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A THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF THE WORKS OF  
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## ABSTRACT

The main objective of this research is to analyze and comment critically on the various subtleties of the vision of life that Makonnen Endalkachew presents in his works under three sections: Religious, Moral, and Political. When the uplifting of the cultural level and aesthetic appreciation of our people has been officially undertaken, it is hoped that such studies of early writers would be very important.

Before delving into the subject, a brief biography of the artist with an emphasis on his family background and social orientation is provided in the first chapter. Besides, he is compared with two early eminent writers of his time in order to examine the kind of world outlook he possesses. This historical survey has provided the researcher with a firm ground to establish the class Makonnen Endalkachew belongs to, the aristocracy, while the contrast enables to note the glaring difference between his contemporary writers and him in their preoccupations. The contrast has revealed that the two artists want to introduce changes in their society for its development whereas Makonnen seeks to preserve the status quo.

In the second chapter, the religious themes of the artist regarding his perception of life in this world and the world to come, his concern about the salvation of the soul, his belief in the supernatural, his devotion to the Christian faith, his reflections on the nature of man, and fate and time are brought out and are commented upon, with relevance to the betterment of human conditions.

The ethical values, social norms and mores which the artist presents in his works are dealt with in the third chapter. His understanding of virtue and vice, his sense of right and wrong are evaluated and appraised critically from a class point of view.

The social conflicts between the slaves and their masters, the sprouting bourgeoisie and the nobility and the conflicts within the nobility for holding the reign of government and receiving the highest titles mirror the realities of his time and that his resolutions to such conflicts reveal the underlying motives of the artist's endeavour to sustain the political and economic supremacy of his class over the other sections of the society. Finally, the concluding chapter tries to put the findings of this research together and place Makonnen in the tradition of our literary heritage.

The main aim of the researcher is to assess critically the thematic appeal in the works of Makonnen from the point of view of the present social situation in Ethiopia. The researcher has tried to explore and expose the role Makonnen has played in his society.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL BACKGROUND

This research attempts to analyze systematically and critically the works of art produced by Ras-Betwoded Makonnen Endalkachew, who had served the now defunct Haile Sellassie's regime for about forty-four years. The main purpose here, in this chapter, is to bring to the reader's attention four points which seem very essential before analyzing the works of art: to introduce the author to the reader by presenting his biography and family background briefly; to inform the reader about the number of books published by the author and those books that are not available; to give to the reader some leading thoughts about each chapter which this paper will develop later on; and finally to bring out, very briefly, some of the preoccupations of Bilaten Geta Hiruy Wolde Sellassie from his works Addis Alem /New World/ and Yelib Assab: YeB rihanenna Ye-Tsion Mogessa Gabicha/ The Thought of the Heart: the Marriage of Birhane and Tsion Mogessa/, and Dejazmatch Girmachew Tekle Hawariat from his works Araaya /The Model/ and Tewodros Tarikawi Drama/ Tewodros an Historical Drama/ and set Makonnen Endalkachew in this pattern.

#### 1.1 Biography and Family Background

Makonnen was born in Shewa, Addisgie, in 1883 Eth.C. His father was a certain Balambaras Endalkachew Abriq, who was a gallant fighter, and who in his courage and valor was generally believed to have matched the renowned heroes of Adwa. Unfortunately, Endalkachew died in 1883 Eth.C. when he was conquering to expand Menilik's territory. Seven years later, however, his remains were brought and deposited in the monastery of Debre Libanos.

In his book Melikam Beteseboch /Good Families/, Makonnen presents his own life history and the history of his family on his maternal line which was obviously an aristocratic one

and mentions the passing away of his father at an early age when he was young. The author, from his childhood recollections, further tells us in this book that his grandmother, on his maternal side, was continually grieved because she had lost her sons, brothers and many of her relatives who were fighting to expand the territory and strengthen the power of the central government. In this book, he also attempts to bring to the reader's perusal the virtues of this family and the positions held by its members in the court of Menilik II. He clearly indicates that of the whole family, two of his uncles, Lij Enteli and Tessema Nadew were close friends of the Emperor; especially the latter had risen to the rank of Ras and was appointed as a regent to Iyassu, Menilik's grandson and an heir to the throne.

Makonnen's grandmother and her sister owned large estates both in Addisgie and Debre Libanos. This feudal family derived its income from the estates it owned by taking a certain share from the yields of the tenant farmers. Consequently, the children of this family were exempted from physical labour of any kind and had the time to receive their education - education that emphasized religious training paying little or no attention to secular orientation.

In line with the tradition and customs of the aristocracy, Makonnen had his education in Addisgie. His tutor was Aleka Wolde Tsadik, a servant and secretary of Makonnen's grandmother and who was believed to be a thoughtful person. After all, it was customary for an aristocratic family such as this to keep well educated priest(s) as instructor(s) to enable the young members to learn the basic moral precepts.

In 1892 Eth.C, Makonnen came to Addis Ababa for the first time with his grandmother. Although he was admired by the Emperor, the Queen and other members of the nobility in the imperial court because of his physical appearance, Makonnen did not like the court. This was because his first companions in the court who were more or less children of his own age became

jealous of him on seeing that he was being favoured, and so they exploited every opportunity to irritate him. As a result, Makonnen begged his grandmother to take him back to Addisgä where the timid Makonnen felt more secure.

As there was no established institution that offered formal education, in the modern sense of the term, up to the reign of Menilik II, the court was substituted as the "university" of the time and was the only place where young members of the aristocracy who would cherish the values of their class received their lessons in administration and social orientation.

Therefore, since it was a common practice to acquaint young members of the nobility with the laws, traditions and customs of the court, Makonnen, too, like any other member of his class, had to come to the court of Addis Ababa to learn about life. Accordingly, he came to Addis Ababa in 1895 Eth.C and was introduced to Emperor Menilik by his uncle Ras Tessema Nadew. Thus, Makonnen entered government service at the age of thirteen.

When Menilik opened the first modern school named after him, Makonnen became one of the few privileged ones to receive his formal education there. From 1899-1901 Eth.C., he attended Menilik II School with Imiru and Ras Teferi, who later became Emperor Haile Sellassie of Ethiopia. During this time, Makonnen, with the help of Aleka Gebre Michael and Aleka Araya Selassie was also studying Psalm of David, New Testament and the conjugation of Geez outside his class hours.<sup>1</sup>

Towards the close of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, Menilik, who became unable to carry out

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<sup>1</sup>Makonnen Endalkachew, Melkam Betesebotch, (Addis Ababa: 1949), P.40.

his public duties due to ill health, appointed Ras Tessema Nadew as a regent of Iyassu. Because Makonnen was the nephew of the regent and lived in the same house, he established a good relationship with Iyassu. At the sudden death of Ras Tessema, however, there was a turn of tide against Iyassu and the warm relationship between Makonnen and Iyassu was disrupted because the latter grew suspicious of the former for he knew that there was a clear cleavage among the nobility; one siding with Iyassu and the other attempting to overthrow him in order to bring Zewditu, Menilik's daughter, to the throne and Teferi as an heir apparent. After some political instability and open arms confrontations, the nobility siding with Zewditu emerged victorious.

Before Zewditu and her allies became triumphant, Iyassu was exercising full authority over the empire. During that time, he took the administrative region of Makonnen and gave it over to Aba Wolde Ghiorgis, who was his spiritual guide and mentor, an act which frustrated and dismayed young Makonnen. Besides, his followers, when they noticed that young Makonnen was losing Iyassu's favour, were nagging him constantly. In the presence of their master, Makonnen, they were talking about promotions given at the court in a tone suggestive enough to show their dissatisfaction. Unlike his followers, Makonnen saw no bright prospect in Iyassu's reign and reprimanded his servants that, in his presence, there should be no talk of promotion, demotion or reshuffling made by Iyassu. Makonnen preferred to remain silent rather than to wait at the door of Iyassu in order to seek his favour.

With regard to this moment of depression and frustration, the young aristocrat, in his work on the history of the family writes:

በዚያን ዘመን የሚያጸናኝ ዋና የታዘነ ባለገደራዬ  
ዳጠን ሱንያን የሚባል ጸሐፊ የጻፈው የክርስቲያን መንገድ  
የሚባል መጻሕፍ ብቻ ነበር።<sup>2</sup>

During those hard times my only trusted friend  
that gave solace to me was John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress.\*

The sentence quoted here, reveals that this period of depression and despair marked a turning point, particularly with regard to Makonnen's change of attitude towards books, in his career as a writer. It is also worth noting that Bunyan's style of writing created a very strong impression on him and can be observed in many of the works of Makonnen.

Later, however, in 1909 Eth.C. as Teferi became an heir apparent to the throne, Makonnen received his first title Lij and was appointed Governor of Wombero, Abitchu and Masete. Four years later, he was appointed as the Manager of the Franco-Ethiopian Railway. In 1916 Eth.C., when Teferi toured Europe, Makonnen was a member of the delegation as a special adviser to the former. In 1919 Eth.C., he became Negadiras, a title which actually meant the Minister of Finance. In his capacity as the Minister of Commerce, he was sent to London as a special representative of His Majesty in 1921 Eth.C. He also became a Mayor of Addis Ababa in 1924 Eth.C. A year later, he was made Deputy Minister of Interior and Governor of Sibru, Gudeya, and Genji. In 1927 Eth.C., he was promoted to the rank of Dajazmatch and became Governor of Illubabor.

1928 Eth.C. was a year of tension, turmoil and bloodshed because Ethiopia was being invaded by Italy. In this year, Makonnen went to war on the Ogaden front as the Commander of the Illubabor army. He fought with valor and courage against

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 74

\* This and all subsequent translations are made by the researcher.

the invading force. When defeat seemed imminent because of the enemy's superiority in arms, Makonnen went to Jerusalem and lived there until 1933 Eth.C. In Jerusalem, he administered the refugees on behalf of the Emperor.

In 1933 Eth.C., after undergoing some Officer's training at Sobar Military Academy, he came back to his country together with the Emperor aided by the British Army. From this time onwards, Makonnen won great influence at the court of Haile Sellassie. Soon after his return, Makonnen was made Minister of Interior and Chairman of the Council of Ministers. In 1935 Eth.C., he was appointed Betwoded and was made Prime Minister and Counsel to the Crown. He also represented the Imperial Ethiopian Government when the Charter of the United Nations was signed

The representative of the Addisgibe family achieved the peak of his promotion when he became Ras Betwoded, and was made President of the senate in 1949 Eth.C.. After serving the regime for forty-four years in these capacities, Makonnen Endalkachew withdrew from the court and he died in 1955 Eth.C. at the age of seventy-two.

## 1.2 Books Written by the Artist

As the various titles and offices that Makonnen Endalkachew won and held bear witness to the fact that he had played a significant role in the establishment and strengthening of Haile Sellassie's regime, the books he had written may also, if systematically and critically examined, reveal the significant contributions made to the development of Amharic literature.

The researcher, in his attempt to study Makonnen through his literary works, so far has learnt that out of the twenty-one books published under the author's name, he could not get hold of the two books, Atifru Sigachihun Kemigedilu /Fear Not Those Who Kill Your Flesh/ from which Yedem Dimtse /The Voice

of Blood/is adapted for stage and Yeyihuda Anbessa Lemin Tedefere/ Why Is The Lion of Judah Defeated/.

It is noted that these books are found neither in the National Library nor in the Institute of Ethiopian Studies. The effort made to get access to these books in the libraries of the Senior High Schools in Addis Ababa and the attempt made to obtain them from the individuals who, the researcher thought, would have them in their personal collections bore no fruit. Therefore, it is hoped that the reader would note that the author would be assessed and judged on the basis of his books of literature that are available.

### 1.3 Leading Thoughts to Each Chapter

The major point which the researcher presents to his reader here is the outline of his thesis. But before presenting the outline, the researcher wishes the reader to note that, at present, when the attempt to raise the cultural level of the nation and to develop the literary appreciation of our people is officially undertaken, the need for a systematic appraisal of the literary works of the early prominent writers becomes immense. And, although Makonnen Endalkachew was one of the early prominent writers, there has until now been no systematic and critical study of his literary works. It is in this light that this study has been undertaken.

Hence, in Chapter two entitled "Major Themes: Religious" an attempt will be made to assess the fundamental questions the author poses regarding Life, the World, God and other philosophical concepts as reflected through his works of literature. The social relevance of his comments on the basic values of life will also be examined.

After analyzing these basic queries put across by Makonnen Endalkachew, the third chapter, entitled "Major Themes: Moral", will try to sum up the moral that can be drawn from his works

of art. Although the religious and moral aspects are difficult to winnow as the grain from chaff because both these aspects form intercomplimentary facets of this artist, this section will also endeavour to put together the concrete suggestions made by the artist regarding the ways in which human conditions can be improved.

In the fourth chapter, which will be entitled "Major Themes: Political", an attempt will be made to examine the social attitude and class affiliation of the author in his artistic presentation of the reality of the then existing society. His efforts either to unmask or justify the outrageous exploitation of the ruling class vis-a-vis the poverty, degradation and misery of the broad masses will also be evaluated. In this regard, whether the artist has directed his works to opiate the working people so that they accept the conditions they find themselves in or he has helped them to rise up to resist the social injustices will be looked at.

Finally, the "Conclusion" will sum up and critically comment on the major preoccupations of the artist and his art in general as reflected through his literary works. Besides summing up the major ideas discussed in the chapters, the contrast with the other writers mentioned may again be brought in briefly to clearly establish the overall impression given by Makonnen Endalkachew.

#### 1.4 Makonnen and His Contemporary Writers

The researcher, in order to give the reader a brief evaluation of Makonnen Endalkachew, the artist, would like to compare him with two early and prominent Ethiopian writers who are believed to have made immense contributions to the development of Amharic literature. They are Bilaten Geta Hiruy Wolde Sellassie and Djazmatch Girmachew Tekle Hawariat.

Bilaten Geta Hiruy was born in a humble family in 1871 Eth.C. in Tegulet, Shewa and died in 1931 Eth.C. in London

while living in exile. His father, Ato Wolde Sellassie was an appointed head of a church (vicar) who was illiterate. Tired of the incisive remarks of the debteras,\* Wolde Sellassie took his son to Debre Libanos where young Hiruy was to receive his church education. Unfortunately, when Hiruy was thirteen, Wolde Sellassie died as he was closely following and anxiously waiting to see his son becoming master of church education.

In spite of the difficulties and hardships he had to bear, Hiruy continued to pursue his education. He also learned, through his own efforts, the skill of writing which was frowned upon at that time. This skill enabled Hiruy to become a secretary of Kegnazmatch Beshah and later to be promoted from the rank of a servant to that of a secretary in the household of Kegnazmatch Mekirech. Because of his insatiable desire for knowledge, Hiruy left his post as a secretary and began to pursue his interrupted education at Raguel Church in Addis Ababa. He studied Kene\*\* and Yemetsehaf Tirgum\*\*\*.

Hiruy, because of his ability to write, became a member of the Ethiopian delegation to England when George V was crowned in 1903 Eth.C. which marked a new turn in his future career as a diplomat and a writer. Gradually, Hiruy became well acquainted with Empress Zewditu and Teferi, and served the government at different levels and rose to the capacity of Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The other writer, Girmachew Tekle Hawariat was born in 1908 Eth.C. at Hirna, Hararghe. Unlike Hiruy, Girmachew's father had eleven years of military training in Russia and three years of education in agriculture in England and France. Girmachew had his elementary and high school education in Dire Dawa and Addis Ababa respectively. He also had his higher

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\* A person who is well versed in church education but not ordained.

\*\* Religious poetry

\*\*\* Translation of Books.

education in France and took his baccalaureate in theology after five years of studies. During the Italo-Ethiopian war, Girmachew went to Djibouti to live in exile but due to ill health he returned to Addis Ababa. Soon he was captured and taken to Italy where he stayed in the prison of Asinara for seven years.<sup>3</sup> He, too, like the other two authors, had served Haile Sellassie's government as Director General of various departments, consulate, Ambassador, Governor of Administrative Region, Minister and finally as a member of the Senate.

When one surveys the life history of Makonnen, Hiruy and Girmachew, one observes certain points which they share in common. The similarity lies in the fact that all the three of them had served the Government, had lived in exile, and had produced works of art. Their differences, which the researcher would like to point out, lie in their family and educational background and their visions of life. Obviously, Hiruy was from the lower social group and had no opportunity to obtain formal education; however, because of his quest for knowledge and determination, he had educated himself.

Regarding the literary works of these writers, Hiruy and Girmachew seem to have presented more extensively than Makonnen Endalkachew the lives of the different social groups of the society and the traditional practices that should be avoided if the society is to develop and prosper. Both Hiruy and Girmachew, in their works, use the theme of going out from the society for some time and coming back with new ideas and innovations to change the life of the community. That is what Aweke, in Hiruy's Addis Alem and Araaya in Girmachew's Araaya do, for example. Although Makonnen, too, portrays characters that go abroad and come back, his idea of change, particularly concerning the material life of the society, is not conspicuously observable as is in the works of the other two writers.

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<sup>3</sup> Mahiteme Sellassie Taddesse Yedejazmatch Girmachew Tekle Hawariat Yehiwot Tarik, (A.A. University; 1964 Eth.C.), p.17. (Senior Essay)

In Addis Alem, Aweke, the central character, becomes a servant of a Frenchman known as Mr. Larus and follows him to Djibouti looking after the pack animals. There, Aweke plainly and sincerely tells Larus his desire to go to France and benefit from the wisdom and knowledge of the West. Larus accepts Aweke's request and takes him to France and covers all the expenses of Aweke. Seven years later, Aweke comes back and settles amidst his people in Tegulet. In Girmachew's Araaya, a rich Frenchwoman, widowed because of the Second World War, takes Araaya, the central character, to France and provides him with everything he requires till he completes his college education. About fourteen years later, Araaya comes back to his country and enters the government service. In Makonnen's Tsehay Mesfin, Tsehay, one of the main characters, is sent to France by her father. Before she completes her studies, he calls her back just on the eve of the outbreak of the Second World War for fear of being separated for ever.

