the years.

#### **1.4. Significance of the Study**

The study at its best endeavors to provide a particular attention to the flow of dramas that have been presented since television arrived in Ethiopia. It then grants the reader a general picture on how the storytelling of our television dramas function in entertaining, educating, informing, inspiring and shaping the minds of the society.

The researcher also believes that this enquiry is not a complete one by itself. However, it might be used as a means of stimulating further research in the same issue that could take on different route or in greater depth on aspects dealt within this study. It could also be a useful document that would substantiate other researches as a secondary source.

Moreover, it is hoped that the study would create sensitivity in anyone in the literature or other related departments and media entertainment to pay more attention to television drama as a social event that mirrors the actual life of the society. So that in the future more dramas that spin around the society will be produced at the highest level.

#### **1.5. Scope of the Study**

The study confines itself to deal with major landmarks in the evolution of ETV dramas in terms of the changing society and its stories. Because of time constraints, the researcher restricted himself studying only the major landmarks of the dramas in each period selecting some dramas that could explain the patterns of the stories. Within this context, the

study is grounded in the Ethiopian Television dramas from its earliest production to present developments. For that purpose, the study gives total prominence only to the Amharic dramas. Oromiffa and Tigrigna are not considered here for they have relatively emerged recently, on one hand, and for the researcher's constraints of those languages, on the other hand.

### **1.6. Methods of the Study**

This study is grounded within the context of Ethiopian Television (ETV) and the evolution of the dramas in light of the changing society and its stories. To examine those dramas in their social context, the researcher, therefore, adopted a historicist critical methodology that stresses the totality of links within socio-historical connections shaping realities. In doing so, the researcher engages in empirical research conscripting particular dramas to co-relate it with the major socio-historical contexts.

Based on frequent observation of a number of dramas which explained the fact that dramas have been evolved from time to time aesthetically and ideologically along with social changes as well as technological developments, the study framed the major landmarks of ETV dramas. In this sense, the study traces the different regimes and different ideological views that have caused major shifts on the patterns of the dramas.

To that end, the sources of information were archival materials such as the written and visual records. In this regard, video records of ETV dramas and the written and visual records of historical events were utilized to inquire the evolution. Consequently, so much time and effort are spent on ETV's audiovisual library to view and make a verdict on the flow of the dramas based on the theoretical assumptions and evaluating approaches which is detailed in the Review of Related Literatures.

### **1.7. Limitation of the Study**

While conducting this study the researcher has confronted with some limitations that might affect the study. Among them shortage of time was one major problem. Besides, the absence of scripts of the dramas has made the study to depend entirely on viewing videotapes which actually was so much taxing and time consuming. On the other hand, losses of some of the dramas produced in ETV, especially early productions, had their bearings on the processes of the research. Due to these and other factors which have been impossible to avoid, the researcher is far from asserting the completeness of the study. Yet, much effort has been exerted to minimize those limitations by working laboriously on the available resources so that other studies might be embarked on wider context.

### **1.8. Organization of the Study**

This research paper falls into four parts. Chapter one, for that matter, brings forth the introduction part which constitutes the background, statement of the problem, purpose, significance, scope, limitation and methods of the study.

Chapter two addresses the review of related literature focusing on different theories, assumptions and criteria of television drama evaluation.

Chapter three examines the evolution of ETV dramas in their sequential developments. In this part, social events are co-related with the trend of drama production.

Finally, chapter four presents the conclusion drawn from the discoveries made through the historicist method. In this part future prospects are included with the best hopes of anticipation.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Starting Point: Studying Television Drama**

Television obviously constitutes the most common source of information and entertainment. Besides, television is the most known frame of cultural reference in the modern world. The dramas transmitted in this medium, according to Thornham and Purvis (2005; 11), are proved to be filled with a highly value-laden metaphors which need to be investigated and analyzed. In this regard, a number of writers on television drama, Thornham and Purvis wrote, have appeared to involve more fully both with the shifting characteristic and multiplicity of forms of television drama as well as with questions of audiences and the role they play in the production of meaning.

Tulloch (1990; 14), in this respect, suggests that television drama should be perceived as the most important place for the production of stories, or myths about the society and also as a site of struggle over meanings. It is this struggle and the various ways that can be considered to function within the institutions, the texts and the audiences of television that need to be enclosed. Tulloch states that television dramas harbor ideological meanings and manipulate aesthetic values that could be traced and studied within the story the society produced.

This research engaged in the study of ETV dramas from socio-historical context, and therefore makes a historicist analysis focusing on the stories as a particular production of historical process. It evaluates how those stories evolve from a particular turning point that marks the change from ideological and aesthetic aspects. To ground the study,

then, this chapter deals with different theories and assumptions, methods of research and alternative approaches.

## **2.2 Television as a Medium of Drama**

Television means many things to several people who perceive its potential. Its existence is marked by the combination of technology and cultural form. It is a business-making media and also national institution in numerous countries. It is a chief way of entertainment and the most important source of information that has appeared as a family companion. Television is also an outcome of creativity and a medium through which social concern, political thoughts and the myth of the society may be expressed.

At the most apparent level, as Esslin (1982;10) puts it, television is a dramatic medium for its utilization of a large amount of materials it transmits in the form of traditional drama that is composed of fictional materials represented mimetically by actors and using plot, dialogue, character, gesture, costume and also other dramatic means of expression. Television, like the cinema with which it shares many characteristics, is a dramatic medium. Therefore, watching television, Esslin remarks, from the viewpoint and with the analytical tools of dramatic criticism and theory might give a better insight about televisions nature and several aspects of its psychological, social, and cultural impact.

Television, a relatively more recent medium than theatre and cinema, has brought a new scale and passion to the experience of drama. As Raymond Williams, a literary and media critic, has pointed out, there has never been any moment in the history of mankind by which the majority

of the population has such a regular access to drama (Sheehan, 2001). After the introduction of television, there are actually, Sheehan (2001) states, qualitative and quantitative changes in the level of drama which are firmly linked with the day by day life style. The dramas that are deeply rooted in such rhythms of everyday life then make the cumulative account of television to be analyzed in relation to the total flow of television and within the socio-historical condition.

Thus, in here it would be important to mention the claim and its relation with other media of drama since their erstwhile existence entail an impact on television's latter production, its impacts and also the continuous flow of images that brought about development as well as swift move.

In its relatively short history, television has been claimed in its merits and demerits by people who develop various attitudes towards television. The claim ranges from those who consider television as a magnificent entertainment to those who called it world destroyer and pollutant. From its inception, television has hosted a variety of opinions that stated its best moments or positive impacts to its being a worst medium that pervert a good attitude (Sheehan, 2001). Sheehan then argues that television has been an instrument of change in the way we spend our time, in how we perceive our own environment, in how we exchange our experience and how we relate to others. She also remarks that television has actually shifted the nature of our sensory balance in that it represents return to a culture that is more oral and visual than literary. It also represents a mode of consciousness that is more oriented to sounds and images than to words and ideas.

Television at all stages of its history and development has drawn too much from other media. The way it makes use of the function of other

media is either by direct appropriation of materials and methods or by indirect adaptation of genres, themes and techniques that have evolved considerably over the years.

The major influence on television in its earliest days was radio. This was because of the fact that television was pioneered by those organizations and personnel on the business of radio broadcast. As Sheehan (2001) states, television was at first taken as radio with pictures. Then a process of transferring radio stations into television began. Most drama forms have got their roots primarily from radio which too had drawn from previous media like music hall, newspaper, magazine serials and comic strips.

Apart from radio, television has often taken materials from literature and comic books. Particularly for its drama it was highly dependent on written fiction. There has been various works from pulp fiction to classical literature adopted into television drama. In this case, Sheehan (2001) points out that most countries have drawn on literary adaptations for television drama.

The other vital source and influence in the field of drama has been the theatre. At the beginning, television drama made use of too much of the ways of theatrical productions, theatrical traditions, theatrical methods and personnel. The early dramas transmitted in television engaged the tradition of studio-based drama that required settings constructed in a studio and was transmitted live. As Longman (1996; 246) points out, this presentation of studio-based drama lasted until the location drama, which means moving out to actual places by recording it on films, replaced it. This tradition of location shooting has actually matched with the cinematic presentation of images. Television drama was not only a studio-based as an early crossing of the theatre tradition, but it also

attracted those experts from theatre to present materials specifically for television. This tradition, Sheehan (2001) states, has never been broken up both in the personnel movement and a mutual influence until the present.

The other medium that has a long standing relationship with television is the cinema. As Sheehan (2001) points out, in fact television was used as an exhibition box for films made primarily for cinema. Subsequently, we can find that drama which is made for television has appropriated the genres, themes, characters and storyline from cinema. For that reason most dramas meant for television have adopted most of the film grammars in developing television styles. In this way as Sheehan (2001) states, television has evolved in a path away from the theatre toward the cinema. However, Sheehan remarks, even with the introduction of video-tapes, drama is still prone more to be played as in the theatrical productions. It is still pondered to be more of a writer's medium like theatre than a director's medium like film. Yet, the improved editing facility, lighter weight video camera and the realm of location shooting has enabled television to conquer what was previously the realm of film which brought more production than the stage-using tradition.

Keeping all the above facts in mind, television is not only a medium that made the province of other media its own but has some distinct features which distinguish it from others. Television has also lent its material, styles and narrative structure for others as a point of reference. Hence, television, unlike literature, as Sheehan (2001) states, functions under the acting out of story. Unlike radio, it involves visualization and verbalization. Unlike theatre, the visualization and verbalization is not expressed in live performances, but transmitted electronically. It produces contact which is more intimate and more distanced. Contrary to cinema, the image in television is viewed on smaller screen and is not

usually surrounded by darkness. Television also does not require so much imagination as radio and literature. Like the cinema and theatre counterpart, television does not involve the same sense of occasion, the public setting, the darkness, high attention, focus on a single story and expectation of tight narrative structure and strong resolution. However, it involves a pattern of viewing that is more casual, transient, distracted, scaled-down and open-ended. Moreover, it is distinct in its immediacy, familiarity, continuity, accessibility and its addictive nature. In other words, as Watson (1990; 124) forwards, TV is markedly moving away from film in its live-ness-or immediacy

Television, thus, is an important medium liable to be studied and analyzed as a country's channel of information, culture and entertainment. The analysis of such media, according to Thornham and Purvis (2005;3) and Sheehan (2001), is not a complete process without a consideration of the general character of society or the order of time, politics, economy, ideology, technology, e.t.c. The drama offered in this medium has undergone its own evolution along with changes in the societies.

### **2.3. Story: Meanings and Structures**

#### **2.3.1 Definition and Its Representation**

Story is the main element of drama. Throughout the human experience, an interminable stream of narrative and enactment of narrative has filled some basic necessities in humans that have instilled an insatiable craving for stories. According to Sheehan (2001) people seem to have an unlimited capacity for exchanging experience, for occupying our lives with representations of other peoples' lives, for reaching to terms with the challenges and possibilities of life through a vicarious involvement in others lives, for incorporating others' experience into ours and vice versa.

For that reason, consideration of stories constantly poses such questions as: what is it about stories and the acting out of stories in drama that retain such fascination for people, what exactly are stories, what sort of representations they involve and how do they weave into the very complicated structures to reveal social culture and value?

A story is the most familiar element among people. Yet, it is worth mentioning some of the meanings provided by some scholars in the area as to what story is. In this respect, Rimmon-Kenan (1983:3) referred story as 'the narrated events and participants, abstracted from their disposition in the text.' He also explains that the larger construct in the story refers to the represented world of which the fictional reality where the story's characters are supposed to take place. Similar definition is provided by Seymour Chatman's 'story and discourse', cited in Martin (1986:108). Accordingly story includes the events, characters and settings as well as their arrangement. Therefore, story is not only telling an event but involves a selection and structuring or ordering of events meaningfully. In short, story represents an account of events based on some form of structure as in narrative.

A story, then, might be factual or fictional, comic or tragic, deep or superficial, mythical or mundane, verbal or visual. In the cases where the narratives are found fully developed, it is a highly structured and meaningful ordering of experience (Thornham and Purvis, 2005; 30). More than what is understood, though, it is often a basic activity which is tied with an intricate relationship with other activities and the total patterns of experiencing the world.

Stories are at large a part of our life as a child as well as an adult. The world is opened to us in the form of stories. To a larger extent we interpret our environment through stories. We constantly experienced

new stories, varying sort of stories, and conflicting stories. Regarding the knowledge and activity of sorting out and weighing of stories, Sheehan (2001), points out that:

*'The more integrated, the more intellectually sophisticated and emotionally mature we are, the more actively we are ordering and re-ordering the details of knowledge and story experience as comes our way into a coherent narrative of the of the world, the story of mankind, the story of our own time and place and the story of our lives within the context of the other stories.'*

Thus, stories are not reflective of leisure time but have to do with showing the values and experience of our time that inhabit within the history of the society that tells the story. They also presume and project particular pictures of what human life looks like, a certain images of the social order and reveal some of the implicit world view. Thus, it could be said that stories play a crucial role in forming and depicting a picture of the social order in which the systems of value are revealed. If viewed totally and intellectually, stories, as Sheehan implied, could provide a coherent account of the world.

### **2.3.2. Story as a Myth and Drama**

A highly compelling and resonant images and stories that brought social life collectively always constitute a force that preserves a special symbolic significance. Such stories, according to Sheehan (2001), emphasize the basic themes of human existence that involve archetypical characters and situations defining the basic curiosities, hopes, fears, ambitions, conflicts and patterns of resolution. Such stories, as Sheehan puts it, have the power of myth.

Though the term myth is associated with primitive ritualistic and scientific thought, it can also be adopted to the contemporary literary

trend. For that purpose myth is defined as a story by which a culture explains or understands aspects of reality or nature. Myths, therefore, according to the scholars who defined it similarly, Sheehan, (2001); Thornham and Purvis (2005; 24); Tulloch (1990; 14); Fiske (1987;128),are not just any stories but entails a special importance in how to look at the reality. Mythical themes include those of creation and destiny, life and death, fertility and sterility, initiation and estrangement, good and evil, danger and flight, war and peace, covenant and betrayal, ignorance and enlightenment, quest and estrangement, exile and Promised Land and also success and family.

According to Edelstein and Lerner (2007; 37), myth should be taken as expressions of modern culture; it should not be viewed as the timeless and universal forms as in most of anthropological, religious and psychological approaches to myth. Therefore, myths are not just only an appeal of primitive or false nature but they could be primitive or modern or could be true or false (Bell, 1997; 4). Accordingly, myths reflect a highly significant foundational story in one's native culture for critical understanding.

Myths, as Sheehan (2001) puts it, are reflections of a society' geographical conditions, means of production, social division of labor, political structures of power, state of scientific knowledge , etc. They may not be realistic representation of their times, but they can be imaginative constructions or aspects of the collective consciousness that reveals the factual records of the time. Such myths, Sheehan argues, are not static. Myths are stories that evolve in rhythms which are attached with a larger historical evaluation. They change, twist and turn with the changes put into motion with inventions, migrations, power struggles, invasions, victories and defeats. Therefore, myths are liable to amendment with

revolutions. They also imply an embedded humanity shaped by the movement of history.

Bell (1997; 31) in his book *'Literature, Modernism and Myth'* relates the term myth as an awareness of the slice of a world-view at an individual or collective level and the question of belief or evaluative commitment. He also states that myth is the successful definition of imaginative work that harbors the truth value peculiar to the age. In this sense, it reveals the tangible structure of a world view which is shielded by various thematic concerns.

Television drama, as Tulloch (1990; 14) points out' should be viewed as the prominent site for the production of stories or myths and hence as a site of struggle over the meaning of human tradition. Television drama for that matter has been aware of its role in creating myths in different periods engendered by social processes.

According to Rafter (2000; 5), there is no better way to negotiate our circumstances without drawing on the myths, attitudes and assumptions of human existence. The myths created by television drama, thus, endeavor to map out our social world that conforms to the dominant ideological struggle.

At this point, then, it would be important to mention what television drama is and how it is perceived within the general terms of drama which has long been the acting out of the stories.

To begin with, Drama, one of earliest literary form, was explained by the Greeks with considerable sophistication. Aristotle analyzed the various elements-plots, diction, spectacle-which the dramatist utilizes; and his successors have elaborated incessantly upon theories of drama. Most of

the literary genres that are used in other forms of literatures equally work for the drama. Therefore, like other literary forms it relates stories, ask the readers to acknowledge sequence of events and have a plot design.

Thus, drama can be referred to as the enactment of a narrative which can happen in fiction and in fact. As Sheehan (2001) points out, drama is the most structured ordering of experience and can also be taken as the most structured experience in itself. Its process includes the ritual entering into a story, by the presenters as well as by those to whom it is presented. Further, Sheehan explained, drama can be taken as a highly schematized and condensed attribution of human experience. Drama is, then, a highly stylized and ritualized presentation of the human condition at the core of things, at the middle and at the turning points. It depends on a causal structuring of facts and events and a very highly rhythmic organization of time. Thornham and Purvis (2005; 11) states that there is always drama wherever there is the convergence of narrative, performance, heightening and condensation. Amidst all its forms and genres, fact or fiction, single or series, comedy or tragedy, historical or contemporary, there is drama in the most important conditions of life.

Esslin (1982:19), referring to drama as 'a mimetic reproduction of the World', wrote that this form of art reflects the reality of the everyday life like a mirror. We are, therefore faced with people and situations we have to view, recognize and understand. There exists a disparity between the worlds of dramatic performance with reality as, reality happens spontaneously with no chance of repetition while the dramatic performance has been purposefully crafted to create an anticipated emotional and intellectual response. Though drama found some part of itself in the sphere of reality, it actually is only an imitation of reality and

is above all, simplified, compressed, re-structured, manipulated, reversible, and repeatable.

In a dramatic performance, Esslin (1982; 21) explains, on a stage or on a television or movie screen, the number of sign systems or systems of significance involved is extraordinary. The verbal language and the whole of voice expression are improved by an immense array of other sign systems. It is not only the manifestation of the actor's face and body that carry information, but signs and gestures also suggest a meaning. Costumes and their meanings are also included in this system. Settings which are conveyed photographically and the furniture of a room or the architecture of a building which is termed as props also elaborate significance. There are, moreover, the systems of signs in lighting, plot and in the musical background that lie beneath so much of TV shows. The variation of shots which is found in television and cinema also carry signs. Esslin then remarks that, though it is difficult to allocate each of the sign systems a persistently maintained position on a ladder of priorities, in drama 'the complex multilayered image predominates over the spoken word' (1982:22).

Television drama, as Pope (2002;207) puts it, is a major and growing component as a source of information and entertainment, and the most common frame of cultural reference in the society.

Thornham and Purvis (2005;21), on the other hand, suggest that television dramas turn out to be a main means of assessing and critiquing human experience as it provides pleasure and the truth of how things work. These same writers then argue that 'viewing television drama is intensely political, never detached from institutional, textual and ideological structures'. In here drama is once again acknowledged as reflection of human concerns which can relate a collective experience

with scale of values in the narratives. Its fictional narrative materials range from short illustrative sketches to original, full length scripts. The term also covers various genres such as situation comedies, serials, mysteries, series, soaps, docudramas and topical dramas.

Drama from its early days is expected to educate, inform and entertain people of different ages, interests and tastes. Yet, drama presentations for scores of years are subjected to transformation in the rhythm of different social changes while performing those functions.

### **2.3.3 Structures and Form of Television Drama**

Television dramas are regarded as being enactments of event that are told through the actions of characters, in a linear cause and effect structure. These dramas are a primary generator and every day sources of narratives. As Newbold, et al. (2002:131) remark, the narrative structures in the moving image are taken as 'the organization of plot into coherent sequences that communicate meaning'. It is, then, this organization process that puts forward the fascination, or entertainment, for the viewer.

Narrative, then, will concern a story and how that story is put together. Moreover, narrative, according to Fiske (1987; 128), offers the basic means of making sense of our experience of the real. Fiske further states that narrative is a means by which we accept or question our sense of social or individual identity. The meanings and values related to narratives would also shift; not only because they were told at different times, in various ways and to different people but with the social orders that establish their making. Narrative actually works within the basic framework of who tells the story as distinct from the figure who wrote the story. There would also be an addressee internal to the narration and an

addresser external to the narration (an audience or reader) whose identity is never constant. It is this audience and addressee relationship that makes story eligible for viewing.

The literary model of narrative, as Thornham and Purvis (2005; 32) state, will be more complex when it is applied into the study of television. Television does not make use of narrators as source of the narrative in the same way as that of novels as their narrators are easily identifiable unlike their televisual equivalents. The important elements for such identification of narrators are, as Holland (1997; 118) suggests, the camera angles, shots, sequence, and character perspective.