Hiruy, in his novel Addis Alem, shows his protest against traditional practices and customs of the society and makes concrete suggestions as to which aspects of the life of the society require change. In this novel, Aweke violates the traditional way of dressing, mourning, objects to marriage by arrangements, adamantly refuses to prepare teskar \* and to build a house on his father's grave.

Aweke first encounters a stiff resistance from his relatives concerning his style of dressing. They find his style very shocking. So they express their amazement:

ዎ ነፁ ዎን ሆነሃል አብደሃልን ወይስ በጤናህ ነፁን  
አንዳት አንደ አብዱ ጥበቆ ብቻ ለብሰህ ተሃዳለህ አሉት<sup>4</sup>

What! What has happened to you? Are you normal or have you gone crazy? How is that you go out wearing tibiko\*\* only like a madman.

<sup>4</sup> Hiruy Wolde Sellassie, Addis Alem, (Addis Ababa: Goha Tsibah, 1925), P.2.

\* A religious service held, and a feast given to solemnise a dead person.

\*\* A simple traditional clothing for children.

Aweke's relatives do not want to let him wear as he wishes. Thinking that he has perhaps gone a little crazy, they fetter him for one month. But Aweke does not flinch. In fact, he explains to them that the western fashion is handy while the national dress encumbers movements and is inconvenient to accomplish one's tasks.

When Aweke's father is taken ill, Aweke hurries to Addis Ababa and takes a physician back with him so that his father will receive medical attention. But his relatives prevent the patient from taking medicine. As a result, Aweke's father dies. Although Aweke is very much grieved, he, contrary to the practices of mourners in that society, puts on his best suit and sorrowfully stands near his father's coffin.

According to the tradition of the society, Aweke should wear a long, rough, black mantle, yell and scratch his face with it. Aweke never does this. This act of Aweke becomes another shock to the society in general and to the mourners and funeral attendants in particular. One of Aweke's relatives who finds such behaviour of Aweke unbearable approaches him and says:

አንድ አባት አንድራሽ ያህል አባት ሰዎች ጊዜ ቢሆን  
ፊትህን ነጭ ተሰፎ፤ ዘተት ታዋቂ ታረገዬ ነበር። ይህ እን  
ቧን ቢቀር የዘርተር ልብሰህን ለብሰህ አባት አባት አያልክ  
ጭልቀን ነበር አንጂ የሰት ልብሰህን ለብሰህ ባባትህ ራህ  
አጠገብ አንድ ድብረ ተገተረህን ... ለካ የፈረገዬ አገር  
ተጻሀርተ አንጻህ ያዎ ያልላል።<sup>5</sup>

When a father like Ato Endelibu passes, you should have performed the mourning dance hitching a mantle and scratching your face. Even if you fail to do this, you should have at least worn your everyday clothes and sung the mourning dirge. How on earth do you put on your holiday suit and stand by the side of your father's coffin? It is amazing! Does a white man's education spoil people like this?

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.11.

Here, too, Aweke does not budge an inch. He resolutely follows his own way because he knows that his method is better than what the society practises. This conflict between Aweke and his relatives shows the conflict between tradition and change, and obviously, the position taken by Aweke is the position taken by the artist. Hiruy, here, seems to believe that traditional values such as this from which nothing beneficial to the society comes out should be abolished.

Hiruy also protests against the marriage practices of the society, that is, marriage by arrangements and giving one's daughter in marriage before she comes of age. In Addis Alem, when Aweke's relatives disclose to him, with an air of certainty that he would accept, that they have betrothed for him a daughter of a notable man, he replies:

እኔ የግንባትን ቤት መልኩን ሳላይ፤ ጠባይ ዋና  
ዕውቀትን ሳላመረድ የግንባት ይመስላቸዋልን እርሷን  
መልኩን ሳታይ፤ ጠባ ዩንና ዕውቀትን ሳትመረድ እኔን  
ባሉ አይርጋ ለመኖር የምትችል ይመስላቸዋልን የናንተ  
ዓይን ለኛ ምናቸን ነው።<sup>6</sup>

Do you think that I would marry a woman without seeing her appearance, studying her conduct and knowledge? Do you think that she, too, without seeing my face, investigating my conduct and knowledge, would take me as her husband and live with me? What are your eyes for us?

Hiruy believes that since such practice is outmoded, the society should allow its members to choose their own life partners. He shows that his belief can be realized by letting Aweke reject the choice made for him by his relatives and making him marry a girl of his own choice. In his other novel, Birhane and Tsion Mogessa are well acquainted before he proposes for marriage. Tsion Mogessa accepts the proposal on condition that he waits till she comes to a marriageable age;

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p.34.

a condition to which Birhane agrees and readily and patiently waits for the appointed time.

Hiruy also attacks the clergy people who encourage lavish spending. For example, in Addis Alem, priest Sebagadis, father confessor of Aweke's father, insists that Aweke should give a feast in commemoration of his dead father which Aweke refuses to do. The matter is finally brought to the attention of the head of the church. The head monk calls for a synod and decides that such practices of the clergy which do not suit the time should be changed as long as they do not affect the basic principles of the Orthodox faith. Accordingly, the synod adopts ten resolutions in line with Aweke's ideas and these resolutions are put into effect.

Hiruy's works cited here clearly depict his desire to change the life of the society to a better condition and his optimistic view of life. In both Yelib Assab and Addis Alem, the central characters who advocate for change emerge victorious. In Yelib Assab, Birhane and Tsion Mogessa keep their promises, they wait for two years, get married, being accepted and revered by the society, live to their old age. In Addis Alem, Aweke's relatives realize the fact that they are at fault and ask Aweke for his pardon. They promise him to do whatever he advises them to in the future.

The replacement of both the social practices and religious observances that hamper progress and affect the well being of the society by new values and practices that enhance development depicts Hiruy's faith in man as capable of changing and shaping his life. To Hiruy, it appears that those men who persevere and have firm principles become successful in life and that those who advocate for new ideas to flourish will definitely triumph over the traditionalists.

Makonnen, unlike Hiruy, prevaricates the issue of this world and concerns himself with life after death. Makonnen, nowhere in his entire works of art, dares to challenge the

views of the clergies. The fact that Makonnen does not raise his voice against church practices and traditional values makes the researcher think that Makonnen is conservative in his outlook.

In Hiruy's Addis Alem, for example, Aweke rejects the suggestions of Sebagadis on several occasions. When the priest presses Aweke to prepare a feast to commemorate his deceased father, Aweke outrightly rejects it because he believes that such preparation taxes much time and energy and dislocates people from the line of the production of their means of subsistence. When the priest suggests that a house be built on the grave of his father, Aweke refuses and erects a tombstone. Aweke tells the priest that his father ~~does not need~~ a house because he would not come to live in it. When the priest brings to Aweke's knowledge that the long standing custom allows father confessors to appropriate the clothes, drinking horns, tanned hides used as sleeping mats together with the beds of the deceased, and that he, too, is entitled to possess such items of Ato Endelibu, Aweke not only refuses to give but also brings the matter to the synod so that church laws prohibiting such customs be instituted. He succeeds. Then the reader notes that Aweke brings change in the lives of the people as well as the clergy. Sebagadis, who represents the conservative doctrine of the church, realizes that his ideas are jaded. Like Aweke's relatives, he, too, ~~accepts~~ the change and even preaches to help its implementation.

Unlike Hiruy, Makonnen seems to believe in the supreme authority of the doctrine of the christian faith and that words of the clergy are to be obeyed but not to be resisted, let alone rejected. This is because Makonnen seems to believe that the priest is the proxy of the Almighty in this world. To him, a follower of the Christian faith goes to heaven when he confesses to a priest. This belief is reflected in his novel Yefikir Chorra/ The Ray of Love/ and in his play Hassabnna Sew /Man and Thought/.

The marriages between Desta Tessema and Woubitu Gebre in Yefikir Chorra, King Dawit and Bersabeh in Hassabnna Sew, defy the norms of their societies because, in the former, each forsakes the spouse and in the latter Dawit completely possessed by the charms of Bersabeh gets her husband killed in order to marry her. Yet, the reader notes that, because of confession and continuous prayers, both couples are redeemed. To allow such marriages seems to reveal the moral decadence of the aristocratic class.

In Makonnen's Yedihoch Ketema, Aba Sew Bekentu preaches about the vanity of man and the uselessness of worldly treasure, at a funeral service of a wealthy merchant. At the end of the sermon, Aba Sew Bekentu says,

አንተ ሀብታም ሰው በባንክ ያለውን የወርቅ ጥቅ  
በጣም ለክ ከእግዚአብሔር የተጣለህ ነፍሱን ይጣራት፡፡<sup>7</sup>

You wealthy man, who has quarrelled with God  
because of your idolatry of your golden calf in the  
bank, may the Lord give your soul His blessing!

Here, too, no one challenges the views and shows the errors of the monk as Aweke does in Addis Alem. Yet, the monk is imprisoned because the rich businessmen feel that the monk has degraded the dead person who was their respected friend. The monk dies in prison.

This confrontation, the monk's bitter speech against the businessmen and his imprisonment in retaliation, seems to reflect the sharp conflict that exists between the religious values, which the artist seems to have a high regard for, on the one hand, and the growing bourgeois ideology on the other. The death of the monk, it is felt, signals the end of the hegemony of the clergy and the aristocratic class and at the

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<sup>7</sup> Makonnen Endalkachew, Arimugne, Addis Ababa: Tinsae Ze Gubae Printing Press, 1952), P.127.

same time heralds the flourishing of new ideas spearheaded by the bourgeoisie although the artist anticipates a dreary future.

Makonnen, in his play Yedem Dimitse/The Voice of Blood/, shows the martyr's death of Abune Petros. In his last minutes, Abune Petros appeals to the various nationalities of Ethiopia and the followers of his religion to unite and resist the invaders. He says:

የኢትዮጵያ ልጆች ህይወት የኔሽን ልጆች ደህና ሰገን ተ  
... አደራ ለጠላታችሁ ፋሽስት መንግሥት አንዳትገዙ: <sup>8</sup>

Farewell, Dear children of Ethiopia and mine...  
please do not submit to your enemy, the fascist Government.

It is apparent here that the monk's address, "The Children of Ethiopia" refers to other religious groups while "My children" refers to the followers of his faith. Since both of them are the children of one country, he urges them to fight against Italian forces and show their devotion to their motherland. By giving away his dear possession, life, very courageously, he knows that he is setting a model for nationalistic patriotism. Thus, he excommunicates those who serve the interest of the enemy instead of following his suit. In his short novel, Almotikum Biye Alwashim/ I shall Not Lie that I Am Not Dead/, Makonnen also shows how thousands of Ethiopians courageously fight against the Italian forces with ardent nationalism through the actions of the hero, Ato Temachu.

Girmachew, too, in his work of art Araaya, writes on the same theme - national patriotism. Like Makonnen, he shows that during the Italian invasion many Ethiopians have sacrificed their lives. However, Girmachew's hero, Araaya, who has harassed the Italians for five years and has received serious wounds several times, survives many of his fellow patriots,

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp. 97-98.

reflecting his optimistic view of life. Obviously, Girmachew is not as optimistic as Blaten Geta Hiruy is, because we see that Araaya does not bring to reality his ideas of change and progress but hopes that the future generation may do so.

Girmachew attempts to assess the progress made during the first fifteen years of Haile Sellassie's government.\* And the finding of his query is summed up in this manner and tone.

ይገርግል በሌላው አገር በጥቂት ጊዜ ውስጥ በዙ  
አዲስ ነገር ተፈጥሮና ያገሩ ጠልብ ተለወጠ ይታያል።  
አዚህ ገን ምንም አልተለወጠም።<sup>9</sup>

(It is) Amazing! In other countries, in a short period of time, a lot of new things are seen being originated, and the feature of the country being changed. But here, nothing has been changed.

When this book is published, Girmachew has served the government for not more than five years. It seems apparent that Girmachew, besides being young and change-seeking, is inexperienced and seems to know not much about the bureaucratic red-tape. Thus, his evaluation of what the government has done for the people and his acceptance of the bitter reality seem to have emanated from his enthusiasm to see his country developed.

To Girmachew, the traditional way of ruling people appears to be one of the major hindrances to progress. As a result, he feels that such administrative practices ought to be modified and changed. He states his view as to how it should be re-organized. In his view, local administrators who know the economic and social problems of the society should be elected

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<sup>9</sup>Girmachew Tekle Hawariat, Araaya 3ed. (Addis Ababa, Brihanenna Selam Printing Press, 1964). P.123.

\* When one calculates from the date of the first publication of the book back to the coronation of Haile Sellassie, it becomes about fifteen years (1923-1938 Eth.C.). The researcher, therefore, finds it plausible to infer that it is about Haile Sellassie's government.

by the community and be granted certain authority to exercise over matters directly affecting the daily lives of the people.<sup>10</sup>

He also provides us with the opportunity of having a glimpse at the lives of the rich in the city on the one hand and the rustic and poverty-stricken countryside life on the other. On his way from Dire Dawa to Addis Ababa, Araaya meets a landlord who resides in the capital. He invites Araaya to lunch. This invitation enables Araaya to note the living condition of the governor and he gives the reader the account of what he has observed:

የመከንኩም ገቢ አድጎ ሰፊ በሆነ አጥር የታጠረ ትንሽ ቤት ገንጠ ላይ... አርሶም ሲገባ በመጋረጃው ውስጥ ብዙ መጋገገትና ሰጠው ፊት ለፊት አንዳት ገረዶ አደጅን ወደ ፊት መስቀልና አጣጥሮ ቀጣላቸው። በአገሩ ሥር አሥር የሚሆኑ ድብተና ሰህናቶች ተደርድረዋል። አንዳንድ ጊዜ ጉንበስ አይላቸው ወጥ አየጠለፈቸው አመሰግኖታል። አንድም አየመረጠቸው አፈት አፈታቸው ታደርጋለቸው... ሽግግሉው መኩንን "ይኸውልህ አንደዚህ ከሕዝቡ ጋር አብረን ነው የምንበላው ከገብርና ከርስት የምናገኘውን አብረን ነው የምንበላው" 11

The compound of the governor was a small palace round which a large fence was put up ... when he entered, he saw many ladies and gentlemen sitting in fours and fives round a messob\* and dining ... In front of the messob was standing a maid servant with her hands crisscrossed... At her feet were about ten saucepans and plates assembled in a row. She occasionally stoops, dips out stew and puts it on the messob before her masters... She also selects and places the bread (Ethiopian bread made from batter) before them... The old governor says, "You see, we eat with the people like this. What we obtain from the tenant farmers and estates, we eat together."

To Araaya, this is a horrible sight. It reminds him of the condition of people in Europe during the middle ages which

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., PP.143-145  
<sup>11</sup> Ibid., PP. 155-158.

\* Traditional tray with circular stand woven out of grass used as a dining-table.

he has known only through books. He realizes that his country has a long way to go before he actualizes his dreams of change and progress. In this description quoted here, Araaya presents one of the governors to whom the heavy burden of administering the people is entrusted by the government. As shown in the book, the old landlord neither works in the city nor tills land in the country to earn his living. Yet, we see that he is an affluent person who gives such grand banquets. The money obviously comes in the form of taxes, tributes, gifts and bribes from the peasants.

When the governors live in such luxury, what does the life of the tenant farmers, who are being continuously milked by the ruling class and its close allies, look like? Girmachew describes it as:

ቀተያዥ ሥጋ የሚበሉባቸው ቁፍጥ ባመት ውስጥ አጅግ ጥቂቶች ናቸው። ቀቤና ወተት አንደሌብ መብላት ሲቻላቸው ወተትን ገጠው ቀቤውን ለመሸጥ ወይም ገላቸውንና ራሳቸውን ለመቀባት ያደርጉታል። አንደ አማርኛ የሥጋን የወጥን የአንደራንና የጠጅን ጠዕም በፍጹም አያውቀዋትም። በርበሬውን በድንጋይ ፈጭተው ምንም ሳይጨምሩበት በጡቅ ውሀና በጠፀ በጥብጠው የማሸላ አንደራቸውን እየነከሩ ከወተት ጋር አያማጉ ነው የሚመገቡት። በዚህ አኳኑን ሲኖሩ ለሥራ ፍቅር ባይኖሩ ራቸውና ጓተንነት በዘቶ ሲታይባቸው ምን ያበደገታል።<sup>12</sup>

The number of days the Kotus eat meat in a year are very much limited. When they could have eaten butter and drunk milk without restriction, they churn the milk to make butter. They sell the butter or smear themselves with it. Unlike the Amharas, they completely do not know the good taste of meat, stew, bread and wine. To eat their food, they grind pepper with stone, mix it with warm water, without adding any spice, add salt to it and dip their bread of sorghum in it and also sip milk. Since they live under such condition, it is not astonishing to see if they show tardiness and lack of interest in their work.

This presentation of the rustic life of the kotu people gives the reader a general picture of the life of the Ethiopian peasants who do not enjoy the fruit of their labour. Why do

<sup>12</sup>Araaya, pp. 212-213.

the kotu people eat meat very rarely and sell butter? Is it really, as Girmachew reasons out, because of the fact that they know not the flavour of meat, stew, bread and the good taste of wine? Obviously, Girmachew could not give us the genuine reasons why they do not because his class nature does not allow him to do so.

However, Girmachew's description of the house of the governor and the different courses served at a single meal when contrasted with the life and daily food of the kotu people of Hararghe, brings out, very vividly, to what extent the toiling masses are mercilessly exploited and how boundless the luxurious life of the aristocracy is.