In the study of narrative, the dominant views were taken by several formalist and structuralist studies. The most recent view, among other critics, is the one provided by Roland Barthes (, 2005; 33). Barthes relates how stories make meanings and how narratives operate to encode stories. For him, it is the narrative structures that provide life and meaning to the text; and it is the text's internal dynamics, between plot, image and sequence, which link the text's systems of meaning.

The other theoretician Tzvetan Todorov (1988), in Thornham and Purvis (2005:33), proposes a five part structures, usefully deployed in the analysis of television drama. Thus, story begins with a setting of the scene and introduction of characters. Afterward, a disruption of this equilibrium with catalyst for the eruption of tension, conflict, misunderstanding, contradiction and mystery follows. Following this, exploration of the causes, implications or consequences will be presented. Then efforts at resolution which formulate a climax, a high point of tension that brings revelation or catharsis will proceed. It concludes with a resolution in a new state of relative equilibrium. This resolution shows that harmony is restored.

On the other hand, Vladimir Propp categorizes different character roles- (heroes, heroines, villains, fathers, helpers, donors, mentors) - which serves as labels in the analysis of narrative. According to Propp, states Thornham and Purvis (2005; 33), characters are attractive not for the insight they provides into human psychology but for their role and function in initiating and establishing action or event. Fiske (1987; 117), while dealing about American television, states that, these structures underlie the typical television narratives with significant consistency. In such a way, therefore, dramas can be examined and considered to their various ideological meanings beneath their texts.

#### **2.4. Realism and Television Drama**

Realism operates under a belief that the world can be sufficiently represented and elaborated. The term has been used as television's defining aesthetics and social project. As Holland (1997:121) puts it, realism 'constitutes perhaps the basic demand that our society makes of its film and television representations, apart from a very few, limited exceptions.' Realism is, as Thornham and Purvis (2005: 61) forwards, a term that makes certain claims to value despite its shifting and complex nature of its definition. Then, based on realism's importance as a yardstick of value, it would be invaluable to understand 'why it has been so central within television drama study and why its meaning has been fluctuated and contested'.

Realism formerly was fashioned in relation to theatre and more centrally, the novel. However many critics have focused on the continuity between these forms and the narrative structures of film and television maintaining the crucial differences (Thornham and Purvis, 2005:63).

Film with its capability to capture the world through photographic image seems to provide it a more immediate and direct relationship to reality than the former literary forms.

Raymond Williams (1977; 68), cited in Thornham and Purvis (2005: 61), in his explanation of the terms development offers a historical background to the confusing variability of its meaning and definitions. According to him we apply the term 'real' in two contradictory senses, senses which operate under the sense of 'realities' position in the material or in the spiritual, or ideal world. Therefore, on one side we apply the term 'real' to contrast with 'imaginary' to refer to something in its material existence, as in 'the real world'. On the other side, we use 'real' to contrast with 'apparent', to stand for a truth which lies beneath the level of the material. These meanings appear in different ways in which 'realism' and 'realistic' have been used in television drama. Both of them could be used and implied in realism to show things as they are.

Realism heavily relies on an objective reality which is experienced accurately, represented authentically and comprehensively. This, according to Williams, provides three characteristics of realism. Thus, realism has a contemporary setting; focuses on the secular action that is, with actions that have causes and are played out, totally in the material and social world; and it includes a movement toward the representation of ordinary people and subordinate social groups. The final characteristic leads to an element which is applied more on realist drama specifically identified with social realism or progressive realism. As Williams notes, this form is 'consciously interpretative in relation to a particular political view point (Thornham and Purvis, 2005; 62). The claim to accurately represent the 'real world' and its social subject is also a claim about how we should absorb that world. This claim is matched with what George Lukacs in Ngara (1985; 15) has pointed out concerning realism. Hence,

according to Lukacs true realism allows the writer to see the relationship between things and to relate his description of objects to the essence of the objects and of the reality around them. However, argues Thornham and Purvis (2005; 64), realism's methods or conventions can never be wholly a matter of description, as it needs to offer us understanding and depiction of the real. Thus, realism can be defined by the way it makes sense of the real than by what it says the real consists of.

Thornham and Purvis (2005; 65) and Holland (1997; 121) state, when we say television drama is realistic what we mean is that it is often a blend of photographic realism and cultural and generic verisimilitude-how far it goes with the cultural norms and generic expectations- and its compliance with the conventions. The conventions in this respect are made in an endeavor to make distinctions between different kinds of realist project.

The distinction made is between those which need to be about the real or Raymond Williams's 'social realism' or 'progressive realism' and those which aim instead for 'verisimilitude' or being like the real. Thornham and Purvis (2005; 64) explained that 'verisimilitude' is a term which refers to having the appearance of truth. Verisimilitude, then shows the amount to which a text conforms not to reality itself but to our expectations of the reality. This notion brings forth that the world we experience through art should not require the viewer to turn beyond it to look for the means to understand it, though it should, like the real world, appear to make its sense based on the laws of nature.

Realism, then, with its demands of telling both the authentic rendering of reality and its structure into coherent form, according to Thornham and Purvis (2005; 71), continues to assess the real and our need of it through

narrative forms. In this context realism with its continuous search for the authentic, is being used as a means by which the 'truth' of those interpretations is both claimed and evaluated.

## **2.5 Evaluating Television Drama: Aesthetics and Ideology**

Evaluating television dramas on their different merits, aspects, motives and even in their popular taste is lodged with perspectives and studies from literature and other similar humanistic backgrounds. As a result, Newbold, et al (2002;234) revealed that, different scholars from these disciplines made a claim and contribute greatly to the study of television dramas. However there is certain debating on whether there are any clear and coherent frames of reference to analyze the texts produced in this medium. This debating was also followed by, Sheehan (2001) who points out such questions as: is there a criteria to consider some dramas good and others bad; and, is there any way to identify exactly what values are loaded on the dramas?

Sheehan (2001) states that, a more promising area that gives rise to television drama study is found in literature. Literature then is a principal source to establish the approaches and methodologies employed in television drama. According to Sheehan, while some of the approaches proposed in the area scan the surface and disregard questions of value, others go deep into the questions of value in the most direct way. The broadest categories of the approaches or methodologies in the attempt to study such dramas consist of content analysis, structuralist and post-structuralist semiotics, effect research and historicist studies.

Content analysis is one of the widely used approaches that examine texts in their manifest characteristics, which are merely specified and quantified. It tabulates, for instance, acts of sex and violence in the dramas. It also offers statistics on characters in different dramas classified based on age, sex, socio-economic status and behavior patterns. It also embraces some limited value in creating superficial patterns. To a considerable extent, however, it is prone to seek more questions than it answers. At other instances it uses rudimentary categories like pro-social versus anti-social characters. It moves over the surface of what television is all about, while it fails to examine either the underling assumptions of world view or the overarching structures of power. It also ignores or disregards sociological contexts or philosophical frames of reference.

Structuralist and post-structuralist semiotics on the other hand, as Sheehan (2005) explains, is European in origin and uses more of grand theory research to examine texts in terms of their formal qualities. By taking its task as the deconstruction of conventional codes of discourse, it perceives both author and audience as decentred subjects across different independent practices. It emphasizes the specificity of every mode of discourse: the literary, the cinematic, the televisual, etc. It is in opposition to realist modes of representation to narrative form, rational coherence, and socio-historical analysis. It engages in making relationship only within the text itself and avoids questions of the relation of text to anything external to it.

Effect research at the other extreme is mostly the behaviorist equivalent of content analysis. It, thus, tries to measure quantifiable changes in individual behavior patterns resulting from particular viewing experiences. It continuously engaged in finding out whether any acts of violence have any impact on personal acts of viewers. The basic problem

in such kind of study is that it fails to define its context broadly. As a result, there might be a problem of grasping either deeper psychological processes or larger historical shifts.

Historicist approach, at the other end, is involved in inquiries to examine production or consumption within a wider sphere. More emphasis in such study is, for example, given to the relationship between the existing social structure and the power in the society and the artistic products of that society. Most studies at this level, as Sheehan (2001) points out, are carried out at a broad or a holistic approach focusing on the scope of individual creativity, ideological and subversive readings, the complex and subconscious processes through which programs are constructed and interpreted.

Therefore, this study appropriated this last approach, the historicist methodology, to meet the purpose of the study. This method, thus, will enable the researcher to examine particular texts and it can help to relate texts to other texts and to a broad socio-historical contexts. Dealing with some of the dramas, it emphasizes that the dramas are not just a simple and particular play but are a pattern of social development attached with the pattern of the social history.

There are a great deal of evaluation and analysis made on particular production as well as on continuous patterns of representation along various productions. Thus, the fundamental criteria employed to this study are the two inter-related categories: aesthetic and ideological.

### **2.5.1 Aesthetic Values**

Aesthetics is a term derived from a Greek word meaning 'things perceptible to the sense', 'sensory impressions'. As Pope (2002; 175) puts it, at a broadest level, anything could constitute an aesthetic effect simply 'by virtue of being sensed and perceived. Currently, aesthetic is mainly identified with the cultivation of good feeling in anything and everything from fine wine and clothes to literature, painting and music. In television drama aesthetics is one of the ways to judge its total flow. In such a case, there is one appropriate question that deserves a consideration while dealing with aesthetic value: what is it that makes some television drama great or good and others average or bad?

One obvious consideration in aesthetic evaluation, in this regard, is the production standards or quality of casting, performance, camera angle, lighting, locations, editing and make-up. All these play a part in making the distinction between good and bad in the nature to television drama. Nevertheless, Sheehan (2001) forwards, there exist a world which is more inclined to a dependence on star casting, fluid camera movements, fast cutting, exotic locations, trendy soundtracks to discussion on the current state of dramas that centered on film versus video tape, studio versus location shooting, and the single play versus the series or serials.

The other important consideration brought in television drama is the significance of the story. Sheehan also remarks, all other considerations of visual style, pace and performance ought to be seen in a second place to evaluation of the drama in terms of its basic human meaning. Therefore, all questions concerning the method of presenting the story should pursue the question of whether it is a story worth telling.

It would be crucial, then, to consider such questions as what is it that makes a story worth telling? What is it that makes some stories more significant than others? What is it that makes some drama more recognizable and meaningful than others? In relation to these questions, Sheehan points out that the most significant stories are those which reflect the epochal in the immediate, by showing the conflicts and preferences of the period as cultivated at the moment of actual lives. The most recognizable and meaningful dramas embody a metaphoric thrust that reaches beyond itself and presents a whole way of life. It stimulates social recognition. It purifies what is implored confusingly in others lives. It puts forward what is there, but ignored, for others. It appropriates the past, interprets the present and envisages the future. It shapes individual image of social reality. It also captures the flow of historical process.