Furthermore, both Girmachew and Makonnen have produced works of art on Emperor Tewodros; the former a play, the latter a novel. Tewodros, to many Ethiopian artists, appears to be a source of inspiration because he symbolizes unity, nationalism, change, innovation, progress, valor and courage. In Girmachew's play, Tewodros Tarikawi Drama/ Tewodros an Historical Drama/, for example, he presents the various traits of Tewodros. His aspiration and attempt to unify the country, his desire to establish a central government and standing army to make Ethiopia one of the strong nations, to abolish slavery and maintain religious equality are well brought out. Makonnen, on the other hand, in his novel Taitu Bittul, seems to concentrate on a single personality trait of Tewodros-his violence. Thus, Makonnen presents Tewodros to his reader as a heartless blood thirsty tyrant only admitting his national heroism when he commits suicide refusing to surrender to the British army.

It is apparent that the historical Tewodros has a set of complex traits and the artist has an ethical obligation to present these qualities of the individual in his endeavour to recreate him. In Girmachew's play for example, when Tewodros avenges Djazmatch Wondirad by making him drink kosso\* everyday,

\*Kosso: Local anthelementic - particularly taken to get rid of tape-warm

the kotu people eat meat very rarely and sell butter? Is it really, as Girmachew reasons out, because of the fact that they know not the flavour of meat, stew, bread and the good taste of wine? Obviously, Girmachew could not give us the genuine reasons why they do not because his class nature does not allow him to do so.

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we see that he bears no grudge to the common soldiers who fought against him. The facts that he handles the wounded with care and tenderness and that he forgives the common soldiers reveal that Tewodros has a generous heart which Makonnen does not seem to realize.

Girmachew, also presents the violence of Tewodros as one of his personality traits, but he provides the audience with plausible reasons why Tewodros at times becomes severe. To Girmachew, the violence of Tewodros begins to unfold itself at the time when the princes, in various regions of the country, rebel against him in order to establish their own small kingdoms; thereby becoming impediments to the attainment of his lofty goals of the unification and progress of his country.

On the other hand, Makonnen portrays Tewodros, in Taitu Bittul, as an inherently devilish character, devoid of human sentiments. For Makonnen, to hold a rein of a government one has to be a man of noble birth. Although Tewodros is married into the nobility, the artist seems to consider him as a real upstart who has made his way to the throne unlawfully; and consequently, does not qualify to rule a country justly and peacefully. Thus, Makonnen seems to believe that, firstly, as Tewodros is from the lower social class he has not inherited the art of ruling a country as well as governing his own passion. Secondly, society disobeys him because he is not its legitimate ruler. As a result, Tewodros takes a recourse to violence and abuses his authority. This portrayal of Tewodros in such a light shows that there exists a fundamental difference between the two artists in their outlook.

This brief comparison of Makonnen in relation to his contemporary artists by no means claims to be an exhaustive one. Its primary intention is to show some of the similarities and differences in depicting the life of the society they live

in, their conception of change and progress in view of the western civilization as reflected through their works of art in order to give a perspective to the reader and show the position maintained by Makonnen Endalkachew before he is taken up for further exploration.

## CHAPTER TWO

### MAJOR THEMES : RELIGIOUS

This chapter tries to explore and critically comment on the religious themes that Makonnen Endalkachew presents in his works of art. We find that the four main issues that he appears to be concerned with can be classified as salvation of the soul, philosophy, the nature of man, and time and fate. In each case, relevant texts are quoted to strengthen the position taken by the researcher. Here, besides attempting to sift out and present the religious and philosophical thoughts of Makonnen, an attempt has also been made to explore and assess the social purpose of his works, as reflected through his works of literature in light of the modern post revolutionary period in Ethiopia. However, before discussing the basic questions that the author poses concerning the Life and the World, it seems appropriate to look at some of the definitions of the term religion at the outset.

Philosophers, sociologists, theologians ... have all defined religion in their own ways for their own purposes. Some philosophers have called it "a superstitious structure of metaphysical notions", some sociologists refer to religion as "the collective expression of human values", followers of Karl Marx define it as "the opiate of the people"... Although it is impossible to give a conclusive definition of religion, there are certain characteristic forms of human activity and belief which are commonly recognized as religious: worship, separation of the sacred from the profane, belief in the soul, belief in the gods or God, acceptance of the supernatural revelation and the quest for salvation.<sup>11</sup>

Although defining terms has its own limitation in that it narrows the meaning of the term and the concept it intends to convey, its advantage especially in putting specific ideas across is immense. However, certain terms like religion cannot be easily defined as shown in the quotation taken from the Encyclopedia Americana.

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<sup>11</sup>The Encyclopedia Americana, Vol. 23. (New York: Americana Corporation, 1975), p. 342.

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Religion, although it is difficult to give a precise and universally accepted definition of the term, is thought to express the beliefs and social practices that exist in a given culture. And since culture is the sum total of the beliefs, customs and social values of at least a section of a given society, at a definite stage of its development, the attempt to explore the religious themes of Makonnen Endalkachew is, in essence, an attempt made to explore the religious themes of that section of the society.

In a class divided society, an artist does not produce a work of art that transcends classes. The vision of life, and philosophic thoughts which the author treats in his literary works are thought to reflect the beliefs and values of the class he identifies himself with. In view of this fact, Makonnen, too, reflects the values of his class-the nobility.

Regarding the social position of this prolific writer, a famous historian describes him as:

The head of Addisgale family, Ras-Betwoded Makonnen Endalkachew, another giant of a man previously a prime minister, was the president of the senate in 1960. When seen with his dogs in his country house, Makonnen seemed almost the Prototype English Aristocrat.<sup>12</sup>

When one retrospects on the artist's own life, social position, and family background, one does not fail to appreciate the observation made by Greenfield. Hence, it is not surprising to note that the literary works of Makonnen embody the concepts of virtues, vices and mores of the nobility, and that the artist strives to reflect the various facets of the life of the class that he is committed to. As there is no supra-class work of literature, Makonnen contrives a work of

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<sup>12</sup> Richard Greenfield, Ethiopia: A New Political History, (New York: Frederick H. Praeger Publishers, 1968), P. 385.

art that praises the system and entreats the audience to adhere to it by presenting the positive aspect of the life of the society. And it seems that he, in his works, does not take the pain to promote the wishes, hopes and beliefs of the oppressed classes by depicting the contradictions that exist in the social order. It is in view of this fact that the concerns of the society become the concerns of the author.

### 2.1 Salvation of the Soul

One of the major preoccupations of Makonnen Endalkachew is the salvation of the soul. Throughout the works of the artist, a sensitive reader observes that Makonnen is solicitous about the life after death. In his play Yedem Dimtse, Makonnen vividly describes the fate of the soul of the righteous as follows:

መልአክ:- ቀድሶት ነፍስ ሀይሌ፤ እነሆ ከነገሥታት ንጉሥ  
ከጌቸጥ ጌታ የተላከላት ሰሌዳ ይሄም ሰሌዳ የቀዳሳ  
ኑሮቸን ታሪክ የሚዘረዘር ስለሆነ ልተሰጧው ይገባቸዋል::  
ወይ ጸዩን ተራራ ካዲሲት ኢየሩሳሌም ተሄጃለሽ ከዚያም  
የማይቀጠሩ አላላፍ መላእክትና የፍጹማን ሰማዕታት ነፍ  
ሳት ይጠብቁቸዋል:: ወይ እግዚአብሔር ገነትም ተሄጃለሽ  
የማያልፍ ፍሬም ተበያለሽ አንደ ደረሰሽም ነጭ ልብስ ታ  
ገኚያለሽ ከዚህ በኋላ ለዘላለም ከንጉሥ ጋር ተጫወቱ  
ማለሽ:: በዚህ ዓለም ሳለሽ እንዳገኘሽ ያለ መከራና  
ትከካይ ሕጻን ጠዘን ጥት አይታይም::... ከዚያም በኋ  
ላ የወርቅ ዘውድ ተጭኖለሽ ሁሉ ጊዜ ቀዳሳንን በማየት  
ደስ ይልባል ከዚያም ደግሞ በብጹዕና ታገጧለሽ:: በእ  
ሥራኤል ሠረገላ ተቆጧለሽ ከነገሥታት ንጉሥ ጋር ለመዘር  
በደመና በመላከት በነፋስ ከንፍ ሰመጣ አንቺ ከርሱ ጋር  
ተሄጃለሽ በፍርድ ዙፋንም ሲቆጥ ከርሱ ጋር ተቆጧለሽ  
በአመጸኛቸ ሁሉ ላይ በመላዕክትም ቢሆን ወይም በሰዎች  
ሲፈርድ እንዲሁም አንቺ ከርሱ ጋር ተፈርሻለሽ የርሱ  
ና ያንቺ ፀላቶች ናቸው:: 13

13 Arimugne, pp. 98-99.

Angel: Oh Holy Soul! Here is the scroll sent to you from the King of Kings, Lord of Lords. Because this scroll enumerates the history of your sacred life, it is befitting that you listen to it. You shall go to mount Zion, the New Jerusalem, where countless angels and souls of absolute martyrs await you. You shall go to the Paradise of God and eat the Fruit that does not pass away, and dress in clean white clothes. After this you shall go to and fro with the King and converse with Him. Adversity, sadness, sickness, grief and death which you have experienced while living in this world are unknown there. You shall be decorated with grace. You shall sit in the Chariot of Israel to travel with the King of Kings when He comes by cloud and winds' wing at the sound of trumpet. On the Day of Judgement, you shall sit on the Throne with Him and pass your judgement on rebels be they angels or men for they are His as well as your enemies.

For Makonnen, there are two worlds in which a man lives, this world, which according to him, is inconstant, deceitful, full of vice and transitory, and the other world that lasts for eternity, wherein a man reaps what he has sown, that is, he either goes to paradise and enjoys life or goes to hell and suffers for ever. This speech of the angel, quoted here, depicts the kind of life the soul of the pious people have in the other world.

In his play Alem Woretegna /The Fickle World/, and Salisawi Dawit /David III/, Makonnen tries to show how this world is unreliable. In Alem Woretegna, Yayinie Abeba, the heroine, sees in her dream a young gentleman, Ras-Sew Bekentu entering the house of Alem Woretegna. Alem takes Ras-Sew Bekentu as her husband, provides him with fortune and promotes him to the highest rank in the society. But, since she is a time-server, she turns him out the next day and refuses to see him again. Hoping that she might change her mind and take him back, Ras-Sew Bekentu stays at her door. At this time Mot (Death), the former husband of Alem comes and Ras Sew Bekentu is terrified by the horrific appearance

of Mot. Yet, Ras Sew Bekentu entreats Mot to mediate between him and Alem. But the cruel Mot kills Ras-Sew Bekentu with an axe.

In Salisawi Dawit, Makonnen presents the story of the love affairs of a ghari driver and Woizero Yewoubsefer, a lady-entertainer of the King and his courtiers. Here, the reader observes Yewoubsefer declare her love for the ghari driver and he sacrifices his wife and child in turn. But, when he goes to see her in the presence of the notable people, she thinks that it is a disgrace for her to love such a poor person and repudiates him. The ghari-driver waits at the door and when she sits in his coach, he drives her to Lake Tana and has her drowned. Although the credibility of how the angry ghari-driver, Chanyalew, manages to take Yewoubsefer to Lake Tana for revenge is questionable, Makonnen presents the incident as:

ጋሪ ነጂው እንዳበደ ሰው ፈረሱን እየገረፈ ከጣና ባሕር ዳር ደነዝ ከሚባለው ደረሰ። ገልጦጥ ብሉ ቢ ያይ የሚያሳድዱት ሰዎች የሉም። በዚያን ጊዜ ጥምጥሙን ፊት ወደጎላው ጥሉ እኔ ነኝ ዐውቁን አንጅ የጥፋት ሁሉ ምክንያት ከጊጅ ጋራ አሁን ሕይወቴ ታሰፋለሁ አላት፤ እር ም ባየቸው ጊዜ ደንገጣ ማረን ማረን ብላ አንገት ላይ እንደተመጠመጠ ፈረሱን ከመንገድ አውጥቶ ወደ ባሕር አጥ ብቆ ገረፈው። በዚያን ጊዜ ፈረሱ ደንብር ሁለተኛም ይዟቸው ከባሕር ውስጥ ሰጠው።<sup>14</sup>

The driver, whipping the horse like a mad man, arrived at Denkez near Lake Tana. When he looked back, the people pursuing him were not there. Then taking his turban off around his head and throwing it back, he said to her, "It is I! Know me! You are all the causes of my ruin. Now, my life shall be given away with that of yours". When she saw him, she was startled. As she clinged on to his neck and cried out, "Forgive me! Forgive me!" he led

14 Arimugne, pp. 132-133.

the horse off the road and flagellated it mercilessly. By that time, the horse jumped in fright and took them into the lake where they drowned.

It seems that the artist is trying to show firstly that this world is constantly changing and, therefore, is unreliable, secondly, that moments of happiness in this world are so brief that one ought to seek perennial joy, and finally, that misalliance be avoided because it presses the rejected party to revenge.

In his search for salvation of the soul, Makonnen openly declares that anatomists, theologians, and philosophers of all calibers are incapable of explaining the existence and the fate of the soul after death. He states:

ነፍስ ያረፎ ልብቧን በጭቆና ጥላ የጥቅት ዘላለማዊ  
ባጠረፅ ዋን በተለባባሽ የጭረኻ ዕድላን ያን አንደህነ ገራጠ  
ፀ የሚያስረድቱን በቀዳሳት መጻሕፍት የተጻፉት የሰግዚአብሔር  
ቃላት ብቻ ናቸው።<sup>15</sup>

When the soul casts off its worldly clothes into the grave and wears its immortal and eternal characteristic its ultimate fate would be revealed to us only through the words of God written in the Holy Books.

These lines taken from his biographical novel Yehilm Rutcha/Race in Dream/ reveal the author's faith and conception of the fate of the soul. For him, the Holy Books are the only sources of true knowledge because they contain words of God that reveal the secrets and mysteries of life after death, which are beyond the reach of human beings.

The author believes the salvation of the soul is attained when one abnegates the worldly riches, and retires completely

<sup>15</sup> Makonnen Endalkachew, Yehilm Rutcha, (1949 Eth.C.) pp. 1-2

from this world by renouncing it and leading the life of a hermit in total seclusion. With regard to the denunciation of property, Makonnen says,

“ የዚህ ዓለም ሀብትና ገናንነት ወርቅ አልግዝ  
ብርና አንቁህ አፈር ከሰላ ድንጋይ መሆናቸውን . . . ”<sup>16</sup>

This world's affluence and the glory of man,  
his gold, diamond, silver and pearl too are soil,  
coal and stone ....

Here, the author appears to be doing his best to stifle the aspirations of the exploited masses for a better life, by trying to calm their anger against the yoke of exploitation and by befogging their inquisitive mind and correct thinking by directing their attention to religion, which has a temporary lulling effect. His denunciation of the wealth and glory of man in this world is, therefore, an attempt made by the artist to encourage the masses to accept and be content with their conditions and find solace in their poverty.

Makonnen upholds complete seclusion as one of the ways that enables man to inherit the kingdom of God because he believes that society harbours evils. This is revealed in the following lines.

ከሰው የተለየ ከውሃ የጠራ ነው እንደ ተባለው  
ሰጠዘብ ውክታ ውስጥ ተቀላቅሎ አእምሮን ከጣሳይፍ በመላ  
ካም ሸለቆ ውስጥ ከወፍቸና ከአሠቸ ከአውራጃቸ ገብረት  
ጋር ገብተ የእግዚአብሔርን ግሩም ሥራ ማየትና ማድነቅ  
ሕሊናን ከፍ የሚያደርግና መንፈሱን የሚያንቀሳቅስ ነው::<sup>17</sup>

As it has been said that one who lives in solitude is more pure than limpid water, instead of entering people's commotion and getting one's mind stained, going into a beautiful valley, the

<sup>16</sup> Arimugne, pp. 47-48.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p.15.

territory of birds, fishes, and wild animals, in order to see and appreciate the magnificent creation of God raises one's imagination and moves one's spirit.

According to Makonnen, society is contaminated with incurable diseases such as greed, jealousy, ambition, ruthlessness and bloodshed. References to these weaknesses of the society are made in his literary works Yayinie Abeba, Alem Woretegna, Yedem Dimtse, Yedem Minch, Yedem Zemen and Yekayel Dingay. In the quotation above, as well as in most of his works, the artist states his belief that solitude in the bosom of nature not only enables one to attain everlasting happiness but also uplifts one's imagination and helps one to produce worthwhile thoughts.

Repentance, prayers and confession as means to the salvation of the soul also recur throughout the works of Makonnen. In his other biographical novel, Yefikir Chorra, the hero, Desta Tessema, who in reality is the author himself, is a devout christian who should have lived with his first wife. Yet, the reader observes that he falls in love with the heroine of the novel, Woubitu Gebre, who in fact can be identified as Yeshashwork Yilma - the niece of the late Emperor. Furthermore, the hero has a wife and the heroine a husband. According to Orthodox faith, playing false with someone's wife or husband is a sinful act which a true believer of that religion should not indulge in. The union of the hero and the heroine is, therefore, a violation of the Orthodox religion.

The hero now realizes that he and his heroine have sinned. The knowledge of this fact troubles his soul and he finds no peace of mind. This guilt consciousness drives him to seek for ways to absolve their sins and save their souls from going to perdition. The only way out, he believes, is to expiate their sins through penance, and this is done by telling a priest,

who may perhaps be a father confessor, of the sinners' infidelity. The priest acts as a spiritual guide and prays to the Lord so that the souls of the sinners would be redeemed. How this has been done and their souls are regained, is revealed in these lines:

ወ ነኩሳው በሁለታቸንም ራስ ላይ አጃቸውን ጥለው አቡቱ  
አንድ ይቀርታህ በዛት ይቀር በላቸው አንድ ፐር ነተህም በዛት  
ሰጠላቸውን ይምሰሰላቸው በለው ሲጸሉ ዮ... የተጠራ ቁጥጥ  
የጋጠላት አድፍ አንድ ጭቃ አየተቀረፈ ወይቀ ሁለቸንም ከዳር  
ዳኖስ ባህር ስንጠጣ ደስ ብሉን ወጣን: 18

When, the monk, laying his hands on the heads of both of us, prays: Oh Lord as infinity is your mercy, forgive these sinners as boundless is your charity, stamp out their evil deeds, ... the accumulated filth of crime is peeled like crust of mud. When we came out of the Sea of Jordan, all of us were out joyously.