Television drama should be evaluated, not only by the degree to which it finds out the specific capacity of television as a signifying practice, but also by way of which all drama should be evaluated. Therefore, it should be investigated according to its scope, its depth, its integrity, its authenticity, its clarity, its relevance, its immediacy, its rhythm and its resolution. It should be analyzed as to whether it raises very useful issues and whether it presents authentic and realistic characters in credible situations.

The dramas of television, wrote Thornahm and Purvis (2005; 7), has been considered both as the creative vision of the individual artist and realist concept of truth. The process of artistic creation, then, is deeply rooted in the artist's experience of life. Sheehan (2005) also points out that drama is invaluable shaped by the gathered experience of the writer's life and by the extent to which they assimilated the most developed knowledge, the most basic emotions and the most important socio-historical processes.

It is highly relied on the extent to which the writer perceives the pulse of the times about which he is writing. Possibly, one could say that without the dynamic organization of life in the mind of the writer, without a philosophy, there would be no drama with real value and scale.

Television being a dramatic medium with large production, everything it produces may not be good. As Sheehan (2001) points out, in any period and in any medium, there is so much bad works along with the great ones. However, it is not important for television drama to be good in its totality. In its time, television has produced a range of dramas with great variety of quality. There are also dramas which are great so that their characters haunt the mind and convey metaphoric meaning and narrate stories which capture the thrust of socio-historical collision on the ground.

## **2.5.2. Ideological Value**

### **2.5.2.1. The Concept of Ideology**

Ideology has its origins in Marxism and its edict that all systems of ideas, beliefs, meanings and values are determined by the social and economic structures of the society which created them (Thornham and Purvis, 2005; 74 and Eaglton, 1976; 15). In this sense ideology refers to the shared set of meanings and values through which a society makes sense of their experiences and their affiliation to the material world. These meanings and values, as Thornahm and Purvis (2005; 74) wrote, do not exist as a set of ideas or beliefs but they are encapsulated and dispersed through particular social institutions. Moreover, they exist in the level of 'common sense'-the every day conceptual frameworks which people use to make sense of the world and its events.

Any art form, as Eaglton (1976:17) puts it, “emanates from an ideological notion of the world and there is not such thing as a work of art entirely devoid of ideological content”. This statement suggests the strong relationship between art and ideology and subjects the case to questions of what relationship art has to ideology. In response to this question, Eaglton presents two options of opposite positions. The first is that literature is nothing but ideology in a certain artistic form and works of literature are just expressions of the ideologies of their time. In this case the literary works are more of a reflection of dominant ideologies and are prisoners of ‘false consciousness’, unable to go further to arrive at the truth. The second and opposite case grasps on the fact that a number of literary works challenge the ideology they confront, and appropriate part of the definition of literary art itself. Authentic art, as Ernst Fischer (1969) contends in his book *‘Art Against Ideology’*, cited in Eaglton (1976; 17), usually transcends the ideological boundary of its time, producing perspectives into the realities which ideology conceals from view.

Apart from these two cases, however, a more subtle view of ideology was provided by the French Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser. For Althusser, wrote Eaglton, “art has its own particular relationship to ideology”. Ideology, then, values the ways in which people experience the real world, which in fact is the experience literature offered to us what it looks like to live in a certain conditions than a conceptual analysis of those conditions. Nevertheless, art performs more than just inactively reflects that experience. It found itself deep in ideology, but it also tries to separate itself from it, to the point where it allows us to feel and see the ideology from which it springs.

Ideology, according to Althusser, represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence. Ideology, then, works through what he termed as ‘ideological state Apparatuses’ that subsume

institutions like religion, education and the media which, though not necessarily controlled by the state, functions in its interests, extending its power to manipulate the systems of values and beliefs and also their related practices. Hall (1977; 330), cited in Thornham and Purvis (2005:75) stated that:

*As individuals we have our identities constituted through ideology: we can become subjects - makers of meaning and authors of our actions - only by being subjected, by operating within the conceptual frameworks or 'maps of meaning' which ideology constructs for us.*

In this way, 'the communication apparatus,' the press, the radio and television has proved to be powerful ideological institutions. As the mass media developed and transformed into a higher position in each step they become the main channels means and for the production and distribution of culture, and progressively take the ideological sphere.

Consideration of the mass media as a powerful instrument of ideological apparatus means, therefore, television as a pervasive and easily accessible medium for the society would be liable for inquiry in those terms with the main purpose of elucidating the relation between artistic creation and ideology. The endeavor also would touch where the writer stood in relation to the socio-historical impacts of his time and the extent to which he has worked out a world view that encompasses the realities of the world that confronts him. This fact, as Sheehan (2001) points out, reveals the basic aspects shaping the kind of story and the way the writer tells the story. In this respect it would be mandatory to expound what relationships exist between television drama and ideology.

### **2.5.2.2 Ideology and Television Drama**

What television provides are images, representations and narratives about the social environment, a nation, as well as the world, not reality itself. Television dramas, thus, are a massively powerful carrier of ideology and play a considerable role in the development and dissemination of ideology on many levels. Sheehan (2001) forwards that ideology operates not only just when the characters make speech marking their values and beliefs or just when its plots are obviously show the virtues of the system or by its specific programs but also through its total flow, its changing images, that mingled with images drawn from a host of other sources, to make a kind of composite picture of the world in our minds over a period of time. Similarly, Hall (1977; 340-2), cited in Thornham and Purvis (2005:76), suggests three forms of 'ideological work' performed by television in society. The first, in an increasingly fragmented society, is to offer images and representations of 'the lives, meanings, practices and values' of social groups unfamiliar to us.' The second is to offer a means of making sense of these unfamiliar groups. Finally, it is to 'shake into an acknowledged order' what has thus been made obvious and classified to produce an ideological consensus about how the world works and what it means. Briefly, the ideological work of television that holds our picture of the world through its representations classifies these representations, and works to maintain the consent of the imaginary unity or consistency it constitutes.

Ideology has often been taken to be synonymous with propaganda, bias, distortion or false consciousness. In this study, however, ideology refers to a set of interrelated views and values systematically engendered by specific socio-historical conditions. It is also made to focus on the fact that the images, ideas, norms and codes, which people take for granted,

are firmly linked with the time, space and social-conditions within which they emerge. These conditions at large are not long-lasting, universal or unconditional varieties but they are always found in a continuous state of change.

To examine the ideological perspectives of television drama in such a way, it is necessary to focus not only on a specific dramatic production but on the general patterns of development of television drama. Then one need to underscore the assumptions encapsulated in the recurring images, plot, settings, themes and modes of characterization. It is also important to analyze the changes which have occurred over a period of time within the larger socio-historical contexts.

Television drama, according to Thornham and Purvis (2005; 12) erect particular forms of social knowledge that marks the actions and discourse of their cast of characters in terms of the main set of truth. It also provides the collective images, stereo-types and myths of popular culture through which the society is represented. Its stories, functioning as myth despite its appearance of realism, express and affect the push and pressure of a wider world.

Analyzing television dramas from the stories and societies angle demands to shed light on the experiences, moods, concerns, hopes, fears and values of the social forces in a given culture at a given time. It may reflect a lot about the texture of the times though it may not do so in a direct and simple way. Every drama, Sheehan (2001) argues, even if not deliberately, depicts something of the dynamics of the interacting capability of forces in the society.

In general, the ideological reflections that stem from the total flow of television are by no means identical. Ideological identities of dramas,

Sheehan (2001), Thornham and Purvis (2005; 76); Rafter (2000; 5) wrote, are in a constant state of changes; hence they vary according to time, place, programme, production source, author etc. There are significant differences among the dramas produced in different periods according to changes in the power, the attitudes, and the assumptions we live by changed. Hence dominant ideology always needs to be continually re-negotiated against the oppositional and alternative trends.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **EVOLUTION OF ETV DRAMAS**

Ethiopian television since its inception has gone through various social circumstances, different periods and ideologies. In all of its transmission era, television has produced a considerable number of dramas. Accordingly, the dramas have been evolved in both manner of production and the social values they envisaged based on the socio-historical situation which underlies all the dramas.

These dramas, however, may not be judged by the standards of western production which attained the highest level in television production. Since television production is strongly tied with the socio-economic and technological development, it could be hard to compete with the tradition of industry that outshined greatly both in economic and technological development of the medium. However, it should be noted that the understanding television offered in respect to the production standard of the nation will hopefully stimulate a better future prospects.

In this discussion part of the study, ETV dramas would be viewed as evolving from time to time based on existing social conditions and in the manner of production. The study also offers a view of the reality based on an image of totality, society and interconnectedness of the periods. This study could not trace the whole periods of production, but it took the major landmarks which signaled the evolution of the dramas through the changing social circumstances.

Three events, in this regard, are taken as the major landmarks for this historicist study based on transformation of Ethiopian society since the coming of television.

The first is the imperial regime which is responsible for the coming of television in Ethiopia. The second is the military regime which took power following the popular revolution of 1974. Since there was the same ideological view that in the 1980's that continued from the 1970's, the study did not cover this decade. The third is the post-1991 era which signaled a new direction for more liberal television drama writing.

### **3.1. The Coming of Television**

#### **3.1.1. Ethiopia in the 1960's**

Ethiopia in the 1960's was ruled by an absolute monarchy. This absolute power was led by Emperor Haile Selassie who ruled the country for a long period.

In this establishment, Bahru (2002; 201) wrote, Ethiopian condition from every aspect was dominated and controlled by the emperor's personality for a long time. In this respect, he was able to gain a special and almost supernatural aura. He also came to be taken, Bahru added, as a permanent factor, as immutable as the mountains and the rivers of the country. His birthday and coronation day become national holidays and were celebrated with magnificent public event.

The media has played a major role that enshrined the cult of personality and brought him to superhuman heights. The educational system also served the same purpose.

At the period, Ethiopian societies were experiencing a new mode of production under feudo-capitalism. Modernization was introduced broadly as factories spread out. However, there was still a predominant feudal mentality and views that relies on blood ties and land than capital or labor.

This capitalist intrusion brought various manufacturing industries new technologies. A considerable number of labor force in the factories were constituted by uneducated and unskilled people who fled from the rural areas (Markakis and Nega, 2006; 45). In such case of unlimited supply of labor, Ethiopian workers were easily and harshly victimized. Though workers' self- help organizations were established, their movements were limited and sometimes forbidden by the government.