In the above quotation, the phrase, "we came out of the Sea of Jordan happily" reveals that both the sinners who have forsaken their previous spouses have now their souls delivered and are beginning to lead pious lives afresh. Although the author does not explicitly state, as the text quoted here from Yefikir Chorra, it is perhaps due to the recognition of the worldly authority given to a priest by the Lord to save the souls of the sinners that Tewodros whom the artist presents as a ruthless personality in Taitu Bittul asks the patriarch to give him his blessings at a gun point.

In his play Hassabnna Sew /Man and Thought/, Makonnen again shows that remorse, repentance and prayers bring about redemption. In this play, King Dawit finds Orion's wife Bersabeh irresistible. He tries to suppress his desire for her but in vain. Thus, he commits the sinful act of fornication with her and Bersabeh becomes pregnant. King Dawit,

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18 Makonnen Endalkachew, Yefikir Chorra, (Addis Ababa: Julius Beltus German Printing Press, 1949 Eth.C.), pp. 152-153.

realizing the gravity of the problem, and hoping to sneak out of this shameful act, sends for Orion, who at the moment is in the battle field, to come and report to the king about the war situation.

After Orion has reported the condition, the king tells him to spend the night at home and be happy with Bersabeh, a suggestion tantamount to a command which Orion refuses to obey. The king learns that his plan to simulate that the pregnancy is from her husband has failed. His next design becomes to get Orion killed. So, the king sends Orion back to the war with a special note to the commandant stating that Orion be put into action immediately and that he be abandoned when the fighting becomes fierce. The order of the king is carried out and Orion is killed in the battle by the enemy. At the news of Orion's death, which is glad tidings for the king, he marries Bersabeh because the custom allows a widow to be married to anyone, and they begin to live happily.

It is apparent that king Dawit has committed the major crimes that violate the established social practices and norms of the society: he has disrespected the sanctity of marriage, and has the sincere and innocent Orion killed. The king, however, does not seem to realize his errors until the prophet Nathan comes and admonishes him. Nathan also tells him about the wrath of God regarding his sin. After the words of Nathan, Dawit isolates himself from the public in order to mourn, do penance and prayers. Finally, an angel appears and felicitates that his repentance and prayer have been received by the Lord and that he is purified and redeemed.

To Makonnen, the abnegation of the fortune of this world, total detachment from society and leading a monastic life, together with fasting and continuous prayers absolve one from one's sins. Moreover, it appears that his underlying motive is to show that nothing can be kept secret from God because he is omniscient and ubiquitous.

Makonnen's belief in the supernatural force, God, from which religion originates, seems to dominate the everyday life of his class-the aristocracy. Besides, such entertainment of a belief whose cardinal principle affirms that no matter how infidel and sinful a person may be, he can be cleansed of his sins (as the artist tries to reflect in most of his works) through remorse, affliction, penance, prayers and confession to one's mentor, depict the function of religion with its political overtone.

## 2. 2 The Philosophy of Makonnen Endalkachew

As reflected in his works of art, Makonnen seems to have a rather pessimistic view of life. As depicted in most of his works such as Yedem Minch, Yedem Zemen, Alem Woretegna, Salisawi Dawit, Yedihock Ketema and Tsehay Mesfin, Makonnen believes that this world is unreliable, and that to be happy at one time, sad and melancholic at other times is the lot of the worldly man. He also seems to believe that when man fails to stand against the temptation of amusements and delight, which he thinks are transient, he becomes envious, greedy, adulterous, ruthless and malicious.

In Yedem Zemen, the artist tries to show how man devoured with envy and greed ruins his fellow men and ultimately himself. In this novel, the reader observes that there exists a genuine friendly relationship between the two main characters King Tekle Haimanot and Woregna Fasil, who is the most favoured courtier and whom the king allows to inherit the large dominion of his father. Soon, Lij Ayalew and Lij Siyoum, brothers of Woregna Fassil, taken by envy and hoping to dispossess Woregna off the large estate of their father contrive a plot that sows a seed of distrust between the two friends.

These shrewd and calculating persons, keeping their sinister motive secret, instigate Woregna to rebel against the king and very strongly press him to try his lot. They

also promise to cast their lot with him as he paves his way and organizes an army and the moment of armed confrontation to decide the winner approaches. Deceived by the double-faced nature of his brothers, Woregna tactfully takes leave of the king and goes to his father's country, Belaya in Gojjam.

There, Woregna organizes an army and fights against the king to make his way to the throne. But, unfortunately, he is defeated and taken to prison. He stays in jail for five years and faces death under deplorable conditions. Later, the king discovers that Woregna is ruined and that the King has been made to kill Woregna without an open trial because of the intrigue of Lij Ayalew and Lij Siyoum. Then, he first gets the two conspirators executed and then abdicates his throne and lives in a monastery till the end of his life.

In both Yekayel Dingay and Yedem Minch, Makonnen presents a grim picture of the world and Civilization. In the former, Kayel kills Abel with a stone weapon, which according to the artist marks the beginning of jealousy and killing. In Yedem Minch, the artist says that the two World Wars are waged,

በቃሉል ልዩቸ ወራሪ ፍራፍጥ ያከገገተ ...<sup>19</sup>

Because the children of Cain are bitter  
fruits...

He also calls the inventors of war weapons from gunpowder to the most sophisticated machines the 'children of Cain' because, to Makonnen, Cain represents not only jealousy, greed, and affliction, but also death.

In this book, Makonnen goes a little further and presents his pessimistic view that all man's discovery gradually leads

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<sup>19</sup>Makonnen Endalkachew, Yedem Minch, (Asmara: EL Poli grafico So.A., 1939 Eth.C.), pp. 66-67.

to his own destruction. Besides, the two world wars, which have claimed millions of lives and property, he mentions some of the battles fought between European nations and the names of dictators such as Ghom, Nero, Hitler, Mussolini come in who finally had their tragic ends. Makonnen, throughout his works of art, stresses the uselessness of man's endeavour to attain worldly happiness and peace because he argues that history reveals to us that these momentary phenomena are followed by catastrophe.

Makonnen sees this world as a place not fit for righteous people. He calls it,

ዓለም ሆይ... ሌቦቸ ቀጥኛቸና የቃሌል ልዩቸ  
የጥቅረሎቹ ስጦት ረገታቸው ነገር፡፡ ሕሊና ዩ ለሆኑ ለሌላ  
ልዩቸ ገን ጸኑ ከባድ ሽክም ነገር፡፡ 20

Oh World! ... You are the fortune and share of cheats, robbers and Cain's children. But for the spiritualist children of Abel, you are a severe heavy burden.

To the artist, therefore, civilization, invention and discovery have nothing to contribute to create better conditions of life. Nor has the world itself something to offer humanity. It seems that since Makonnen has a foreboding sense of disaster, not only of himself but for human beings in general, he believes that man should completely forgo the comfort which this world provides him with.

Makonnen firmly believes that man, if he is to make history and attain everlasting consolation, should pass his life in trials and tribulations. In the introduction to his collected works, he plainly states his philosophy of life as:

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., pp. 81-82

ጊዜ ሀዘንና መከራ የሰጡ ልጆች መንፈስ ከፍ ስለ  
ሚያደርጉ ስለሚያጠሩ ቀዋሚ የሆኑ ዕውቀቶችና ሀሳቦች ከመከ  
ራና ከሀዘን ጭስጥ እየተጠሩ ይወጣሉ፡፡... ለዓለም ጠቃሚ  
የሆኑ መጻሕፍቶች ተጻፈው የተገኙት ከሰደተኞችና ከአሥረኞች  
ከጥገረኞች ነው፡፡<sup>21</sup>

Because time, wretchedness, and loneliness elevate and filter the spirit of man, permanent knowledge and thoughts are sifted out from sorrow and afflictions ... Books that are of value for the world are found written by refugees, prisoners and the poor.

These lines show Makonnen's belief that worthwhile works of art are produced by a person who has seen the ups and downs of life. It is true that a person who has experienced misery, affliction and sorrow gives a better picture of life under such conditions in his attempt to recreate it in the mind of his reader. But when such views come from Ras Bitwoded Makonnen Endalkachew, a descendant of the head of the Addisgibe family, who owns a number of gashas\* of land, villas both in the capital and the countryside where he stays during the weekends, who is serving the then existing social system in different capacities at the time of producing his literary works, the researcher is forced to question the sincerity of the artist not only to the audience but also to himself.

His sincerity is questioned because his philosophy of life contradicts the very life he leads. However, the artist tries to convince us that he has seen the vicissitude of life in this world. First, in 1923 Eth.C. he was under house-arrest, that is, he was confined in his estate near Akaki. He states that this confinement (which he has never explicitly stated) and solitude have helped him to produce some of his literary works. Secondly, he claims to have tasted the "bitter life" of

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<sup>21</sup> Arimugne , p.7.

\* A measure of land approximately equal to forty hectares.

a refugee for five years when Ethiopia was invaded by Italy. While he was in exile in Jerico, he has written two books entitled Silemindinew Ethiopia Dil Yehonechew /Why Is Ethiopia Defeated/ and Atifiru Sigachihun Kemigedilu/ Fear Not Those Who Kill Your Flesh/.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, Makonnen seems to believe that his works of art may stand the test of time because he considers himself as one of those writers who have gone through hardships.

The researcher, however, finds this view of Makonnen very ironical because, both in exile and confinement, Makonnen has led a comfortable life - a life that has, perhaps, never been enjoyed by the middle class let alone by the lowest social class of the country. His confinement appears to be just a show because the only privilege he was deprived of during this time was that of entering the capital. Otherwise, all his property was at his disposal. In exile, too, he was in a position to buy a house with a garden in Jerico, and was acting as the deputy of the Emperor looking after the Ethiopian refugees in Jerusalem.

In his play Alem Woretegna, the artist maintains the same vision of life. Alem Woretegna declares

ለለጁ ለዐዳጁ ለራሱ ሰፊ ሰብንተ ደስታንና  
ሀዘንን፤ ዎኛተንና ፍተሮተን ሰጥቻለሁ፡፡<sup>23</sup>

To my son and friend. Ras-Sew Bekentu, I  
hereby give bliss and sorrow, desire and adultery.

in public in the prime of their love. Alem a wizened old lady, who appears to be very young and tempting, represents this world, while Ras-Sew Bekentu /man-in-vain/ symbolizes humanity. What Alem has to offer to her lover is what this world can give to humanity. To the artist, then, these are

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<sup>22</sup> Arimugne., p.19.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., P.56.

the only gains that man can attain from this world.

In this play, a close observation of the conversation between Yayinie Abeba and Gebre Egziabher in the desert of the Afar land shows that they, too, view life in the same manner.

ገብረ እግዚአብሔር:- የሰው ልጅ ጊዜውን በመከራ ካላሳለፈ ታሪክ የለውም፤ ታሪኩን የሚወልድ መከራ ነው።

ያይኔ አበባ:- አባቴ መከራ የጸድቀ ማጣሪያ ነው ሲሉ አሰማ ነበር። የወርቅ መፈተኛ በአሳት የሰው ልጅ መፈተኛም በመከራ መሆኑ አይዘነጋም።<sup>24</sup>

Gebre Egziabher:- If man does not pass his time in adversity, he has no history, for history is born out of misery.

Yayinie Abeba:- I used to hear my father say that adversity is a filter of righteousness. It is to be remembered that as gold is tested in fire, man is tested in suffering.

This dialogue between the two characters reveals that, according to Makonnen, man makes history and enjoys the happiness that is beyond description in the world to come only if he experiences hardship and endures it while living in this world.

Furthermore, the artist, in his novel Tsehay Mesfin, states what he considers to be the impetus of history.

የሰው ልጅ በወገን ተልቅ ነትና በገንዘብ ብዛት ዘመናዊውን ተምህርት በመጣርም ቢሆን ከፍ ያለ ታሪክ ሊሠራ አይችልም እንደዚህ ያለ የቀድሞ ነገር ሥራ የሚገኝ ገብ ከነፍሱ ተልቅ ነትና ከፍ ካለ መንፈስ ነው።<sup>25</sup>

Man is capable of accomplishing something of historical significance not because he is from a renowned family and possesses a great deal of money,

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p.53

<sup>25</sup>Tsehay Mesfin, p.1

and not because he has acquired modern education, but the achievement of such worthwhile matter (thing) comes out only from the greatness, nobility of the soul and an elevated spirit.

It is quite apparent here that for Makonnen history does not mean a discipline that deals with past or current events focussing on the social, political and economic life of a society, the last being the main driving force of progress and social change. History, as we look at it to day,

Represents a consecutive supplanting of separate generations each of which utilizes the productive forces inherited from the previous generations ... the new generation both continues the inherent activity under the totally different conditions and changes it in accordance with the new conditions.<sup>26</sup>

For Makonnen, however, history has a special meaning; perhaps a functional one. To him it appears that history means the ability of man to endure the misfortune that befalls him and his determination to sacrifice worldly consolation in his endeavour to attain the kingdom of God. To achieve this lofty goal set before him, man needs a "greatness of the soul and an elevated spirit."

In Tsehay Mesfin, Lij Alemu Desta, one of the main characters, is of a humble origin, who, at present, is a share holder of many companies, although the companies are not specifically mentioned, and owner of big apartments. Besides, Lij Alemu is also an educated person who has received his bachelor's degree in Engineering in the United States. Alemu forgoes his wealth and comfort and throws himself into complete misery in order to bring up the children of Tsehay Mesfin, who, he believes, is ruined because of him. To Makonnen,

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<sup>26</sup> Sheptulin, A.P., Marxist-Leninist Philosophy, (Moscow: Progress Publishers), p. 504.

then, this is history and Lij Alemu makes it. Furthermore, in Yayinie Abeba, the artist again states what kind of people he believes make history very succinctly as:

በሰጥዘላቸው ስራ በገይ የተቀበሉ ለሰው ሰላ ስደጃ  
ያገጩ ለወከራ ያሳሉት ሰጥ የሚያሰጡ የገና ታሪክ አላገዙ<sup>27</sup>

Men who are tormented in the name of God and those who face persecution for the sake of others throughout their years have a worthy reward that is not transient and have made history.

In today's Ethiopia, however, history is viewed from the Marxist perspective that "men must be in a position to live in order to make history. But life involves before everything else eating, drinking a habitation, clothing, and may other things."<sup>28</sup> And also, as is very clearly stated in the opening lines of the Manifesto of the Communist Party. The history of hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle."<sup>29</sup> But Makonnen's perception of history and his interpretation of it totally negates these fundamental principles of Marxism.

Makonnen's philosophy of life is best summed up in Yayinie Abeba's words in Alem Woretegna in the following manner:

ሰው የወከራ ወጽጠኛ ግለት ነው እኔ አባጥንና ስናጥን  
አጥኝ ለጭዘር ኑሪ ተሰጥ ከጭቆና ጥን ምረጫ የወከራ  
ታሪክ ሆኖ ተጽፏል፡፡<sup>30</sup>

Man is a history of plight. I too, from the day I missed my father and mother, and fell in the hands of Woizer, Nuritu, have become a written history of misfortune.

As depicted in these words, Makonnen sees life as disgusting and agonizing and man can do practically nothing to alter it.

<sup>27</sup> Yayinie Abeba, p. 59

<sup>28</sup> Marx and Engles, Selected Works, vol. I. (Moscow : Progress Publishers, 1976), p. 31.

<sup>29</sup> Karl Marx & F. Engles, Manifesto of the Communist Party, (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1975), p.30.

<sup>30</sup> Arimugne. p.56.

On mount Azzelo, when Yayinie Abeba discovers that the nun whom she is helping is her mother, and hears from her mother that her father is dead, she is overcome by mixed feelings of happiness and sorrow. She is delighted because she finds her mother and is grieved because she loses her father. In her bewilderment, she tells her mother that she does not know whether to rejoice or mourn to which her mother replies,

በዚህ ዓለም አታቀሻም አትሰቁም ይለቀሰ የዚህን ተራራ  
ዘረን እንዘረን:: 31

In this world you should neither cry nor laugh. Instead, let us sing the hymn of this mountain.

As it is depicted here, the philosophy of Makonnen seems to be that whatever befalls man, he should continue praying, fasting and singing hymns to the Lord. Even to express one's feelings of joy and happiness seems to be a deviation from the path of righteousness.

Furthermore, the reader notices that Yitot Belainesh does not utter a single word for a period of one year, but when asked how she manages to do it she declares:

ከሰፂ መጥፋትና ከባሉ መዋት ወዲህ ዓይኔ መልካም ነገር  
አንዳ ያይ አፈም ክፋና በገ አንዳይና ገር በሕርመት ጸም  
ዘግ ገገጦ ነበር:: 32

Ever since the disappearance of my daughter and the death of my husband, I have closed my eyes so that they do not see good things and shut my mouth so that it does not speak good or evil through prayers.

Although Yitot Belainesh was unable to speak because of starvation, for the artist tells us that monks and nuns living on Mount Azzello subsist on leaves only, the explanation he gives depicts that such people are devoted to their religion.

<sup>31</sup>Arimugne , P.74

<sup>32</sup>Ibid. , P.76

A reader who knows Makonnen does not expect otherwise because to present plainly or even in the tone that is suggestive enough to show the extent to which thousands of people whom Yitot Belainesh symbolically represents die because of starvation would be a betrayal of his class. Besides, it would also mean that literature is not performing its social function.

The fact that the artist brings the mother and the daughter together, and the fact that he makes the mother regain her power of speech through fasting and prayers may perhaps reveal to the reader his belief that devotion to the Christian religion and faith in God help to accomplish miracles.

Thus, Makonnen's philosophy of life appears to be to ignore the bliss of this world. After all,

የሰው ሕይወት አንድ አረፋ አንድ አበባ አንድ  
ጥላ ወሀ ኑን አያውቅን አንኖራለን: 33

Knowing that the life of a man is like  
bubble, a flower, and a shadow, we go on living.