Most of the firms were controlled by foreigners in areas of import and export trade. The managerial and other higher positions were totally in the hands of foreigners. Besides, intermediated trade sectors were dominated by foreign community residents.

Amidst this process, the imperial rule began to experience a new form of discontent from each corner of the society. Students began to launch demonstrations against the government. The upheaval and demonstrations continued until this regime was replaced by the military regime.

### **3.1.2. The Beginning of Broadcasting**

At such historical period of the 1960s, when social upheavals and capitalist intrusion reigned, Television came to Ethiopia.

Television normally began operation on November 1, 1963 after an opening ceremony. This opening was accompanied by the inaugural speech of Emperor Haile Selassie. On the occasion, as the ETV programme transmitted on November 11, 1999, documented source, he said that the coming of television heralded a new step to modernize the country. Actually, television began its operation by materials brought from Khartoum and Cairo. The installation was made without planning

for the purpose of transmitting the approaching coronation ceremony of the then emperor.

Before television began its normal operation in the country, it was first pioneered in the occasion of the inaugural meeting of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) which was convened at Addis Ababa, in 1963.

Television from the days of its arrival was run in the same administration system together with the countries radio station. Working under the same umbrella, the two different media merged together to be called Ethiopian Radio and Television. Besides, programme schedules were filled with imported films and music. Moreover, most of the personnel of television were crammed with foreigners.

After television began its normal operation in 1963, its transmission was available for group listening and viewing. Television sets were scarce and were available only for few elite groups. For the majority of the population television was available in major high ways and auditoriums for mass viewing.

During this period, since ETV did not have video cameras which have the capacity to record for long time, most programmes were transmitted live in a black and white. As a result most of the air- times were covered by foreign films and dramas. In the same way, the cameras that existed at the time did not have the capacity to record sounds while recording images. As a result, sound recording was made in studio separately from the image produced.

### 3.1.3. ETV Dramas in the 1960's

ETV at its early years of transmission was a new medium with programmes imported from western countries. Most of these programmes were found in the forms of movies and series dramas. Domestic productions were presented in small amounts as the recording cameras were under developed.

Foreign dramas such as *Beverly Hills Cop*, *Bonanza*, *Espionage*, *Robin Hood* and *Wonders of the world* were some of the major imported programmes that inhabited the station in the early years of ETV.

These dramas frequently focused on law and order, family life and adventures of people. Apart from covering air-time for the new medium which hardly produces its own programmes, these foreign dramas offered an exposure to its audiences on the potential of television. The dominance of foreign dramas also synchronized with the spread of capitalist systems that prevailed in the country. In this way the dramas were supposed to spread the essence of modernization through the flow of television which was viewed by few groups. Later, ETV began producing dramas which was transmitted live from the studio. For that purpose, theatre players were called upon to the studio to present plays that entertained audiences.

As time moved towards the late 1960's, there were attempts to produce drama out of the studio with location shooting. Among such plays, a drama entitled ' 27 , 1969' (*Me and My 27 Servants*) could be taken as a spring board for the development of productions. Focusing on the love affair of young couples from the higher class family, the drama represents the manner and wealth of the higher class society. In the

drama we can see the character represented by one of the early television actors, Wubeshet Workalemahu, driving a car and taking his finance to cinema and spending their time happily. In such a way the dramas reflected the life of the highest class people that possibly had the access to view programmes from television screen.

Aesthetically, the dramas lack a clear visual style because of the blurred line that interrupts the image. Sounds of the dialogues were recorded in the studio and they were long and imprecise. There was slow pace in the plot development and fluid camera movement was barely discernible except in a few cases. Since television production instruments were not well developed much could not be expected from the dramas. Yet, it is undeniable that the continuity of drama production in the station was new at the time.

In general, this period marked the foundation of ETV with its prospects as a medium of drama. The capitalist modes of production were also transmitted through the station as new ways of modernization. Foreign films dominated the channel bringing international flavours to the country, which was emerging out of the feudal system. The beginning of home Produced dramas demonstrated a type of drama that reflected the life of the wealthy social group. Nevertheless they marked the beginning of ETV on the path of progress towards producing its own dramas by its writers and actors in its settings.

### **3.2. Transformation, Progress and Challenges: Ethiopia in the 1970's**

Ethiopian societies in the seventies were in a high current of social movement that was induced by the popular Ethiopian revolution. This revolution which toppled the Emperor from power broke out in February

1974. The situation was unexpected for many people though there had been callings and protests from the early sixties. In this period, the society, most of them students, were posing questions concerning land, the most important resource to Ethiopians. Since most of the land was controlled by a few, leaving the majority landless tenants, students always went to demonstration holding slogans. Among the slogans about land issue, as Kiflu (1993; 39) puts it, is the one shown below:

*We demand the parliament again and again  
Not for the reduction of feudal dues  
But for Land to the Tiller.*

This kind of slogans and students' demonstrations were common until the imperial regime was brought down by the uprising of 1974. This uprising brought together various social groups in a spontaneous, convergent, but unorganized and leaderless assault on the regime. Though the revolution was dominantly an urban phenomenon, there were some agitations among the peasantry. In the city and the towns, different parts of the society including students, teachers, unemployed youths, civil servants, taxi drivers and soldiers rose in different acts of defiance.

The movement then resulted in the replacement of Haile Selassie's imperial regime by a self-proclaimed military junta. However, the military junta had to deal with protests from different parts that demanded a people's government. When the new government failed to accept this demand, a counter-revolution emerged led by Ethiopian people's

revolutionary party (EPRP) and Ma'ison (the Amharic acronym for the Rival All Ethiopian Socialist Movement).

At such heated moment, the military regime became responsive to other popular aspirations and adopted a number of proposals for social reforms which later came into effect. As Markakis and Nega (2006:17) wrote, relying on such accomplishments, the military junta claimed legitimacy in the name of revolutionary socialism. It then issued a list of its objectives to what it called the philosophy of 'Ethiopia First'.

When the reforms were declared and came to an effect, it brought a shock for many aristocrats while it pleased other classes which had been inflicted by the feudo-bourgeois system. According to Markakis and Nega (2006; 154) the reforms were introduced to dismantle the socio-economic structure of the old regime. On the other hand, peasants and most factory workers envisioned a hope of improving condition.

As a starting point, the reform began with nationalization which heralded great news for the radical intelligentsia that demanded a national economy independence of capitalism and imperialism. Beginning with banks, financial institutions and insurance companies, the state nationalized 72 concerns involved in food, beverage, textile, leather, shoe printing, chemical, iron and steel processing and production. At the same time, most positions were taken over by Ethiopians and a better working atmosphere was anticipated for the workers.

The land reform was also declared and both rural and urban land were granted to be the collective property of the Ethiopian society, the distribution between owner and tenants was abolished, and transfer of land through any means was prohibited. The occasion was celebrated by

the urban people staging huge demonstrations. This reform was considered as the major achievement of the popular revolution.

Then, the reform was pushed further to a concerted campaign to radicalize the peasants and the illiterate. As Bahru (2006:160) states, teachers and student corps were urged to undertake a campaign to promote “progress through co-operation’. The aim was to explain the objectives of the “Ethiopia First’ movement to the rural people. Later, other tasks of promoting functional literacy and community self-help organization were added. The literacy campaign also spread to urban areas in the essence of providing ‘basic education’ for citizens aiming at the elimination of illiteracy through the motto ‘education for all’.

These are some of the aspects in the life of the country during the seventies. This life had been reflected by different forms of artistic creation. However, the doctrine of socialism set its own way concerning art only as a reflection of the society as it is. Therefore, only works that educate and inform people were considered valuable; anything outside this sentiment was considered undesirable. As a result, artistic works were made to be the reflection of the social milieu that deals with the time, campaigns and orders of the ruling class. Medias and popular stages, especially, were bound by such rules and were forced to do so until new forms of art took over.

### **3.2.1. ETV after the Revolution**

After the popular revolution of February 1974, television like other media has been an instrument of mobilization and education. Fekadwa Moges (1980; 7) forwards that in this period media as a whole were weapons toward a goal to eradicate capitalism and neo-colonialism under concerted attack. They were responsible to promote the revolution a step

forward in the right direction. Though there were limited skilled personnel, ETV endeavored to depict the revolutionary activities of the people and outcome of the revolution where its transmission reached.

During this period, nevertheless, television was not a popular medium. It was a utensil available only in the salons of a few members of elite classes. Its distribution was also limited to Addis Ababa and other areas were not privileged to ETV's transmission. The citizens had to go to public halls or hotels if they wanted to watch television. As a result, Radio was much more familiar and available as a source of information and entertainment.

Television began to receive attention and laid its base as a popular and important medium, when the film entitled '*The Hidden Hunger*' was televised to the public (Fekadwa Moges, 1980; 9). This film, transmitted after the disposal of the emperor lured the public to develop a particular preference for television than the radio or news paper. Since then the power and impact of television has been acknowledged by everyone.

At the same time, Mr. Samuel Ferenje was appointed as Ethiopian manager of ETV. There were also enrollments and transfer from other media to replace the foreign personnel that were dismissed or fled out of the country immediately after the revolution.

A decision was made to avoid foreign dramas and films that exposed audiences to foreign cultural and ideological elements. This was necessary because they were considered vernacular to capitalist sentiments and propaganda. Eventually, the country decided to promote the production of local drama programmes. As a substitute for Western films, the station began to present films obtained through a cultural exchange programmes with friendly and socialist countries. Moreover, as

Fekadwa Moges (1980:18) states, unlike the feudo-bourgeoisie period, programmes inclined more to political, economic and social development issues. Entertainment programmes declined enormously and very few programmes in this area were transmitted occasionally. Dramas were made to portray the political, economic and social situation of the country which was oriented towards supporting the values of socialist Ethiopia.

### **3.2.2. ETV Dramas in the 1970's**

After the popular revolution of the 1974, ETV dramas were largely influenced and shaped by the life of the nation. Regarding technological developments, according to a programme on '*ETV's History and Working traditions*', transmitted on November 1999, the seventies witnessed an improvement introducing a new video recording and editing equipment. Consequently, these developments increased the visual qualities of the dramas as compared to what had been during the early years of ETV despite the fact that color television was not yet introduced.