Here, it is clearly observable that the existence of death, that is, the possibility of losing one's life at any time worries the artist. His concern seems to be, therefore, that since life is short, man should exert his efforts to accomplish things that do not pass away. But he does not make concrete suggestions regarding what exactly these things that do not pass away are other than giving alms to the poor, serving the country and being subservient to the Emperor.

However, it would probably be possible to think that when Makonnen says "things that do not pass away", he is referring to writing books. It is quite apparent that Makonnen has

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<sup>33</sup>Yefikir Chorra., P.195.

produced many books. The urge to write and leave behind seems to have emanated from the desire to become immortal. The desire of the artist to live for eternity through his books, has made him exhaust his new ideas because the reader finds him presenting the same theme in various books. For example, both in Yayinie Abeba and Alem Woretegna, the reader comes across the story of Ras-Sew Bekentu and Alem Woretegna. In Salisawi Dawit and Yedem Zemen, the artist presents a story of a ghari driver. Such repetitions of ideas further suggest that the artist has very soon exhausted his stock of ideas and consequently has nothing new to offer to his readers.

### 2.3 The Nature of Man

Makonnen poses certain abstruse questions regarding the nature of man. He asks himself, what is man? Does man have an immortal soul? What would happen to the soul after death? And, what is death itself? In almost all his works of art, the reader observes that the artist is being haunted by these and other similar questions.

In Yehilm Rutchä, although he acknowledges that such exciting questions have been raised by men of deep thoughts for many years and have stated many brilliant ideas in their search to arrive at the truth, they came to no avail.<sup>34</sup> So, Makonnen gives his own definition of man and mentions a series of developmental stages during which his behaviour and attitudes change accordingly.

Makonnen defines man in these words:

አራ ተ የሠጋ ባጠርጫ ከነፍስ ጋራ በጥጋታ ገዳ  
አገራት ታሰረው ተጥሪው ሰው ያስገኛል፡፡ 35

The merging of the four characteristics of the flesh with the soul in an inseparable manner constitute man.

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<sup>34</sup>Yehilm Rutchä, pp. 1-2

<sup>35</sup>Arimugne., p. 130

The four characteristics of the flesh, he states, are the earth, water, wind and fire.<sup>36</sup> Makonnen not only gives such a definition to show how man is created but also strives to bring to the reader's knowledge how man's attitudes and wants change as he develops physically and advances in age. In his book Kebukaya Iske Meker/From Seedling to Harvest\*/, Makonnen presents what he believes to be the behaviour and wants of man in a series of ten stages and at an interval of ten years. He takes up this subject because he thinks that man knows many things and strives to know much more save the creation and development of himself.<sup>37</sup>

In the first ten years, Makonnen believes man to be free from worldly evils. To him, this is the blessed age of man because at this stage he knows no grudge, rancour, or greed. But the next stage, the age of twenty, Makonnen seems to consider it as a very critical one. It is at this stage, the artist believes that man experiences love and needs money, thereby, violating the laws of the society and that of God. The artist refers to this period as the age of instability and fire.<sup>38</sup>

The artist identifies the age of thirty as a period in which man establishes his family and shoulders responsibility. At this age, the artist believes that the concern of man becomes the well-being of his family and, therefore, exploits every means to spare money in order to shape a bright future of his family. Makonnen states that the four weaknesses of man, namely, sorrow, disturbance (trouble), remorse and lamentation, and pessimism become conspicuous.

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., pp. 130-131.

<sup>37</sup> Yedem Zemen, p. 154.

<sup>38</sup> Makonnen Endalkachew Kebukaya Iske Meker (Addis Ababa: Artistic Printing Press, 1946.), p.18.

\*The translation given is a rather literal one. But when one examines the content of the essay, one tends to translate it into English as From Babyhood to Senility.

According to Makonnen, public life becomes the primary concern of a man of forty. Man, in the forties, likes to read books on laws, politics, and economics. At this stage, man, be he a landlord, a tenant, or a daily labourer, shows perseverance to accomplish his task and when something stands in his way, he reverts to force and savagery.

Makonnen, according to his understanding of the development and behaviour of man, views fifty as the age of thoughtfulness and evaluation of the past. Now, the artist believes, man would neither be shocked when misfortune befalls him nor would he be overjoyed when luck finds him on her way. In the sixties and seventies, the artist thinks that man, perhaps, becomes free from worldly comforts.

From the age of eighty onwards, life becomes meaningless and death becomes the concern and the only hope of man. To the artist, death seems nothing but the separation of the soul from the flesh. In death, he believes, the four characteristics of the flesh incarnated with the soul will disintegrate, that is, the earth becomes soil, the water becomes blood and oozes, while the wind scatters and the fire cools down, setting the soul free from the worldly restrictions. After death, the soul begins a new life.

Makonnen believes that not only the mortal man has the soul but also that the soul lives for eternity. This is more vividly depicted in Yedihoch Ketema than any other work of his. In scene four of this play, for example, the discussion between the Spirit Soul of Aba Sew Bekentu and Ato Habtih Yimer, in a church grave yard in the United States while the latter is on a business tour, on the topic of the existence of the soul, reveals Makonnen's vision of life after death.

መንፈሳዊ ቁጥ ነፍሱ፡- አዎ ለሰባቸን መንፈስ ነው፤ እኛም መንፈስ ነን፤ የምናመልከውም በመንፈስ ነው፤ በዚህ ዓለም

በሥጋ በተወሰነ ጊዜ የተወሰነ ገዢ በሚገኝ ጊዜ ዕውቀት  
ታችን አገራችን የተወሰነ ነበር። ዛሬ ገንዘብ ዓለም የሚሰጠው  
ወሰን ገዢ ስላለን ዕውቀት አይቆጠብንም ዓለም አደጋ  
ሰንበንም ሁሉን አኖርቻለን በሁሉ ሥፍራ አንኖራለን።<sup>39</sup>

Our Lord is a spirit. We too are spirits. We worship in spirit. In this world, when we were limited in flesh, and had a worldly governor, our knowledge and country were limited. But today, because we have a Governor whose power and domain are infinite, we know no limitation both in knowledge and territory; we know everything and we are present everywhere.

From this speech of the spirit soul, it seems clear that Makonnen believes that perfect equality is to be attained in the other world, for the spirit soul states that they (perhaps all the souls of the righteous men) are all knowing and at once present everywhere and they know no territorial limitations. This ability and practice are not possessed by men.

The guiding principles that would help man realize the vision of life which the artist puts forward in his works of art are the following: to despise being flattered by others; not to be interconnected with people in matters concerning business benefits or advantages; that is, not to be interconnected with their subjects because it defiles their sanctified body and soul; and not to be ensnared by seeming friends who would be obstacles to truth and justice.

In short, Makonnen seems to believe in the dual nature of man: Godly and Manly. The kind of life which a man lives in this world seems to determine the kind of life he leads in the other world. To Makonnen, the worldly man seems to be not

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<sup>39</sup> Arimugne, p. 167

trustworthy because, as he has tried to show in his philosophical essay, man's behaviour, attitudes, concerns and constitution are subject to change. As depicted in Yedem Zemen, Man's friendship and love are bound to pass because of gossip. Hence, Makonnen believes that man should patiently bear whatever happens to him if he is to attain the indefinable happiness of his soul after death as that of Aba Sew Bekentu's soul which the artist describes as a very delicate thing, as white as carded cotton but it cannot be touched or felt, having a babyish feature whose radiating rays illuminate the darkness.<sup>40</sup>

2. 4 Fate and Time

In Makonnen Endalkachew's works, idel, which means fate, luck, lot, destination, connected with gize, which means time, hour, day, era, epoch, seems to play a major role in determining a person's life. For Makonnen, a person succeeds in climbing up the social ladder not through his individual effort. A person rises to the highest rank in a society because he is destined to attain it and time is also favouring him. On the other hand, a person suffers from all kinds of injustices be it economic, political or social, perhaps even dies of deprivation because time and fate are working against him. Makonnen, in presenting his observation and belief that man cannot change the course of his life, states:

ይህ ዓለም የመ ነጣጠ ቀያና የከንቱ ገበያ ስለሆነ  
የሰው ልጅ በዘመን ምክንያት እድሉ ሲያበብ በሌላ ዘመን  
ይገባ እድሉ ይጠወልገና ቤተ ፈርሶ ርቦት ተሸጦ ይታያል፡፡  
በጊዜ ምክንያት አገንጥ የነበረ አንድ ሰው ጊዜ ጥሎት  
ፈለገው ስንኳን የማይገኝ ይሆናል፡፡<sup>41</sup>

Because this world is a market wherein men live in snatching from each other and in vanity, Man's fate is seen flourishing at one time because of

<sup>40</sup> Armugne pp. 165-166

<sup>41</sup> Yefikir Chorra., p.174

the epoch at another time, when his fate fades away, he is seen with his possession ruined and his estate sold. A man who has once been prosperous becomes poverty-stricken and his path untraceable when the tide of the time runs against him.

From these lines, it appears quite reasonable to conclude the artist's belief that fate, in conjunction with time, decrees that a person should rise up into the balcony or come down to his ruin showing that man has no control over his destiny. Although Makonnen's philosophy is presented in a very beautiful and highly figurative language, it is very venomous as it is laid down here. It is venomous because, under the guise of religion, it disseminates the idea of submission and acceptance of what has befallen man instead of encouraging him to make frantic efforts to change conditions and shape his own destiny.

Makonnen, in his novel Tsehay Mesfin, presents Tsehay who is a descendant of an aristocratic family. When the story begins, however, the artist introduces her to his reader as a wretch who is very anxious to get married to the young prosperous person, Lij Alemu Desta. Why does Tsehay who has a long standing family background become poverty-stricken, and miserable and want to marry Lij Alemu? Makonnen gives the reasons in the following manner:

“ፀሐይ መስፍን ጊዜ ስለጠላት... የዕድህ  
አበባ ስለገረጠ... ይህን ዕድህ ስለ ሠርቶ አን  
ዳተባለ አባቷ ያስተማራት ፈረንሳይኛ ነበር::”<sup>42</sup>

Because Tsehay is a victim of the time... because her fate has faded away ... this unfortunate woman is unable to earn her living by being employed by the government because her education was in French.

<sup>42</sup>Tsehay Mesfin , pp. 3-7

Tsehay loses her parents at an early age, becomes a French scholar at the time when French has lost its Pre-Italian-invasion status to English. She marries early and becomes a widow early. She meets a wealthy man who she thinks would marry her but when she realizes that he is ashamed of introducing her to his friends because of her poverty, she dies broken-hearted. According to the artist, the reader observes, that all these are the workings of fate and time and Tsehay suffers and dies in such a wretched condition because it is her fate and she cannot escape it.

The lamentations of Tsehay's father in the following couplet,

ጊዜ ነፁ ለገገ ቀን ነገራዎ 43  
የሰፊ ልዩነት ለያህራዎ::

It is time that is important, for noble birth is not worthy of pride.

reveals that Makonnen believes that for a person to be called Yesew Lij\* one must be of a noble birth. Obviously, being a descendant of such a notable family presupposes that the person is rich. But to his dismay, the artist finds this possession of wealth and attainment of high social rank as one's forefathers no longer true because social values are changing as a result of the sprouting up of the bourgeoisie. In Tsehay Mesfin, for example, Makonnen presents Lij Alemu Desta, who comes from a humble origin but is rich at the moment. His lineage, however, is unmasked when Tsehay (after they have agreed to marry) asks him to explain to her how this great wealth is handed down to him from his forefathers. He tells Tsehay,

ለሰገቴ ለያዥ ቀደም ለያተ ጊዜ ነፁ:: 44

For my father, gize (time) is his grandfather and great-grandfather.

<sup>43</sup> Tsehay Mesfin., p.28

<sup>44</sup> Tsehay Mesfin., p. 26

\*Human being.



የሚያሳዝነን ለንተን ከመልካም ኑሮህ የዕኔ  
ዕድሉ ለጥቶህ ሥቃይ ማየትህ ብቻ ነው።<sup>46</sup>

What grieves me is that you suffer because my  
ill-fate takes you out of your nice living.

reveals that she is so concerned not for herself but for her  
friend Gebre Egziabher because she thinks that it is her fate  
that brings all these sufferings upon him also. From what  
has befallen to them so far, she concludes

ይህ ክፉ ስድህ ጩራ መልካም ያደርሰን ለይመስለንም።<sup>47</sup>

I do not think this bad luck of mine will lead us  
to a better chance.

thereby depicting the artist's unswerving belief in the  
inescapability of fate.

Furthermore, Makonnen's belief that success and failure  
depend on time is clearly revealed when Yayinie Abeba says,

ያንንም ይህ ከይህና ንብረተ ይህንንም ሴት  
ከይህና ጌት ነትዋ ለመለያየት ያጋጠማቸው ስንዴት ያለ  
የተረገመ ቀን ነው።<sup>48</sup>

How cursed would be the day that brought the  
parting of that poor and innocent person from his  
happy family life, and this woman from her aristocratic  
life.

Here, the reference is to the story of the ghari driver and  
Woizero Yewubsefer. Yayinie Abeba believes that the day these  
two unfortunate friends met might be a cursed day. This belief

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<sup>46</sup>Yayinie Abeba, p.56.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p.82.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p.105.

of Yayinie Abeba, therefore, reveals what the artist wants from his audience. He seems to demand that they accept his philosophy of life, his vision of the other world and his belief in time and fate unquestioningly, as Yayinie Abeba does here.

The artist also shows that the souls of Abune Petros and Aba Sew Bekentu have entered the Heavenly Kingdom because besides being church leaders, the former is a patriot who has sacrificed himself for the freedom of his country and rightful king while the latter has totally ignored the pleasure of life in this world and dies in prison after being ill treated by wealthy merchants for advocating the uselessness of worldly property. On the other hand, he also shows that the soul of Ato Habitih Yimer, which consequently, reflects the fate of the souls of all rich merchants, is damned to perpetual suffering in hell. Hence, according to the artist, man while living in this transient world, should be Christian, should forgo his comforts, and should endure hardships in order to enjoy life after death.

## CHAPTER THREE

### MAJOR THEMES : MORAL

In many of the literary works of Makonnen Endalkachew, the reader observes this artist assuming the role of the preacher. In his effort to establish certain standards of behaviour among the nobility, he puts forward guide-lines for the wealthy people regarding what they ought to do with their God-given property.

As the artist, in his religious themes, uses the forces of the supernatural power to enslave the spiritual life of the society, here, too, he uses his moral teaching to urge the exploited masses to conform to certain moral standards which he thinks are right. His moral values of right and wrong seem to originate from his religion and faith in God and his teaching obviously is intended to perpetuate his belief. Furthermore, as we shall see a little later, the artist seems to have laboured much to show the goodness of Christianity and the evil of Islam and paganism.

In the following lines taken from Yefikir Chorra, the reader notes the religious overtone of the moral which the artist presents.

ከብት በደባዎ የሚገኝ ቢሆን ከጥዋት እስከ ጥታ  
የሚሠሩ የቀን ዋያተኛዎች ይከብሩ ነበር:: ... በእግዚአ  
ብሔር ገር ነት ያገኘነውን ብልጽግና ለቤተሰባችንና ለሀገራ  
ችን ይህን ይልድሉን የቆሃርን ለቆሃር የእግዚአብሔርን ለ  
እግዚአብሔር ግደላደል ይገባናል::<sup>49</sup>

If wealth was to be gotten through one's own toil, daily labourers who work from morning to evening would be rich... We should distribute the wealth we have gotten by the grace of God among our families and our country's poor and give to the Emperor and God their dues.

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<sup>49</sup> Yefikir Chorra , PP. 190-191.

As depicted here, the artist conceives that man does not become wealthy because of his labour. Had this been the case, he argues, the daily labourers would have been richer. According to the artist, therefore, some are rich while others are poor because God has created them to be so; thereby, attributing the division of society into the haves and the have nots to the working of the Supernatural Being. In actual fact, the rich and the poor exist in a class divided society not because God has created them, as this artist understands and explicitly states it in the quotation above but because the rich have appropriated the means of production while the poor have not. As a result the rich live by exploiting the toils of the peasants a fact which Makonnen, including members of his class, who enjoy life without working, has deliberately ignored trying to justify their socio-political positions.

In his sermons, therefore, he appeals to both the rich and the poor to measure up to the moral standards he sets for them. He preaches that it is right for the rich to give charities to the poor from their properties which God has blessed them with. It is also wrong and evil for the rich to keep their money in banks, to take interest and use their money for woled agid\*. The indulging of the wealthy people in such lucrative business activities instead of carrying out their moral obligation of alleviating the difficulties of the poor, seems to violate the social norms of his class, and therefore, the artist considers them as morally wrong. He also preaches that since God has created the poor to be what they are, it is right for them to accept their condition and live by the generosity of the rich.

In two of his works, Yedihoch Ketema and Tsehay Mesfin, Makonnen presents two characters who have different moral

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\* Woled Agid: literally it means stop interest. It is actually a form of loan, in which the borrower gives a guarantee, which could be plot of land, building etc. which the person can use until he gets his money back.



This deliberation of Lij Alemu, as cited here, in actual fact reveals the moral precepts which the artist wants to put across. His sermons on good conduct generally seem to include that every believer, regardless of his class position, should be fearful of God, and since God has given the rich their property, it is His will that they use this property to help the needy ones by following the example of Lij Alemu who the artist sets as a model.

From the words as well as the deeds of this philanthropist, the researcher observes the artist tending to believe that when a man is as godly as is Lij Alemu, his children, too, shall be blessed with good fortune and disposition. The reader further notes that the adoption of Tsehay's children by Lij Alemu completely changes the course of their whole life. They successfully complete their higher education abroad and come back to their country where they hold government offices. With the money they have obtained, they jointly establish an organization that caters to and provides support to the old which actualizes the hopes of their foster father and, consequently, that of the artist.

The way the lives of the two characters end further testifies, according to the artist, the profanities of Ato Habtih Yimer and the virtues of Lij Alemu. Ato Habtih Yimer, for example, suddenly dies in a foreign land leaving behind his wealth for which he had an excessive love, even without a will as to who should inherit it. On the other hand, the adopted children of Lij Alemu have been unable to know the whereabouts of their foster father for long, however, he is identified while he is on his deathbed and is buried in a colourful ceremony.

From these works, one can conclude that shunning family responsibility (by not getting married at the right age), repudiating one's own child because it is illegitimate, and above all engaging oneself in business which eventually results

in stinginess violate the social norms of the society and are unacceptable. On the other hand, to relinquish one's business and devote one's entire life to improve the living conditions of others, as Lij Alemu does, and, finally, to establish and finance institutions from which the afflicted can benefit, as the adopted children of Lij Alemu do, is not only to meet the moral standards that the artist expects but also it is to set the best example.

In Alem Woretegna and Yayinie Abeba, Makonnen seems to continue to support the theme of self-sacrificing in order to spare others from the misfortune that has befallen them. Here, however, Makonnen's belief that such moral qualities are to be found among the Christians seems apparent. Both in the play and the novel, we see that Gebre Egziabher is killed by the Adals when he tries to free Yayinie Abeba from slavery. His body is left in the desert to be devoured by vultures and wild animals. When Yayinie Abeba meets a monk, on mount Azzelo, she tells him how she has lost her friend and begs him if he could help her to bring the dead body of her friend to a church (if there is any) for burial. The monk replies,

ለሰው ሰው የዋተ ያን ስት ክርስቲያን ያስፈልገዋል  
አሰራሪ ስት ክርስቲያን ነው።<sup>51</sup>

A man who has given away his life for the sake of  
of other people requires no church for burial. He himself  
is a church.

This, in a condoling tone, depicts Makonnen's preaching that for a Christian, there is nothing more sacred than sacrificing oneself for the sake of others. Furthermore, in the novel, the slave dealers who mercilessly lash Yayinie Abeba, the mistress who, both in the play and the novel, flog, fetter and generally treat Yayinie Abeba very harshly and brutally are

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<sup>51</sup>Arimugne, p. 64

Muslims. Gebre Egziabher who frees Yayinie Abeba from the Yoke of servitude and who is leading her away from the Mundane affairs of this world is a son of a priest and a devout Christian himself. Yet, this virtuous person is killed and emasculated by the pagan Adals.

Taking the artist's devotion to the Christian faith into account, the purport of such a presentation, it is felt, is to show that Christians are good-hearted, and selfless, as they give their lives away to relieve human sufferings while non-Christians are cruel and selfish because they trample over human dignity. The fact that the Adals kill and castrate an innocent person suggests to Makonnen that they are not even human. Such a presentation, I think, besides unmasking the author's belief that the ethics of his faith is more human than the others, depicts the political overtone of his morality.

⊗ Makonnen, because he believes that all kinds of social evils emanate from discoveries and inventions, fears that civilization would shatter the values which he considers as good. This dreary vision of the future which haunts the artist is presented in his morality play, Yakayel Dingay.

አቶ ማስተዋል:- በዓለም ላይ ሰላም አይገኝም ከፊተኛው የኋለኛው የከፋ ይህናል እንደ ተባለው የቃየል ፍሬያቸ ካለፏት ዘመናቸ ይልቅ የመረረ የገጠዘዘ ሆነዋል፤ የዓለም ሰላም በብዙ ገንዘብ የሚገዛና በፈብሪካ የሚሠሩ አይደሉም:: በውነት ሰላምን ለማግኘት በዓለም ላይ ተለያይተው ከሁለት ከተሞቻ ላይ የሚኖሩትን የአቤልንና የቃየልን ልጆቻ ማስታረቅ ያስፈልጋል::<sup>52</sup>

There shall be no peace in the world. As it has been said that things get worse than before,

<sup>52</sup>Arimugne, p.39.

the fruits of Cain have become more bitter and sour than ever. World peace is not bought with money and is not processed in a factory. In fact, to attain world peace it is necessary to mediate between the children of Cain and Abel who are living in the two different cities.

The two cities which the artist talks about here refer to the secular and religious institutions while the children of Cain and Abel refer to the worldly people and the clergymen. Since the children of Cain are becoming bitter from time to time, "world peace", the artist thinks, is unattainable unless the people of these entirely two different worlds come to an accord and begin to live in harmony.

In Taitu Bittul, however, the moral that Makonnen presents to his audience seems to be rather secular. In this novel, the artist presents Tewodros and Taitu embodying the right and wrong codes of conduct. Tewodros, completely possessed by the beauty of Taitu, makes a passionate advance towards her to satisfy his sexual desire. Taitu, on the other hand, resists this erotic move and appeals to him, with humility, to control his passion. She says:

ገርግዊ ሀይ የውነተኛ አርበኛና ስለሥልጣን  
ራሱን መገዛት የሚችል ብቻ ነው።<sup>53</sup>

Your Majesty, the only real patriot and dignitary (authority) is a person who can govern himself.

Makonnen seems to condemn Tewodros as wicked and malicious and as one who cannot control his emotions and shows that what he does transgresses the norms of the society. On the other

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<sup>53</sup>Taitu Bittul , P.27

hand, the artist appraises Taitu's reluctance to such an ethical move even at the cost of her family which unveils her spiritual strength, chastity and virtue.

When one examines the anti-thesis and synthesis of the novel, as contrived by the artist, the morals that can be drawn from the story becomes vivid. As explained, Tewodros is presented as a corrupted emperor who does not refrain from doing all the evil things, that could be imagined, such as the beheading of Taitu's husband and her two sons, unless his personal desires are satisfied. Taitu, on the other hand, is portrayed as a chaste, virtuous and morally strong woman who exhibits determination and courage not to yield to the will of a corrupted worldly man no matter how omnipotent and ferocious he may be.

Yet, we see that Taitu has a generous heart. She completely forgives Tewodros when she sees that he dies an honourable death. The artist in his attempt to justify the appropriateness of such attitude and conduct states:

ግንም ሰፊ መከራና ሥቃይ ቢበዛበት የእግዚአብሔርን  
ሕግና የቤተሰቦቿን መልካም ኑሮን መተው... እንዳይገባ፤  
ግንም ሰፊ የገሰ ጠላትም ቢሆን ለሀገሩ ከፍ ያለ ሥራ ቢሠራ  
የገሰ ጠብን ወደ ጉን አድርጎ ስለሀገሩ ጠላትን መውደድ እን  
ዲገባ፤<sup>54</sup>

As it is inappropriate for anybody to dismiss the laws of God and the good living of kinship because of too much misery and torture... it is appropriate for anyone, putting personal contention aside, to love one's enemy, even if he is a personal enemy, when he accomplishes a significant task for his country.

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<sup>54</sup>Taitu Bittul , PP. 87-88.

Hence, the audience notes that because Tewodros is a morally corrupted Emperor, he loses the support of the society and meets his tragic end. But Taitu, who wins a moral victory, is rewarded later in her life by becoming the wife of the famous Emperor Menilik II which sums up the moral of the story that a man is rewarded when his actions are in harmony with the ethics of the society and is punished when his actions are otherwise.

In Hassabnna Sew, Makonnen, through the character of King Dawit, attempts to bring out that man encounters conflicting thoughts in life. The artist, in his address to the reader, suggests what a man ought to do when such things occur to him. He states:

የሕሊና ጠርቶ ተሰላረው በተዋገባ ገዜ ሰው  
አያየንም ብሎ በከፍ ፈቃድ እጅ ተጣርቦ ከመሄድ  
እገዛአብሔርን አጣጥ አድርጎ ከፍ ፈቃድን ጣሻ ነፍ  
ዋና ቁፍ ነገር መሆኑን አገጻገረሰ... ሰው ባያይ  
እገዛአብሔር ያያል: 55

When conflicting ideas battle in our conscience, instead of being captivated by the evil idea and pursue it believing that no man sees us, winning the wicked idea, making God our witness is a worthwhile thing. If man does not see what we are thinking of, God does.

The artist, here, seems not only to preach the omnipresence of God but also to make people conscious that this Supernatural Being watches the daily activities of man and every thought that he may think of be it vicious or otherwise. Besides, since both the rich and the poor are his own creation

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55 Arimugne , P.250

and that it is completely outside the range of man's ability to alter his fate, Makonnen, as these lines testify, tirelessly reiterates that men be fearful of God because there will be no secret which they can conceal from Him.

It would not be difficult to imagine what the moral that Makonnen wants his audience to draw would be when he, in his play Yedihoch Ketema, says:

በእጅግ በተለቀ ገንብ ውስጥ ተቀምጦ በጭንቅ  
ያገገው ገንዘብ የሚያስቀጥበት የታኔ ነ በታ ከሚረዳገ  
ሀብታም በርቫ ውስጥ የሚኖሩ ገብረ እንደሚበሉት ይረ  
ጻዕል::<sup>56</sup>

In actual fact, one understands that a peasant farmer who walks in his farm taking fresh air would be much better than a wealthy man who is living in a big building and under great stress seeking for a safe place to keep his money.

Although the artist presents a distorted reality, the quotation here clearly exhibits the partisanship of the literary work. As can be observed from the text, Makonnen glorifies the life of a simple peasant farmer making it superior to the life of a wealthy man who is in great distress seeking for a safe place to hoard his money. This exaltation appears to be a deliberate one because the artist seems to realize that unless he masks the reality and preaches to the audience that the life of the wealthy people is not enticing and is in fact full of worries the wretches may rise against his class and deprive it of all its privileges which it is enjoying at the moment. The moral of this story is apparently intended to make the lower social classes lose sight of their struggle for their economic as well as social equality.

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<sup>56</sup>Arimugne, p.107.

Under the thin veil of religion and morality Makonnen's attempt to carry further in order to realize his desire of promoting the interest of his class becomes overtly apparent when he addresses the reader,

በዚህ ጊዜ ጊዜ በምትኖርበት ዘመን ሁሉ ሃይማኖትንና  
እውነትን ተወርኮዝ። ለሰው ያለው ትዳሩ ሁሉ ጠፍቶ ሃይማኖት  
ቱና እውነት ቢቀረሉት ቶሎ ቶሎ ከወይ ቀበት ይነሳል። እውነት  
ቱና ሃይማኖት ዝግብለው ከፍ ያለውን ድል ያገኛሉ እንጂ በዚህ  
ሀ ዓለም ቶሎ ብሎ አይቀናቸውም። ሀሰት ገን ምንም ቶሎ  
ቢቀናት ደስታዎ ከጠመንዘ ተኩስ የፈጠነና ቶሎ ብሎ የሚጠፋ  
ወሀ ኑን አወቀ። የሰሰት ፍሬዎች ቅሌትና ጸጸት ናቸው።<sup>57</sup>

In these hard times of your ages, depend on religion and truth. If a man loses all his property, save his religion and truth, he will at once rise up from where he has fallen. Truth and religion become gradually winners. You should know that the pleasure of falsehood is momentary. It is faster than a firing of gun when it disappears. The fruits of lies are remorse and penitence.

The works of Makonnen Endalkachew as I have attempted to show, have both religious and political tones. Regarding the spiritual life of the people, Makonnen in his works, Yedem Zemen, Yayinie Abeba, Alem Woretegna, and Selasawi Dawit, tries to teach the uselessness of worldly happiness and that man should completely abandon it. He also preaches that men should passionately sacrifice their lives for their religion, fight for the freedom of their country, and show their devotion and loyalty to their worldly ruler in order to be rewarded both in this world and the world to come as is the case with Abune Petros, in his play Yedem Dimtse, which, the researcher believes, reveals the intent of the Religio-political themes of the artist.

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., pp. 40-41.

He further stresses that men should be fearful of God because He is all knowing and it is absolutely impossible to keep one's deeds secret from Him. Hence, the artist makes constant reference to this omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient being to scare his audience. He also ascribes the division of the rich and the poor to be His creation. Besides, in his frantic effort to perpetuate the ethical values of his class, the artist attributes the existence of war and social injustices to the evil nature of Cain's children and the advances they have made in scientific discoveries. As a result of his observation, the artist suggests that men should keep their passions under restraint by showing that the end result of failing to control one's emotions, as is the case with Tewodros in Taitu Bittul, would be catastrophic.

Therefore, Makonnen's moral sermons seem to aim at inculcating into the minds of his readers that they accept this natural hierarchical division of society and that they obey both their spiritual leader, the priest, and their worldly leader the King without grumbling.

The underlying motives of demanding such an ethical behaviour from the people, it is felt, spring from Makonnen's realization and fear of the fact that since civilization and discovery raise the level of the consciousness of the people, they will eventually begin questioning the sanctity of both the religious and political leaders gradually leading to the end of their hegemony.

Therefore, the researcher would like to conclude that Makonnen's morality, too, as depicted in his religion and philosophy, is geared towards serving the interest of the

propertied class and tranquillizing the working people. This unveils the artist's class commitment because, throughout his works, the artist presents the morality that expresses the interest of the ruling class. It is, however, generally believed that moral principles of a society change because of its development and progress. Besides, Makonnen seems to realize the fact that the ruling class could not impose its ethical values on the different social groups as it does enforce law and order through its organized state machinery. Since each class of the society, the exploiter, and the exploited, has its spokesman, Makonnen, as a committed member of the ruling class, through the various media at his disposal, that is, the novel, the play, the essay and biography, untiringly presents the moral views of his class hoping that such principles would be accepted by the entire society.

CHAPTER FOUR

MAJOR THEMES : POLITICAL

This chapter attempts to examine the political themes of Makonnen Endalkachew as reflected in his literary works. Since politics is, in essence, the struggle for power between social classes having conflicting interests, the researcher will try to unravel the nature of the political thoughts of Makonnen Endalkachew. An attempt will also be made to bring to the readers' attention to what extent the artist has exerted his efforts to foster the social values and economic superiority of his particular class in his society. As a product of his aristocratic class, Makonnen does not admit changes that shake the foundation of the existing social set up because allowing such changes in the society would only threaten the existence of his class in power. For fear of being denied the privileges the aristocracy enjoyed during Makonnen's time the artist advocates for the maintenance of the status quo under the guise of the emancipation of the slave, in Yayinie Ababa. In the introduction of this novel, Makonnen states how this literary work has been conceived and brought to reality as:

አላጋ ወራሽ በ1909 የኢትዮጵያን መንግሥት ለመምራት ሰጠረጡ የመጀመሪያ ዋና ሥራ ቸው የባር ነትን ክፉ ልማድ ስገር ማጥፋት ነበር። የሰው ልጅ አንድ ከብት መሸጥና መለወጥ በብር ተ ሥራ ሥቃይ ማሳየት የጭካኔ ሥራ የአረመኔ ተገባር መሆኑን ለሕዝብ ለማሰረዳት ይልቀንም ልዑል አላጋ ወራሽ ክፉ ልማድን ለማጥፋት የሚያደርጉትን ብር ተ ተገል ለመገለጽ ነበር... ጊዛው አልፎ ሊተሰበው ጉዳይ ባይጭልም ገዢዎቹ በሚገዟቸው ላይ የጭካኔ ሥራ አንጻይሠረባቸው አሁንም ቢሆን ለማሳሰብ ይረዳል።<sup>58</sup>

In 1909 Eth.C., when the Crown Prince was entrusted with the leadership of the government of Ethiopia, his first main task was to abolish the evil practice of slavery from the

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<sup>58</sup>Yayinie Abeba, PP. ለ--ሰ (b-c)

country. The goal of this fiction was to publicize that, the selling and exchanging of human beings like animals and tormenting them with hard labour are acts of atrocity and barbarism; and especially to expound the arduous struggle which His Royal Highness the Crown Prince was waging against this bad custom. Though it was not used for the intended state of affairs because of delayed publication, it, even at present, helps to remind slave owners not to commit barbarous actions and injustices on their subjects.

Indeed, the purpose for which this literary work is contrived, that is, the emancipation of the slave, carries a very noble theme. An observant reader, however, notes from the text quoted above that Makonnen, by craft, negates the very principle which he seems to advance. He does not genuinely present the just cause of the tormented masses and fight for it to the end. On the contrary, he shuns it and begins to appeal to the slave owners to be sympathetic to and fair with their slaves purely on moral grounds.

When one considers the function of literature and the role of a class committed writer from the modern Marxian point of view, one tends to ironically justify the position taken by the artist because for Makonnen to stand by the side of the humiliated and dehumanized slaves and argue for their emancipation would amount to advocating against his own existence. In fact, since the existence of the artist fully depends on the exploitation of the labour of others, he advocates for a continued existence of master-slave relationship. He subtly resists any outcry which he thinks will threaten the entire make up of the social matrix. From the text, it is possible to infer that about twenty years later, when this novel was published, slavery has not gone out from the society. Yet, Makonnen, in this work, does not take a firm position on the abolition of slavery. Consequently, his work does not show the inevitable victory of the slaves over their masters.

This novel depicts firstly, that Makonnen knows the weakness of the society very well; secondly, he is conscious of the major social conflict that exists between the slave and his master; and finally, the struggle between the force of progress and reaction. Regarding the inhumane punishments and iniquitous deeds which the slave dealers inflict upon their slaves, for example, Makonnen gives the reader the following vivid explanation.

ጩካኙ ወንበዳ ኪሱን አሰገርሶ ከዚያ ከተቢያ ላይ  
አያገላበጠ ያሻት ደመር:: ያፔ ጸሐይ የምትወስል ሕይወት  
ከዚያ ከተቢያ ውስጥ አጋደመው ገዢው ገዢ በቀጽበት መሰከር  
ተለወጠ ደገዎ በጣም የሚያሳዝነው አይኖ አገሯ ለሰላሳ በመ  
ሆኑ ዋጋ አንዳታፈርሰባቸው ሥራ የለመደቸ ነቸ አንድተባል  
አንዳቸከርና አንዳቸረረረፍ በቫካራ ደንጋይ ፋቋት::<sup>59</sup>

The cruel slaver, having put a ball in her mouth, began to scrub her in the mud turning her this way and that. The beautiful girl immediately changed as they laid and scrubbed her in the mud. What is more saddening was that since they wanted to sell her at a reasonable price and wanted her to appear as if she was used to hard physical labour, they scrubbed her delicate hands and feet with rough stone.