At this stage, the studio-based live dramas were appended to location shooting dramas. The location shooting, however, was limited to in-house drama production. The cultural environment was occasionally used and as a result the dramas were made to focus on domestic engagements than the public arena. Dramas such as '*Yaltadelech Hiwot*' ('*The Unfortunate life*'), (1978) and '*Bale zetegn-eger shererit*' ('*The Nine Legged Spider*'), (1978), were made in-house to reflect domestic engagements. In fact, there was little attempt to take some of the scenes of a drama to the cultural environment. Such dramas as '*Endeh Neber*', ('*It was like this*'), (1977) and '*Ha HU Be Sidest Wer*' ('*Hu in six months*'), (1977) have their scenes shot out of the house.

Camera movement and pace of action were very slow which seemed to reflect the slow trend of the period's life style. In this regard, the cameras are seen to move from one character to the other in the same direction whenever their turns for a dialogue reach. Yet, there were paces which were so slow and meandering as we could experience in real life. There was also the use of minimal dramatic actions and could be said that the dramas perfectly suited for radio programmes.

The trend of production of ETV dramas was heavily influenced by theatrical production. ETV dramas were left to the theatre players in their early developments. Of course, there were no other immediate sources of drama actors for television which is a situation still continues to persist.

Different theatre houses in the country, all from Addis Ababa, were responsible for the production of the dramas that suited the need of the single television station. Theatre houses such as National Theatre, Ras Theatre and City-Hall Theatre were providing their resources for the production of dramas for a long time.

In the middle of this trend, it was not unexpected that the television dramas would resemble that of the theatrical production. Since the drama performers for this medium were totally drawn from Theatre houses, the theatrical tradition was reflected on television drama. The resemblance and influences then can be explained in terms of performance, setting and characterization.

Regarding performance, characters in the television dramas were influenced by what has been experienced in the theatrical performance. There were minimum actions which demonstrate any event takes place

in the dramas. Rather they were dominated by descriptive dialogues which are in deficient of either philosophical or metaphorical meanings. Most of the dramas were single plays which showed urban life as a prototypical production. In respect to characterization, most of the time there were characters depicting two different generations involved in ideological conflict. Many productions were centered on the conflict between old (father or mother) and the young generations. Such conflicts were usually resolved with the submission of the old idea to the new and enlightened world views reflected by the young generation that brought a social change through revolution.

Dramas such as *'HA HU Be Sidest Wer'* (*'Ha Hu in six- months'*), *'Yaltadelech Hiwot'* (*The 'Unfortunate life'*), and *'Bale Zetegn-Eger Shererit'* (*The Nine- Legged-Spider'*) could be examples of prototypical dramas of the period transmitted in the single state-owned television station.

There were also other dramas that reflect the infliction of the past regime and the gains of the revolution. In this respect, the drama *'Endeh Neber'* (*'It was like this'*), (1977), raised issues which conceptualize the past in a flashback. The two characters discussed how the feudal land owners and the factory owners exploited the peasants and factory workers. The drama concluded with the determination to safeguard the well being of the revolution which is gained by popular movement.

The dominant theme of the period was confrontation between old values and the new and young world view cultivated by the new social order. The dramas were mainly made to illustrate such clashes between the old generation and the young generation composed in a simple story. They also depicted the mistrust of the old people towards the new edicts and orders of the time. In the dramas, usually the father or mother metaphorically represented the old system that seemed to neglect the

new social order while the young radical generation represents the new social orders and values introduced during that time. The old people in the dramas were seen as suspicious of the changes.

### **3.2.3. Reconstruction of Society**

Most of the productions of the dramas after the revolution were very much concerned with the question of social reconstruction. The newly emerging social orders were alien to most people and were viewed with mistrust. The period hosts an ideological conflict between the outdated system and the newly emerging world view. The reforms and the new world view introduced after the revolution were the sources of the conflict between the old and the new generation that resolved dramatically. These reforms and changes were not accepted with delight by all social groups.

Then dramas could be seen as revelation of the ideological conflict that existed at the time. Social realist dramas were prepared by theatre players that aimed at familiarizing society with communist ideology. The creation of socialist Ethiopia was also undertaken by utilizing those dramas.

In the following two dramas, the researcher examines particular ideological values and conflicts depicted in them. The first is 'Ha Hu in six-months', a single play produced in 1977, and the second drama is ' ' ( *'The unfortunate life'*), a one hour drama produced in 1978 which reflects the major issues of the then period.

### 3.2.3.1. Analysis of ስልጠና ስልጠና /Ha Hu in six-months

*'Ha Hu in six-months'* was produced by ETV in the late seventies during the time at which the state was engaged in different forms of campaigns in the attempt to create a new social order. The title and content of this drama is similar with the theatre written by Tsegaye Gebremedhin, a renowned Ethiopian writer. The drama was presented during the time old practices and values prevailed in the country were considered obsolete. One of the campaigns carried out during the period was 'Development through Cooperation' under which an effort was made to expand 'basic education'. Among the dramas preoccupied with the reflection and callings of the movement *'Ha Hu in six-months'* can be considered more significant for its sharp dialogues and limited characters. The drama pictured a situation that was analogous to what was experienced in reality.

The play presents the conflict between an old lady and a young woman. The characters in this play represent metaphorically different outlooks of the old system that needs to be reviewed and the new system and world view which took over to ascertain a new beginning. This conflict revealed or reflected the 'education for all' campaign as one of the characters stands against this new insurgence and the other trying to accept its values.

This single play, *'Hu Hu in six-months'*, was crafted in the same way as what Stuart Hall termed as forms of 'ideological work' of television drama. In this respect, first the play presents the lives, meanings practices and values of the social group. Then it creates a means to make sense of the group. Finally, it provides a consensus about how the world works and what it means. Crafted in such manner, *'Ha Hu in six-*

months' told a story of Zeleka and her mother-in-law whose outlooks that renders the clashed each other.

The story opens with a gathering of three people in a middle class family for a coffee ceremony. Then we see an old man reading a bible and Zeleka studying Amharic letters. However, her mother-in-law disapproves of what Zeleka is doing and keeps telling her that she would never overcome her illiteracy at this age of hers. Thus they exchanges dialogues that reveal their attitude runs:

*(ETV, 1977)*

*Zeleka's mother-in-law: You'd better raise your child than wandering about to learn the alphabets.*

*Zeleka: Don't say that: I will learn. It's a high time I stopped licking my fingers. I will learn 'Ha Hu' until I hold my degree*

*Zeleka's mother-in-law: Are your fingers any worthier than scraping cow dung?*

The in-law's attitude against the new literacy campaign, however, was not just to keep Zeleka at home for domestic duty but it was born of her fear of the change that has come over the country. It was a resistance of the new outlook that has never been experienced before. The new edict issued by the government, however, demanded everyone to go to the nearest place where basic education is provided. The drama reflecting the existing fact became an evidence for how people viewed the basic education which was among the radical measures taken to modernize the nation.

As the drama moves forward the audience could see the mother-in-law entering a bank. There, she cannot put her signature and the bank clerk insults her for still using her finger as a licking saying 'where have you been when every one learned how to write and read? (Ha Hu in six-months)', (1977). At that moment she decided to join the education to save herself from such insults. At the end as she comes home she tells Zeleka that she too wants to study and insists to begin learning as soon as possible. She also tells her what makes her indignant:

*Teach me right now. That uncultured boy would never insult me again. May he find his illiterate somewhere else? Besides, what you have accomplished in three months, I must be able to manage to do in a month and a half as I am older than you are.*

Thus, this episode reveals how the old belief has given its way to the new social order introduced at the moment. The drama in general pressed against the old world view and outlook which is about to be replaced by the newly emerged world view, values and meanings. The drama, in general, is made in a way to enlighten a citizen to the emerging social orders so that it upholds and reflected the essence of the period as a mirror.

### **3.2.3.2. Analysis of ' /The Unfortunate Life**

This play which was produced in the late seventies by ETV centers on the life of a family reflecting the social condition of the period. This play appeared in a way of social realism revealed the ideological struggle of the society that lived during that period. As such, the drama is meant to familiarize the people with the emerging new social order by repudiating the old traditions and beliefs. It, then, presents different characters that hold different ideological values.

Like many other prototypical dramas of the period, this drama was made for the purpose of advocating and informing people to the new beliefs and values brought by the radical social change. At a number of points it lucidly manifests the reality experienced in the life of societies that lived during that period. It attests to the clash that appeared and reappeared between characters based on their outlooks presented as a reaction to the real world.

The story starts by presetting the outlook of two brothers in different camps. At first we are introduced what world view these characters embodied. At the later episode the conflict between the different outlooks came to be contested.

In this family the only radical character we see, Bekele, rushes into conflict as a result of the mistrust his father has developed for his view which is molded by the new social order. Bekele even if makes an effort to advocate his belief as part of the new social order that governs the time, he could not be accepted easily by his father who stoutly opposes the changes that appeared in the country all of a sudden.

The other character set against Bekele is Girma his younger brother, who yearns to flee to western countries. He is viewed as trying to get money from his father mischievously. He is thus demonstrated as having a less ethical behavior throughout the drama.

As the drama develops, we can see the ideological conflict in a number of ways. First, there is the conflict in the issue of eliminating illiteracy. In this regard, the play seems to advocate that the older generation needs to acknowledge the virtues of education so that they would create an enlightened citizen. The drama at this moment also focused on the view that lack of education affected the older people, who are shown to be ignorant of the 'anti-illiteracy' campaign. However, the drama explicitly shows that the children of this society who had better education are more willing to acknowledge change. Understanding of such vision can be traced from what the two characters, Bekele and his father Ato Demerew, exchanged:

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*Ato Demerew: so is it appropriate for you to go and embarrass the elderly asking them to learn?*

*Bekele: to learn will embarrass no one, father. To learn is to enlighten oneself. So, I would say learn and research*

The drama all the way through such dialogues then identifies itself in concepts of education and progress which dominate the period at the time of its production.

In the play the other issue of an obsolete practice is also raised. It is explicitly expressed that since Ato Demerew earns his living through the money lent for a big interest, he stood against the new social order which defies it. Girma also play his part by encouraging his father to keep on with this practice of which Bekele firmly opposes and considers as

outdated. Because of this situation Girma becomes the favored son while Bekele loses his father's acceptance until the drama approaches the end.

In their dialogue they talked about how the progressive social change has come up with decrees that govern the traditions of society. The play here tries to show how the social practices which dominate the past were considered obsolete to modernization and development. Stressing the responsibility of the younger generation the drama sought radical change to such obsolete practices. In the play the Bekele revealed the effect of this practice which finally appeared convincing in the view of his father:

*It is unfair to snatch the money one has earned through hard work. Since there is an official office which has the authority of lending or borrowing money, it is an illegal act to lend money for interest and if caught it would lead to prosecution and confiscation.*

According to this extract, after the social institutions changed by a more lucid and new social order, people were confronted each other to get a new notion. Obsolete practices were, then, taken as a major center of conflict among societies from different camp.