This explanation, besides unveiling the cruelty of the slave dealers, unfolds the fact that Makonnen is familiar with the common method through which they obtain their commodities, the slaves. During this time, slave traders usually swarm over an isolated village late at night. This sudden raid obviously creates confusion and terror among the dwellers. In their utter bewilderment, they abandon their village and run in every direction to save their lives. But the slave dealers, who are keeping on the lookout track down and capture

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p.15.

some of them. The captives are then taken to distant places to be sold. The process of dehumanization such as thrashing soundly, scratching the hands and the feet with flint, cauterizing with hot iron, which the artist partially presents here, takes place on the way. Yayinie Abeba is one of the many thousands, perhaps millions of people who have fallen victim to such a wicked social practice.

Makonnen, as shown above, presents how slave dealers rip out peaceful families and how they subjugate them through such barbaric actions till the slaves hate their humanity. He also gives the reader a glimpse of the torment and haggard of the slaves in the household of their masters. The text quoted below, for example, is the instruction given to Yayinie Abeba concerning her chores by Woizero Debitu.

አንቺ ልጅ ከዛሬ ጀምሮ ሥራሽን አስታጥቅሻለሁ፡፡ ቧት በሌሊት ተነሰተሽ ውሀ መቀዳት ወዲያው ቤት መጥረግ ከዚያ በኋላ የኔንዎ የአቶ መስመድንዎ የልጆቼንዎ ልብስ ማጠብ፤ ከሰዓት ሰዓት በኋላ ጡና ማፍለትና ገብር ማቀረብ ነው፡፡ ማታ ደግሞ አራት ማቀረብና ጡና ማፍለት... ሌሊቱን ለምሳሌ ለአራት የሚበቃ እሀል እየወሰዱሽ ስትፈጠሩ ማደር... የቀረውን እኔ አገዛ ሻለሁ፡፡<sup>60</sup>

Hey you, from today onwards, I let you know your share of the work. You should get up early in the morning, before dawn, and fetch water. Right after that, you clean the house, and then, you should wash my clothes, Ato Mohammed's and my children's clothes. After mid-day, you should make coffee and serve lunch ... In the evening, too, you should make coffee and serve supper... At night, you should take grain that would be sufficient for lunch and supper and grind... with the rest, I shall help you.

This instruction which designates Yayinie Abeba's daily share of the work clearly reveals the merciless exploitation of

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid., pp . 31-32.

the slaves. It also expresses the fact that slaves labour day and night to make their owners rich. On the other hand, it exposes the ridicule of the slave owners. Here, the reader notes Woizero Debritu pledging to help with the work after assigning these tiring and endless chores to Yayinie Abeba. The reality is, however, that there is practically nothing left for her to do.

Yayinie Abeba, too, though she has no power to avenge on her class enemies, expresses her bitter hatred for both the slave dealers and owners in these words.

ከነዚያ ከግንባሩ ጋር ጠቅላላ ሰውና የሚባሉ አጭራ  
ዎንዎ ልዩነት ስለሌለው ሰው አገንቶን ከሚሸጠን አጭራ ቢበላገን  
ይሸላሉ፡፡<sup>61</sup>

Because I see no difference between man and man-eating beast, ever after my experience with those brigands, I would rather be eaten by beasts than being found by man and sold again.

ጠይዘሮ ኑሪ ተ የሚባሉ ሰዎች ላይ ዓቢሎን ናቸው፤  
ጠፍራዎ ገፋላቸው የቀሙ ነጭ የመሰለ ከጭት አስከጫታ አንደ  
ተቀጡ የሚሉ...<sup>62</sup>

The woman called Woizero Nuritu is a Devil in this world. Her thick eyebrows look like the hair of a giraffe('s) tail. She spends the day (from morning to evening) being angry ...

The texts examined so far clearly manifest the major social conflicts and the fierce struggles being waged between the two basic classes - the slave and slave owner. The representatives of the slaves and slave owners, that is, Yayinie Abeba and

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid., .38.

<sup>62</sup>Arinugn..., P.71.

Woizero Debritu, both in Yayinie Abeba and Alem Woretegna, air their views from their class stand. The researcher, therefore, will not attempt to justify the one and accuse the other on moral grounds; however, he would rather try to explore how the artist has resolved the conflict between the slave and his master and comment on its political implication.

The main purpose of this work, Yayinie Abeba, as expressed by the artist in the introduction, is to publicize and enhance the legal actions taken to emancipate the slaves. But the researcher observes that the actual resolution, which Makonnen presents, seems to testify that he is waging an anti-emancipation campaign. In the story, the reader notes that Yayinie Abeba, after living in deplorable conditions under the yoke of servitude, ends up in seclusion and a monastery life. Since she is unable to get even grains to parch and munch on, she subsists on leaves and roots and finally dies. Gebre Egziabher, too, who is believed to represent the advocates of human rights, is killed and castrated. On the other hand nothing happens to the slave dealers and slave owners. Should a work of art which carries a noble theme of emancipation end in this manner? Regarding the task of the writers who take up the cause of the exploited, Mao has the following to say.

The task of... writers and artists is to expose their duplicity and cruelty and at the same time to point out the inevitability of their defeat, so as to encourage the... people to fight staunchly with one heart and one mind for their overthrow.<sup>63</sup>

But in Yayinie Abeba, and Alem Woretegna, the reader observes Makonnen Endalkachew embarking on an undertaking aimed at improving the conditions of the degraded ones. Since

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<sup>63</sup>Mao Tsetung, Selected Readings, (Peking : Foreign Languages Press, 1971), P. 252.

Makonnen has a tremendous knowledge of the feudal milieu, he clearly presents the conflicts that exist in the social order. But since he does not want the system to change, he makes the conditions of the slaves worse than before while those of the feudal class remain unaffected. Such a finale further reveals that if masters do not become tender hearted the only thing they lose is the service of their slaves. On the other hand, if slaves do not accept their conditions the alternative they have is to perish. Moreover, the conservative political thought of Makonnen is revealed when he gets Gebre Egziabher murdered by the Adals. His death unmasks his resolution to stifle any political movement that endangers the privileges of the aristocracy.

As Makonnen has presented the contradiction between the two basic social groups, he also presents the contradiction that existed during his time within the nobility in his biographical novel Yehilm Rutchu. In this novel, the artist shows what life in the court looked like and what he was doing. He describes the life of the aristocracy and his efforts not only to fit in but also to excel in a very plain and unequivocal manner as follows:

እንደ ሲቫም ሌላው ሲቫር እንደዚህም እንደ ሲቫት ልጅ ሲተካ እንደ ሲታሰር ሌላው ሲፈታ በጣየት የዚህን ዓለም አሸቅ ይታዩኝና ትገላ አጠና ነበር... ከቤተ መንግሥት ውስጥ የተማርኩት ለጥቅም መሽቀዳዎና የከብርን ተራራ ለመውጣት መፍጨርጫና መደከም ውስጥ ወዲያው ተመልኼ ገባሁ... በዚያን ዘመን መሽም መሻር መጋዘ መጣር ማግኘት ማጣት እንደ እንዳን ለመቀደም መርጥ ወይም እድሉ አጋጥሞት ወደቀ መሠበር ሌላውም አደጋውን ዘሉ መጠቀም ሌሎችም ይህን የመሳሰሉ የቤተ መንግሥትን ሥርዓት መከታተል ገዲታ ነው:: ይልቀንም በዚያን ጊዜ አባት ከትላቅ ማዕረግ ደርሶ ሲቫት ለልጅ የከብርን ተራራ ለመውጣት አቋራጭ መንገድ

ሰለሀኑ በዙ ገደኛቹ በግዕዝ ስላገዙ ሂደት፡፡ ነገር ግን  
 አባቱ በሕይወቱ ሰለጠነው ስላይ ራሱ የከብርን ተራራ ለመው  
 ጣት መፍጠር ገደቧ ሆነ፡፡<sup>64</sup>

When one is appointed, the other is dismissed. As one dies, his son succeeds him. When one is imprisoned, the other is released. By observing these happenings, I learnt about the competition and struggle of this world... I, too, again entered the competition for personal gains and began floundering to climb the mountain of prestige acquired in the palace... During those years, it was obligatory to study the procedures, regulations, ceremonies, and manners of the court such as appointment, exile, mercy, how one courtier tries to outsmart the other, how his bad luck brings his downfall. During that time, especially when a father who has attained the highest rank in the society dies, it would be easier for the son to ascend to power. But since my father died during my infancy, I, on my own, had to struggle to climb up to the mountain of prestige!

As depicted in the text, there exist a disharmony within the nobility, and life in the court seems to be full of intrigues. The aristocrats are busy with plots and counter plots. Consequently, Makonnen, including all other young members seems to be busy studying their lessons as to when and why one member is exiled, imprisoned, dismissed from an office while the other is appointed or promoted. The text further reveals that the nobility does not reward individual merits with honour and title because prestige and title seem to be hereditary. Even within the class of the nobility, the artist makes it clear that those whose fathers have held high offices can rise to power at an early age very easily.

However, since Makonnen has lost his father who has not attained the coveted social status in the artist's childhood, he feels begrudged because he has to make his way up on his own. The researcher, however, finds this view of Makonnen

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<sup>64</sup> Yehilm Rutcha., PP. 11-13.

regarding rising to power through one's own efforts, not plausible for two reasons. Makonnen rose to power because firstly, he was born in an aristocratic family which had a long standing history, and secondly, he was married into the Royalty.

During Iyassu's reign, Makonnen attempted to be friendly with the Emperor, but Iyassu displayed his negative attitude by demoting him. It is owing to this fact that Makonnen's desire to possess political power and receive title remained elusive until Teferi Makonnen comes into the picture. Even then, Makonnen seems to succeed in realizing his ambition through marriage. As shown in his biography, Makonnen first got married to Zewditu, a daughter of one of the aristocrats, Ras Betwoded Mengesha. Regarding his married life and the devotion and conduct of his wife, Makonnen speaks,

በ1907 ዓ.ም የራስ ቤተሰብ ወንገራዊ ልጅ ወይዘሮ  
ዘውዲትን አገባሁ። እርሷም በጣም ብሉህ አዋቂና ደግ ፍጥ  
ረት በመሆንም በቤት ፍሰት ሰላምና እረፍት አገኘሁ... ባለቤ  
ት ወይዘሮ ዘውዲት ወንገራዊ ብሉህ፣ አስተዋይ ተሰግሞተኛ በመሆ  
ንዋ ኃዘናቸንን በሰፊው ወንፈሻ ወይ ደስታ ተለቀጠው ነበር።<sup>65</sup>

In 1907 Eth.C., I got married to Woizero Zewditu, daughter of Ras-Bitwoded Mengesha. Since she was a very intelligent and knowledgeable creature I had peace and rest at home. My wife Woizero Zewditu Mengesha, because she was thoughtful, wise, and tolerant, was converting our sorrows to joy through her extensive spirit (Liveliness).

Makonnen, as clearly described in the above quotation, admires the qualities which his wife possesses. Yet, in the same work, as well as in Yefikir Chorra, he tells his readers that he often altercates with her. The excuse he gives is

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<sup>65</sup>Yihilm Rutch., PP. 15-16

that he has been enslaved by a lady whom he has visited in a hospital and whom he has married twenty years later. But who is this lady who has outshined Zewditu and won his attention? Is his love for her really genuine? A close examination of the two texts quoted above reveals the mentality and cunning nature of the aristocracy and enables the reader to observe the fact that an aristocrat would even sacrifice his family in order to maintain power and receive title,

Makonnen, for example, forsakes his wife who has such noble manners and marries Yeshashwork Yilma, the niece of the Emperor. When one learns the fact that Makonnen has been ceaselessly struggling to actualize his dream of rising to the highest power in the society, one would, perhaps unmistakably, find the reason why he wants to ally himself with the Emperor. It is apparent that he marries Yeshashwork not because he genuinely loves her, but because he wants to exploit the marriage to achieve his goal which he has been cherishing for years. In the following words, Makonnen clearly expresses his ambition for high social status within the nobility.

በልጅ ኢያሱ ዘመነ መንግሥተ ጊዜ የከበር ተራራ  
አገደ ሰሜን ተራራ በበረዶ ተሸፍኖ የሚደገግ የሚደረገር  
የሕልም ተራራ ይመስለን የነበረ ያለፎቅም ተሰብኮ ነገር  
ፍ ላይ ደረሰሁ::<sup>66</sup>

At once, without any effort, I reached at the peak of the dignity of mountain, which during the reign of Lij Iyassu, appeared before me like the unascendable snow covered Siemen Mountain.

This text shows that Makonnen has married the Royalty to ascend to power without impediments. As long as the ambitious aristocrat is certain that he would attain the

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<sup>66</sup>Ibid., P.17

authority which he desperately craves for, he does not seem to worry about the kind of family life he leads. Therefore, one can observe from the works of this artist, the general preoccupation of the aristocracy to compete and struggle for grabbing power through various means such as open arms confrontation, contriving plots against each other, marriage alliance as is the case with Makonnen Endalkachew, to promote self-interest and hold the reign of the government.

Makonnen, in his play Yedem Dimtse, attempts to exploit his religious doctrine to serve his political end. This endeavour of the artist is reflected in the soliloquy of Abune Petros at the beginning of the second chapter when he prays to the Lord,

አረኛቸን ኃይለ ሥላሴ የኢትዮጵያ ንጉሠ ነገሥት በሀሳብና  
በሀዘን እንደ ምናሴ በበረተ ቁፍ ውስጥ ተይዞ ይዞሃል። ለቤተ  
በገር ነት ይቅር ብለኸው ወደ ዙፋኑ እንዲመለስና የኢትዮጵያ ሕዝብ  
ሁሉ ከሥልጣኑ በታች እንዲሰበሰብ አድርገ።<sup>67</sup>

... Our shepherd, Haile Sellassie, Emperor of Ethiopia caught in thought, grief and in an iron cage like Minasse, cries to You. Oh Lord, forgive him in your kindness and bring him back to his throne; and bring all the people of Ethiopia under his authority.

The patriarch seems to consider the suffering and humiliation which the king is undergoing as that of the people. He also seems to think that the victory of the Emperor over the Italian and his return to the throne would bring peace and freedom to the people. With this mentality, the Abune prays to God that the monarch triumphantly return to his throne and that all the people of the country may be brought under his firm

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<sup>67</sup> Arimugne., p.91.

grip. This prayer for the reinstatement of the social order with the king at its top, expresses the desire and plea of Makonnen Endalkachew for a continued existence of the aristocracy with its power consolidated.

As Abune Petros uses his religious authority to preach the people to gather together under the rule of the Emperor, he resolutely stands against the Italian and sacrifices himself. This resolution to fight for one's freedom, however, reveals Makonnen's National patriotism. This is further expressed in these words,

ከሎ ሀይ ማኅፀ ዕብዱ ከሆነ ሰው በቀር ስናቶን  
ለገደለበት ባላጋራ የልብ አገልጋይ የሚሆን ለመሰበኪያ የሚ  
ሆን ብዙ ገንዘብ ይሰጥ ያታል ስላሉን በጣም አዘገኩ:: ማን  
ሰው ነው... ለራሱ ወገደያ ወርዘ በብዙ ገንዘብ የሚገዛ...  
ገንዘብ ያ ለራሱ ያ ለጥፋት ያ ይሁን፤ ስኬ ሃይማኖትንና ሀገሪን  
በገንዘብ አልሸጥም::<sup>68</sup>

Your excellency, who becomes a sincere servant to his enemy, murderer of his mother, unless he is mad? I was very much grieved when you told us that I would receive a lot of money for a propaganda work... who buys poison for one's own ruin for much money? Let your money be for your own destruction. I will not exchange my religion and country for money.

This vehement address to the Italian general by the church leader depicts the position of the artist on the question of national patriotism. The patriarch rejects the huge sum of money and the high post offered to him by the Italian general in Ethiopia. He appeals to all nationalities in the country to cast aside their ethnic, religious, and cultural differences and stand in unity against foreign intervention.

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<sup>68</sup> Arimugne., P. 84

His zeal for national patriotism, as reflected in Yedem Dimtse and Almotikum Biye Alwashim, seems to have won him many admirers and followers among the different nationalities and religious groups of the country. In the concluding chapter of Yedem Dimtse, for example, after Abune Petros has met his patriotic and martyr death, the reader observes many Ethiopians being stirred and taking vows to follow his suit. Consequently, the reader notes Kassa of Tigray, Belew of Gojjam, Temachu of Begemidir, Waqqira of the Oromo nationality, Fatuma of the Muslim faith, Adefrisew of Shewa, secretly meeting in a lonely house and talking about what each has felt when this church father is executed by shooting. These representatives of the various regions, nationalities, and religious groups, after appraising the heroic death of the church leader, resolve to take up arms and launch new offences to drive the enemy out of their country.

Makonnen, although he displays a strong sense of national patriotism as depicted in the aforementioned works, seems to have given his deaf ear to the plight of the people. This is revealed in the conversation between Abune Petros and the guards. The Abune, in his attempt to preach and instil in the minds of the people a sense of national feeling, tells the guards that serving the Italian government amounts to serving a master who has murdered one's mother. The guards, however, do not let this view of the Abune pass unchallenged. One of the guards hurls at Abune Petros this difficult and pinching question,

እስቲ እርስዎ ንገሠ ነገሥተና መሳፍንት ባለባት  
 ለኢትዮጵያ ሕዝብ የሠሩትን ይንገሩን፡፡<sup>69</sup>

Would you tell us what the Emperor, the princes  
 and the nobles have done for the people of Ethiopia?

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<sup>69</sup>Ibid., P.93.