Political issues were also raised in the drama that transcends the period. In this case it easily understood that Bekele is a communist that admonished the value of other systems. Every time he got the chance he explained the new social order and the obsolete political systems for his

people. In the drama, it is stressed that the older people who are in conflict with the new social system are ignorant of those systems which are narrated everyday by the avowed communists. On one occasion this issue is raised humorously to express the ignorance as well as the endeavour to enlighten them.

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*Bekele: Feudalism, Imperialism and democratic capitalism are....*

*Ato Demerew: (interrupting) Don't call other people's name here. Don't back bite anyone in my house.*

*Bekele: These are not people's names. Imperialism is a system that exploited workers by monopolizing factories. The harsh features of these systems are enormous.*

Political issues and terms actually overwhelmed the period along side various edicts and reforms. The drama documented the image of the period as it brings forth the lack of knowledge about the proliferated political terms that opposed each other. Thus, the play recreated this fact as a drama crafted in the way of social realism.

The story also traces the existing tradition which stretched from the early period in terms of the way some people earn their living. Among them, the usurious practice which was banned at that particular period as it

was considered one way of embezzling the lower class society became the major issue.

In the end Bekele emerges as an enlightened person who defeats the old ways of belief which indicate the spirit of the period. Then Bekele reveals the intention of Girma which for Bekele is an act of betrayal of not only his father but also to his country. Thus he scolds Girma in the presence of his family as a traitor:

*You intend to go to the white's country, you traitor. While you are expected to educate them, how come you venture to leave your mother country with the money collected in usury? Traitor.*

This makes their father very irritated where upon he decides to get rid of Girma while demanding Bekele's forgiveness. Girma then feels emptiness and becomes embarrassed when he thinks of his future. In his little room where the drama concludes the camera shows Girma seated on the mattress crying and bewailing his wasteful past. He understands all his errors and appreciates his brother for the virtue of his education and enlightened world view and as the one who could live a fortunate life.

### **3.2.6. Judging the Period in terms of the Dramas**

As it has been described so far, the Ethiopian revolution of 1974 marked a new form of drama which is molded by the life of the nation at that time. This period had also shown a better recording cameras and editing facilities than what was during the feudo- bourgeoisie period. More dramas were produced with themes predominantly concerned with conflicting views between old and new values. The dramas proliferated with local settings and local actors that could be taken as another level of progress to television drama production in the nation.

In general, ETV dramas in the seventies, set in a period during which Marxist socialist ideological milieu prevailed, can be described as follows.

1. The dramas were set in a period of turmoil and social change.
2. Most of the dramas told simple stories that revolved around ideological conflicts within the society.
3. The dramas were preoccupied with layers of ideological struggle that trace many overlapping social orders. Thus in a single play one can find more than one issue brought to contestations.
4. The dramas presented the same norms of behavior which emphasized the triumph of the new world view to facilitate the dominant ideology of the period.

### **3.3. New Directions: Ethiopia in the 1990's**

This period marked another significant social experience in Ethiopian society following the demise of the military junta on May 28, 1991, after a long and bitter war. Right after the demise, Ethiopia embarked on the path of democratic rule. The year 1991, then, became a significant

landmark in laying the foundation for another new change and social order in the nation.

Accordingly, the nature of the administration system has changed. In turn, the state introduced new establishments to ensure an expression of thought in a more liberated atmosphere that create a relative confidence to the citizen. In turn a more stable condition has been created.

Enormous progress has been achieved to set up a democratic system of governance, enduring fundamental democratic and human rights of individuals, nations and nationalities. Encouraging results have also been registered in the areas of gender equality, religions and cultural autonomy.

Gender issues took more attention than what had been in the other previous periods. For that matter more air time have been given to gender issues that echo the fact that women are the major victims of many harmful cultural practices. Abduction, rape and abortion were not considered to be serious problems in our country especially in rural areas. Although the country's law prohibited such acts, they are practiced by the society. Moreover, rural women are obliged to travel long distances every day to fetch water from farthest areas and this exposes them to virulent abductors and rapists. Abductors get away with their crimes because of the customary meditations of community elders. To deal with such and related problems several organizations have been established.

Changing the lives of the rural people has also been an agenda of the country. This has been demonstrated through the government's attempt to offer due attention to their needs and priorities. Since the country's

85% of the population are living in the rural areas, the new social order has rewarded particular concern for these parts of population.

HIV/AIDS and corruption acknowledged as the main threats for the development of the country. Various forums and panel discussions were convened on several occasions to deal with these issues. For that matter, a number of announcements and adverts filled the television's screen with messages that warned citizens against such threats. Art became the prominent instrument to fight against those adversaries of society.

The period, in general, can also be described in terms of a thrust of a better freethinking atmosphere for the citizens. To some extent, there was a flow of more freedom which could be expressed individually and in public terms. Artists began to put across their creative product freely about their society. The tradition that has hitherto kept writers in their shell is shattered by the production of more explicit works focusing on any subject the writers considered significant. In this period, writers began to deal with matters related to social and institutional injustice, love affair, private life, class and moral values more critically.

### **3.3.1. ETV in the 1990's**

Ethiopian television (ETV) has seen dramatic changes since the demise of Derge in 1991. At the period, the biggest issue concerning television became the transformation of ETV with a view of making it serve the entire population, the country's nations and nationalities. The changes and the transformation have been attained by the inclusion of two major languages of the country. Hence, Tigrigna and Oromiffa language programmes, in addition to the Amharic and English programmes began their transmission in the same station. For that purpose, air-time has increased considerably.

Though the country has embarked onto more liberal administrative system, the option of privately owned television could not be attained apart from expressed ambitions and discussions on the matter. After years of the endorsement of the first broadcast decree in 1999, which further assume the full grant of the right to own a private broadcasting station, it could not be practical. Yet, many people are still waiting the green light to apply for license to open a new television station and to challenge the single state-owned television with their programmes.

The 1990's also marked the turning point for ETV to attain the capacity for international transmission. According to the book *'Facts about Ethiopia'* (2004:50), ETV began transmitting its programmes to different countries through satellite in 1991. Three years earlier, in 1988, ETV had actually begun receiving international transmission from various channels. This development has been an important step to the progress of programmes, forms and quantities. There was also a huge demand of programme amendments to increase the quality of ETV.

Visual style has already been improved as colour television was commenced in 1984 as a major development. More advanced cameras and editing facilities are also accommodated into the station. According to ETV programme broadcasted in November 1999, ETV has imported a number of cameras and editing materials which most counties do not have. However, most of these production materials could not be functional because of the scarcity of skilled man power to operate them.

As these developments are in progress, the demand for programme and air-time increments saw an important progress. Programmes such as the Sundays' entertainment '120' have begun to take air time. The inclusion

of such programmes is used as a major step in meeting audience needs in improving television qualities.

### **3.3.2. ETV Dramas in the 1990's**

ETV dramas in the 1990's have shown more improved circumstances that provide a new direction to produce drama. The improvement became possible through the introduction of a more advanced technology of television production. As a result, the production of dramas in this period demonstrated the use of various locations, an improved pace of plot and a more improved visual style as colour television had already been introduced in 1984. Dramas such as ' ' (*The Client*), (1993), ' ' (*Wedding Present*), (1997) and other dramas were dominated the location shooting with a comfortable visual quality. Single plays were also supplemented by the production of series dramas that runs for weeks. Dramas like ' ' (*The Client*), ' ' (*candle's tear*), ' ' (*Consciousness's burden*), ' ' (*The Three Handkerchiefs*) and ' ' (*The Wedding present*) have been attributed to the growing tradition of this genre.

The number of drama outputs had also increased with the cultivation of more writers who came up with dramas originally written-for -television. In this respect the opening of the entertainment programme, 120, which still transmitted every Sunday afternoon has facilitated drama outputs and the cultivation of new writers.

Performance of acting also improved as it moved away from the theatrical trend by making credible television drama. ' ' (*The Wedding present*) and ' ' (*The Client*) among other dramas have shown an excelled performance that moved away from the theatrical trend. Their

setting constructions also make them credible as they utilize the wider environment. More dramas have begun to show the attempt that the acting to look like what is experienced in the cinema than in the theatre. Actor's exposure to Hollywood dramas and movies might have contributed to this change. Consequently, the projection of voice, the use of too much gesture declined to a greater extent.

Settings which have been bound to in-house settings also began to cover extensive locations in the cultural environment. The number of scenes viewed in each drama has also increased depending on its kind. Faster scene changes have been demonstrated on series dramas, shooting has also been taking place with more camera movement and close ups that allow a more lucid viewing.

In this period, since television series imported from western countries were transmitted by ETV, many people have the exposure to learn from the production style of these dramas. In such a way, so many writers and directors have vied to made ETV drama outputs in the manners of these serials. As a result the period has demonstrated a dramatic change in style, acting and camera shootings with various modes of production. Dramas then began to appear in various modes which demonstrated versatile patterns in structure, themes, and settings which underlies distinctive forms of drama production at the period.

#### **3.3.2.1. The Beginning of Co-production**

The 1990's marked the beginning of co-production between ETV and other sectors in the area of drama production. Previously, ETV was totally responsible for the production of its dramas. All selection of scripts, actors, shootings and editing was carried out by its personnel. Since 1991, nevertheless, other corporations began to emerge engaging on television drama production in collaboration with ETV. At the



drama shows how women in the rural areas lived in a hardship. Written by Beminabu Kebede who always focuses on the rural life in his dramatic writings, this drama features how women in the rural areas are sexually abused even by their close relatives, a case for even which resolved in minimal justice is usually hard to come by as there is little or no evidence. The single play ‘     ’ (*Demonstration*), on the other hand, is concerned with reflecting the social injustice of rural areas in more of a satirical tone. This play written by the comedian Asres Bekele begins by showing people who go out for demonstration. From the start they are seen holding and shouting slogans against the destruction caused by an elephant owned by the administrator. Their grievances are that the elephant has destroyed their crops in the field and threatened their children. After the demonstrators have agreed in the elimination of the elephant from their village, the administrator appears to find out their demand. However, every one that appeared in the demonstration refrains from speaking their demands in the same way as their leader who has incited and organized the demonstration from the beginning. Then, all of a sudden, they began to speak in favor of the elephant’s presence in the village. They even begin to shout slogans such as ‘elephant is very good’ thus demanding for more elephants to be brought to the village. Then the local administrator promises to bring more elephants to the dismay of the village residents. In such a way, this drama projects the frights of the society even to express their grievances in front of their leaders. It also shows injustices committed as a result of power abuse. This situation is implied in the drama by using Elephant that symbolizes both economy and power.

### **3.3.2.3. Social Problems in the Dramas**

The major social problems of the period after 1991 include issues related to HIV/AIDS and corruption which have been considered the major threats of the nation. Gender issues have also become the focus of some of the dramas produced in the station.

Most dramas produced in this period significantly transcend the fatal disease, HIV/AIDS. In order to prevent citizens from contracting HIV/AIDS and to educate them, most dramas have been made to address related problems. To that end, various non-governmental organizations that work in the area have been allocated budgets for television production. More writers also concentrate to come up with stories on this disease. Dramas like ‘*Candle’s Tear*’ was one of the significant and memorable productions that tell stories of this fatal disease.

Corruption as well has become a major theme of television writers to reflect the issue for the audience. As a major threat of the contemporary society, corruption has been featured to show the magnitude of the problem. Most dramas including ‘*The Client*’ have drawn on this issue to show the infliction of society as a result of corrupt administration.

#### **3.3.2.4. Morality Plays**

The period after 1991 marked the production of morality plays meant to criticize the ill-practice of society. In this respect, there were various single plays and series dramas that focused on the life of the contemporary urban society. The most elaborated and eloquent drama writers in this issue came from writers such as Alelign Mequanent and

Tilahun Zewege. These writers have produced a number of plays which educate and criticize the society. Plays like ‘*We Do Not Know Each Other*’, (1998), ‘*Tears of the Dead*’, (1994) and ‘*Human Being*’, (1996) reflected the moral values of the existing society.

The drama ‘*We do not know each other*’ focuses on an ideal character who preaches the moral level of human beings in the contemporary era. All over the drama this character is seen while mediating between quarreled people, helping the poor and the homeless and finding job for prostitutes to get them out of prostitution. Conveying messages that articulate the growing loss of human communality he always speaks that: ‘We all knew each other. Despite this fact, we are being harsh to one other’. The other play ‘*Human Being*’ that appeared in the television screen also raised a moral issue to criticize human being’s relationship to money against God. In the drama a character that comes back from America is seen manipulating the poor by giving them money. As those people who seek his money began to increase in number he urged them to deny their God.

Those patterns described above in general were what characterized ETV dramas in the 1990s. Under a policy of avoiding a provoking act on any part of the social institutions, the dramas were variously aimed at depicting the social values and life as they provide an entertainment. In this way, though ETV still is in its steady stages of development, it has ventured in presenting dramas in various forms tracing the society and their dominant values. Then among other dramas, the drama ‘*Bale Guday*’ (*The Client*), 1993, is analyzed as follows to show the ideological and its aesthetic value.

### **3.3.3. Analysis of ‘*Bale Guday*’ /The client**

This series drama, 'Bale Guday' was produced and aired in 1993 and became popular among television viewers for its use of important characters, locations and the image of social reality it depicts. The Drama was produced to be aired in the entertainment program, '120', which draw huge audience. The drama raised an issue that traced the social problem of corruption which at the time was acknowledged as the major setback in the nation's progress. The drama was aired during the time in which various organizations were established to alleviate the situation. Hence, it obviously stimulated the concerned bodies and the society in general to open their eyes to the situation.

The drama is set in the urban areas of the contemporary period focusing on the public sector and its corrupt officials that misused the clients. The setting is in Addis Ababa, in one of the country's office where people have to go to seek land to build their houses. In such a way, the drama reflects more of the realist way of drama production. The drama begins with an office setting. As the camera moves towards the wall of the office in a close-up we read the following:

*No one knows the maleness of a bird nor the thought of other people. If there is life there always is a client.*

Then a narrator's voice, kenaw Tebedge's, reassures the audience of this placard which underpins the theme of the drama. This major character in the drama, therefore expresses the essence of the quotation. Amidst the ups and downs of the bureaucratic process, he opens the drama in a philosophical speech which can back the above quotation:

*In the ups and downs of most of our lives what we speak and what we think do not coincide. While our mouth is speaking about love our heart thinks of money. While our mouth is speaking about enlightenment, our heart is filled with darkness. In every office clients lived such contradictory life. Everyday.*

This drama then brings forth the theme of corruption foregrounding what people confront while trying to get service in the government institutions. Thus it frequently showed characters struggling to gain a quick service bribing officials. In this respect, Kenaw seems to be frustrated by various sectors to have his own house and now being determined to bribe the officials. Against him is the manager who has a bitter attitude towards the people who came to his office to get their affairs done.

At the first confrontation of Kenaw Tebedje and Ato Laeke, the manager, what we see is not how to proceed in exchanging service but how one took the bribe and how the other could offer it. In the scene where the two persons discuss the issue of receiving land, they mingle a subject which brings forth the theme of corruption. Therefore, Ato Laeke tries to underscore what it takes to finish the job in his own methods of money-grabbing so illegally and thoughtlessly. Kenaw, on the other hand, has

acquiesced to offer a bribe so that he would finish his affair in that office as soon as possible. This case presented in the drama in thought presentation as the characters confront each other:

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*Ato Lake: he is smartly dressed: How much money  
may he give?*

*Ato Kenaw: this one looks bribed too much; how much  
may he take from me?*

*Ato Lakeke: he has fat cheek; may be he also got bribed  
in his working place.*

In this sense, therefore, the drama tries to blame everyone. In there it reminds the audience how the environment we live in is being corrupted by every one.

As the drama goes forward, we also see other official who are subordinate to Ato Laeke and who are responsible in locating the place granted to the client scheme to take money from them. In this case he expressed that ‘the difference between the office and stomach is being inseparable’. So Kenaw here tried to emphasizes the extent of corruption which became so widespread in the institutions.

Other issues also embedded in the drama are caused by the frequent visit to those offices. Kenaw was attracted by a woman, Hamelmal, who has the same affair in the same office.in the same way Hamelmal has a feeling to approach Kenaw lovingly though both of them dare not to talk

about it. On the other hand, the secretary of the manager has begun to like Kenaw though he has developed distaste for her as he does for all of the people who work in that place. However, he discerns that Hamelmal might have begun an affair with Ato Laeke to have her business done in a while. His shyness also could not get him close to her to express his feeling. He feels that his affair in that office is pushing him away from social affairs.

In the drama, hence, we see corruption not only in terms of money-grabbing but also by using women for their sexual desire. In this case we see how Ato Laeke tries to seduce Hamlemal. It shows how some officials are unethically using every one for their personal benefit. It thus shades light on the influences of this process on the everyday life of society at all levels as a client.

On one level, as the drama comes to an end it shows the condition of the period satirically. Hence, as Kenaw was informed that he could not get the land he has demanded, he refers that the government officials even favoured those that had money than ordinary people like him as follows:

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*Ato Laeke: The land we prepared for you has already been given to another person who had to widen his firm.*

*Kenaw: (in his thought) so the policy is “it’s added unto the haves”*

Finally the drama ends with an expression of disappointment by the clients. Both Ato Kenaw and Hamelmal vow to take the matter to the immediate boss as they are unfairly treated. However, Ato Laeke tells them that he is the person in the highest position and they have no other places to go to. This ending reinforces the theme introduced at the opening of the play describing the life of clients in each office.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **CONCLUSION**

This study attempted to look at the evolution of ETV dramas in the context of the changing society and the stories appeared in different periods. Therefore, the relationship between the social conditions and the commitment of the dramas in which the society is reflected is what the study focused on. Shading light on the major events that manifest the evolution, the study demonstrated how the dramas have been changing each time per social change.

It seems that the dramas in this station have been inhabited by the ruling class's ideological stance that is merely compelled to represent their interest as the common interest of all members of societies. Most of the dramas reflected the society that lives within the milieu the dramas confirmed in a way as documenting the period's major events. Three regimes appeared as the point of attention in this study for their effect on the ideological structures of ETV dramas. These all, then, call for brief, summarizing remarks here, though each has been discussed thoroughly at various stages of the foregoing chapter.

Television first appeared in the country during the imperial regime. A new medium as it was, most of the dramas it aired were imported from the western world. This situation exposed the few audiences of television to foreign cultural ideologies. Few domestic dramas produced in this period were rallying around the manners and modes of the wealthy social classes. The drama '*Me and My 27 Servants*' seems to foreground this intention in this respect. Its scenes full of Western values, this drama pictured the flamboyant life style of the wealthy aristocrats. However being the first experience for the country, it could be said that the dramas were spring boards for the progress of television drama which continued to persist.

ETV dramas entered another phase after the country was transformed to a socialist nation. In that period dramas increased in quantity and production technology. At this time the nation was largely engaged in the process of accepting a new outlook which was shaped by the communist system. Consequently, much of the television dramas reflected the social realities associated with this process. They were crafted to bring change of attitude as they are submitted totally to the new social order. There was more drama presentation in social realism that blurred the difference between fact and fiction.

It can be argued that television drama at this period were the re-created reality that evinced little literary appeal than the ideological indulgence that weighed up the messages of the dramas.

There emerges, however, another era of television drama production that appeared with more liberal and democratic atmosphere. This liberal thought has impacted television drama in Ethiopia to focus on issues from many directions. There was an increased level of drama production both in quantity and as well as in quality. Exposure to many western dramas influenced performance and shootings. This increased the level of drama productions to some extent.

The new liberal atmosphere in the country invited writers to come up with several issues which exist in the society. The writers then produced most dramas that focused on moral values, social problems, and rural life. The cultivation of new writers, actors and directors of television drama has brought a qualitative and quantitative change in the dramas.

Realizing the potential of this single television channel of the country, it can be said that there are so much at stake to enhance the making of our dramas. To attain the production of more dramas at its best quality, ETV dramas need to shed light on the aesthetic and ideological criteria. For the future, it is hoped that there would be much significant and memorable dramas if ETV sets up an independent drama department. In doing so, the dramas should reflect the society's experience in depth avoiding shallow stories of simple life. They should also endeavor towards the representation of both the city and rural life. Therefore, it is hoped that there would be a cultivation of best writers, actors and directors to the dramatic creation with the most appropriate technology in a way that suits the contemporary audience.

In general, this study suggested that television drama remains a main way of accessing, critiquing and imaging human experience which is engendered by the socio-historical conditions. This relation between societies and television drama is endlessly interesting and open to exploration. There is a prospect that, a more holistic approaches to this dramas can be studied focusing on the total social history alongside the total flow of television drama.

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