This question clearly indicates the attitude of the people that it makes no difference for them whoever holds the political power as long as it remains exploitative and unpopular. It further indicates that the people who these guards represent are gradually becoming aware of their class enemies and, as a result, they seem to question the value of honour and patriotism in fighting against the Italians only to bring national exploiters and oppressors to power. From the text, then, the dilemma which these people find themselves in, that is, to fight or not to fight against the foreign invaders can be envisaged because it involves a choice between two devils - foreign and national oppressors. The very fact of raising such a question also unfolds the resentment of the people and their realization of the fact that whichever they choose brings no change in their social status. Finally, in response to the question posed, the reader observes the guards becoming sympathetic to Abune Petros after their talks on the contents of his speech and their reassessment of the atrocities of the nobility vis-a-vis the Italians weighed against their own experience.

However, the people's determination and courage to fight resolutely against the foreign aggressors are well depicted in Almotikum Biye Alwashim. Ato Temachu, the hero in this novel, with his two sons, participates in the war in defence of the motherland. He loses his two sons in battle. He receives a series of serious wounds. As a result, he gets crippled and disfigured. Being unable to stay in the battle field, for he has been physically handicaped and the Ethiopian army has been dismantled and many have reverted to guerrilla warfare for which he is unfit, Ato Temachu comes back home. There, he discovers that his house has become the residence of an Italian general who has married his wife. The knowledge of

this bitter reality fills Ato Temachu with dismay. In fact, his spirit seems to have been crushed once and for all. The hero, who finds such humiliating acts unbearable, commits suicide by hanging himself.

The heroic death of Abune Petros and Ato Temachu have stirred many Ethiopians to join the patriotic front to intensify the struggle for national independence and freedom. Furthermore, the death of these heroes, together with the ruin of Ato Temachu's family, lays bare before us the sacrifices which the masses have made both in life and property. Yet, as is usually the case with Makonnen, these two works of art end with the death of the heroes and sermons stating that people who die in defence of their motherland and in honour of their rightful king would be rewarded in the world to come and that their names would be immortal. To the researcher, however, such an end, besides revealing his pessimistic view of life, appears to be Makonnen's deliberate avoidance of showing people the ways to better conditions of life. He seems to prefer leaving them in obscurity ready for further exploitation and subjugation.

Makonnen, in his works Yedihoch Ketema and Tsehay Mesfin, presents the conflict between the bourgeoisie, which is shooting out, and the nobility, which is in the decline. In these works, he apparently exhibits his desperate attempt to perpetuate the status quo, and seems to conduct an anti-bourgeois campaign because he directs his pen towards pointing out of the horrible and dreadful features of the new system as he observes it in the everyday activity of the society. Makonnen does this because he finds the interests and social values of these classes to be completely at variance and that the bourgeoisie is beginning to dominate the economic life of the

society which would gradually lead to the overthrow of the aristocracy. The artist, for fear of losing the political grip on his class, condemns Ato Habtih Yimer and exposes the social evils which capitalism has begun to generate in the following manner.

ያገሩ ደህንና እናተና አባተ የሞተባቸው ሕፃናት  
ጠዋሪ ያሉ ሽግግራዎች ብዙዎች ከሌሎች ያለፉ ደህን ተሰባ  
ሰበቡ . . . ወደ መወረሻ ፈራድ ፈት አቀርቡን ይህ ሰቡ  
. . . እናት አገሩን ገፍ ወሽጧቸውን ያለሰሰ በደለኛ ነው::  
የዘላለም ፍርድ ይገባዋል::<sup>70</sup>

The destitutes of the country, the orphans, the helpless aged and a large multitude of the poor gathered together and cried... "Take us before the last Judge. This is a man who... has committed injustice by stripping his mother country off her garment and clothing his concubine, a foreign country. He deserves eternal damnation".

As shown here, Makonnen indicts Ato Habtih Yimer for hoarding his money, lending it at a high interest rate and investing his capital in foreign banks leaving the people of his own country in abject poverty. According to the artist, this is a crime that cannot be overlooked. Since Makonnen does not seem to understand the world of capitalism and the nature of competition that exists within the capitalists, and since, to him, investing one's capital in a foreign land enriches the people of that country regardless of their classes, Ato Habih Yimer, who commits all these evils is condemned to eternal damnation.

What the researcher wants to underscore here is not the fact that he attempts to unmask the weaknesses of the

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<sup>70</sup>Ibid., p.176.

capitlist social order but the motif behind such an undertaking. Makonnen, as depicted in his religious themes, believes that the existence of rich and poor in a society is unavoidable. He also advocates that each should accept his fate, for he is predestined to be so, and only aspire to inherit the eternal happiness in the other world. The underlying reason of Makonnen's attack therefore, seems to be his fear of the gradual shift of power to the bourgeoisie and the gradual decline of the aristocracy. This fear is revealed in Tsehay Mesfin when Tsehay regretfully tells Lij Alemu about her forefathers.

እነዚህ ቀዳሳ አያቶች ከባታቸው ጦርና ጋሻ  
 ፈረስና ወታደር ነበር፡፡ ገንዘብ ለነሱ ምናቸውም  
 አልነበረም፡፡ ርሰት ጉልታቸው የአት ዩላይ ነፃነት  
 ብቻ ነበር፡፡ ስለዚህ በዚህ ደስ ብሏቸው ለራሳቸው  
 ውጥቆም ሳያሰቡ ዘመናቸውን አሳለፏት፡፡<sup>71</sup>

The properties of these forefathers of mine were spear, shield, horses and soldiers. Money was nothing for them. Only the freedom of Ethiopia was their estate and fief. Therefore, pleased with this and without giving thought for their personal gains, they spent their years.

The spear and shield, which Tsehay refers to as the property of the nobility, are traditional weapons that symbolize the warrior nature of the feudal lords while the horses and solidiers designate their military might. Spear, shield, horses, and soldiers are, in fact, the means by which Makonnen's class has asserted its superiority and entrenched itself over the masses. Since the nobility and its forces are consumption oriented, the masses are compelled to pay tributes, taxes, in general to supply them with all that they need. On

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<sup>71</sup>Tsehay Mesfin., p.16.

the otherhand, if the people show any sign of resistance, the force would be used to loot, plunder and subdue them. This is the method of oppression and suppression which Makonnen is familiar with and wants to perpetuate.

But now, the artist, to his dismay, seems to realize that this method of subjugation and exploitation is outdated. A new class with a new way of establishing its supremacy appears on the social scene. It monopolizes the commercial life of the society. When the artist realizes the inability of his class to compete with its new rival whose economic domination is beginning to prevail, and when he visualizes that it would not take long for this new social class to assume political power, he expresses his view in resentment and displeasure with the memoir of the past. Furthermore, Makonnen seems to acknowledge the fact that the nobility is being supplanted by the growing bourgeoisie. This is discernible in these words of Tsehay.

አባቱን ለዚህ ለዚህ ለዚህ ገንዘቡን ይመልሰላህና  
ርስቱን ወሰሰላት... አንተና አባትህ ነፍሰ ገዳ ጭጭ  
ናጥሁ:: በተንኮላ የተሰበሰበ ገንዘብ ጭጭ ይሰ  
አያሰጥም::<sup>72</sup>

Please let this destitute pay your money back and you release his land... You and your father are menslaughtererS. Money collected by devious ways does not make one happy.

This entreaty of Tsehay to let Lij Alemu return the land he has taken over from a bankrupt prince through woled agid, is the supplication of the artist to the public to adhere to the old-fashioned aristocratic way of life which obviously guarantees him power and authority. He also denounces the bourgeois as manslaughtererS not because he considers that

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., PP. 36-38.

the wealth which the new class acquires by subterfuge hurts the masses but it gradually uproots the nobility from its fiefs and estates as Lij Alemu has uprooted one of the unnamed princes.

At this point, therefore, the reader clearly observes that Makonnen, in order to maintain the status quo and safeguard the interest of his class, is directing his literary talent to conduct a battle on two fronts. On the one hand, to suppress any popular upheaval, he tries to indoctrinate the masses with his religious ideas that since the changing of their fate lies outside the range of human ability, they should accept the condition they find themselves in; thereby preaching them to be submissive and not to hope for any bright future. On the other hand, when he realizes that the bourgeois is becoming a threat to the aristocracy, he tries to expose the devious ways it employs to uproot the aristocrats from their estates and fiefs; but not how it is becoming a continuous dread of impoverishment to the lower social classes.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

In an attempt to evaluate one of our early writers, Makonnen Endalkachew, this research has examined the major preoccupations of the artist under four chapters: Introduction, Religious, Moral and Political. In the introductory chapter of this thesis, an attempt has been made to survey the life history of Makonnen as well as the history of his family briefly in order to assess the impact of his social status and family background on his literary works. He is also contrasted with two early eminent writers, Blaten Geta Hiruy Wolde Sellassie and Djazmatch Girmatchew Tekle Hawariat, laying special emphasis on their preoccupations in order to set Makonnen in the pattern and generally discuss what point of view he projects in the context of our literary heritage.

The survey has revealed that Makonnen was a member of the ruling class who had a great influence in the court of Haile Sellassie as his uncles had in the court of Menilik. Because of this long standing history of his family and his own participation in the activities of the court from his early teens till he retires from public life due to old age and failing eyesight, Makonnen has become an embodiment of the beliefs, customs, and traditions of the aristocracy that were in general regulating the social relations of his time.

From the contrast made, the researcher has observed that the social purpose of the literary works of Makonnen is markedly different from those of the other two artists. Hiruy, as mirrored in his works Addis Alem, and Yelib Assab, is concerned with improving the living conditions of the masses. He advocates that, through education that follows the example of the West, by getting rid of traditional practices that are harmful to society and deterrent to progress, such as early

marriage, excessive mourning, use of witchcraft to cure the sick, by encouraging the people to be more economical and less extravagant by reducing expenses on teskar and marriage, it would be possible to transform the life of the society. He also introduces change in the religious observances in line with the material need of the society; thereby, showing the people the way to spiritual freedom. His heroes and heroines who come from the common people resist the authority of the church and the traditional minded section of the society. They argue for principles that can be brought to reality and finally become winners revealing his optimistic view of life. Thus, to Hiruy, life is a challenge and man should face the realities of this world and try to endure it with principles and consistency.

The other writer, Girmachew, in his work Araaya, has presented the cross-section of the society and has clearly shown the unbridgeable rift between the living standards of the nobility and that of the peasantry by taking the reader across from a luxurious aristocratic life in the city to a strenuous labouring life of the kotu peasants in the country. Girmachew, like Hiruy, has expressed his feeling that the social set up requires change and that he is displeased with the government because it has practically made no effort to transform the life of the people.

Girmachew has also observed that the administrative practices of the aristocracy are outdated and cannot cope with the needs of the society. In view of this fact, he has suggested that administration be localized and be run by the people themselves to pave the road to progress. Although the concrete social conditions prevalent at the time do not allow the implimentation of his idea, the fact that he makes such suggestions proves his faith in the people as capable of

ruling themselves. He has also argued that the age old method of farming needs to be modernized if the country is to develop and progress. Unlike Hiruy, however, Girmatchew's Araaya does not materialize his hopes and aspirations but hopes that they will be fulfilled by the next generation. His hope in the future vision reveals his optimistic view of life and at the same time shows that he is more a man of intellect than of action.

Makonnen, on the other hand, evades the realities of life in this world but concerns himself with life after death. Contrary to Hiruy and Girmachew, Makonnen uses his pen not to paint the brighter side of life. All the heroes in his works except in Yefikir Chorra and Yehilm Rutchu, suffer from defeat in dejection and despair which reveal his gloomy outlook. As his status in the society attests, Makonnen does not know the actual life of the lowest social class. Poverty to him is reflected through the lower aristocratic class represented by people like Tesehay Mesfin, who owns three gashas of land but who the artist presents as a wretch. On the other hand, Makonnen has exhibited his unexcelled knowledge about the life of the nobility and the intrigues of the aristocracy in the court. Unlike Hiruy and Girmachew, Makonnen does not want the social values, traditional practices and ways of life to change. Nor does he want the authorities of the church and the state to be challenged. The fact that Makonnen cries out against advances made in technology and man's progress towards changing his fate, for he knows that such advances will smash the cement that held his social group to cling together, unmasks his determination to conform to the ancient ways.

In chapter two, an attempt has been made to look at the fundamental questions which Makonnen has raised in his works

of art. The artist believes that man leads two lives in the two different worlds, one being this world in which man lives in blood and flesh and the second being the other world wherein man's spirit soul lives for eternity. He clearly states that since this world is transitory, and man's life span here is so brief, he should reject the pleasure, fortune and glory of this world, he should isolate himself from society for it nurses evils, and he should lead a miserable life. Man should fast, recite his prayers regularly, do penance under the guidance of the church in order to be happy in life after death in the other world.

Furthermore, this chapter has also attempted to bring out the absurdities of Makonnen's vision of life. Since it is the will of God, he believes, that some members of the society are rich while others are poor, and he argues that the tormented and poverty-stricken go to paradise. Yet, we observe that the artist has lived his whole life in bliss. Why has he not renounced the luxury of this world and his property? There seems to be a masked virulence in his religious and philosophical thoughts. Thus, this chapter shows that Makonnen's discourses on the nature of man, renunciation of worldly property, pleasure, comfort and consolation, the immortality of the soul and its fate in life after death have no direct bearing on the everyday lives of the people. His belief that men would attain perfect equality in the Kingdom of God only if they obey God by accepting their conditions and lots in this world expresses that the social purpose of his art is to silence the broad masses so that they would not protest against the existing social system which the artist worships.

In the third chapter, the moral that can be drawn from Makonnen's works of art has been examined. His concepts of right and wrong spring from his belief in God and his devotion

to the Orthodox faith; besides, it is intended to show the virtues of Christianity and the vices of Islam. Accordingly, the artist has tried to set models such as Lij Alemu, in Tsehay Mesfin, who have incarnated the ethical values which he expects from the rich and the poor to measure up to the standard. He preaches that the rich should give and the poor should receive charities and that each should not transgress his limits revealing the bare facts that the moral themes of Makonnen Endalkachew are designed to cater to the demarcation of the hierarchy in the society. Makonnen, in his endeavour to safeguard the privileges of his class, besides scaring the people with the forces of the supernatural, teaches that to amass wealth through business is an act of profanity because man is destined either to rise high up in the social hierarchy or fall down into abysmal poverty and any trial to improve his fate, which he reiterates to be against the will of God, would be a futile attempt.

The practical applications of the underlying motives of the religious and moral themes of Makonnen Endalkachew are dealt with in chapter four. Here, emphasis has been laid to put together and bring to the foreground the artist's effort to preserve the political power and the economic superiority of the aristocracy. The struggle of the artist to present the life of the society under the cloak of the emancipation of the slaves from the ramshackle of the aristocratic order has been found to be just a pretence. Makonnen used the themes of emancipation by showing the degradation and torture inflicted upon the slaves by their masters and national patriotism as a garb to promote his own class interest because, as shown in his religious themes, he believes in the existence of social hierarchy and, in almost all his works, appeals to the reader to accept the division of society into classes.

Besides, as shown in the fourth chapter of this thesis, the fact that Makonnen resolves the conflict between the slaves and their masters by leading the former to a more detestable living condition further reveals that he is a preservationist.

Makonnen's constant condemnation of the results of scientific discoveries as ruinous and his hatred for the sprouting bourgeois class reflect that he is a conservative in his outlook. As is expected from unprogressives, Makonnen, too, advocates against the introduction of any innovation be it technological or administrative, which he thinks would upset the foundation of his ethical values plus economic interests and would bring about a change in the mentality of the people. At this point, the researcher feels, it is worth taking a note of how Makonnen protested very subtly against the establishment of the Parliament in the following manner.

ናፖሊዮንና ከርሱ በፊት የነበረት ዲክቲተር በሠረተ ገፍና በፈሰሰት ደዎ ማክንያት ገገሥ ይነገሃል አንጂ አይገዛዎ የሚል የጠግ መሠረት በአጭር ላይ ተጠለ፤ ርገ በጭነት የዳዎ ክሬት መገገሥት መሆን ፈጠረ፡፡ ፓርላማ በጠግ ፊት ለጠዘብ አላፈ ሆነ፤ ገገሥ ፊት ለፊት የተቀደሰ ሰጭነትን ከጠዘብ ጋር አንጻይጋ፤ ፓርላማ የጠዘብና የገገሥ መጋረጃ ሆነ፡፡<sup>73</sup>

Because of the violence and bloodshed caused by Napoleon and dictators before him, a foundation of legal law which states that a king shall be crowned but shall not rule has been imposed over Europe. Europe has really begun practicing democracy. Before the law, parliament became responsible to the people. It also served as a curtain by sparing the sacred body (personality) of the king from being defiled by direct contact with people.

Eventhough Makonnen was the president of the senate, the quotation here depicts his resentment against the establishment

<sup>73</sup>Yedem Minch, p.11.

of the Parliament. He ironically praises it for being directly responsible to the people and equates it with a curtain because it separates the king from his subjects. Obviously, Makonnen did not like the isolation of the emperor from the people because it reduces the absolute power of the king and consequently that of the entire nobility.

Thus, because of Makonnen's desire to maintain the status quo, his literary works reflect his reluctance to change and progress and exhibit his efforts towards sustaining the power of the aristocracy. It is believed that an artist not only reflects his time but also strives to make life better. He resents that life is so short and wants to leave something behind. He should not be averse to the functional purpose of art. In view of this fact, Makonnen, has adequately reflected the life of the nobility of his time but has not been able to do any justice to the masses.

The role that Makonnen Endalkachew, plays in his society appears to be of a visionary who concentrates his attention on highlighting the subtle gradations of human experience in such a way that the average common reader finds himself completely confused. The point of view that Makonnen is concerned with is one in which the concept of hierarchy forms the basic framework. Makonnen seems to conform to this idea of hierarchy. In his works, the Sceptre and the Crown still appear to be the guiding factors.

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D E C L A R A T I O N

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my work and that all sources of material used for this thesis have been duly acknowledged.

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