

**The Portrayal of Major Female Characters in
Four Amharic Novels**

BY

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ABSTRACT

A number of studies have been conducted at both undergraduate and post graduate levels to study the portrayal of women characters in literature though most of them seem to lack depth for they were not analyzed from a clearly defined theoretical frame work. Besides, in previous studies, much attention has not been given to the discussion of the portrayal of women characters in novels written at different periods to find whether strong and liberated women are appearing in view of the changing realities.

The aim of this thesis is, therefore, to analyze the portrayal of major female characters in four Amharic novels, written during the pre-Italian occupation (1908-1935), the post war period (1941-1958) and the modern period (1950s and 1960s), and see if new images of women are emerging.

The novels selected for discussion include: Afework Gebreyesus's *Toby* (1908), Hiruy Woldeselassie's *Yelib Hassab: Yebirhanena Yetsion Mogessa Gabicha* (1931), Negash Gebremariam's *Setegna Adari* (1964) and Bealu Girma's *Kadma's Bashager* (1970). Major characters have been identified and discussed separately in the order of the publication of each book. The portrayals are analyzed from the feminist perspective.

The thesis has five chapters. In the first chapter, the statement of the problem, objectives of the study, significance of the study, limitations of the study, methodology and organization of the paper are presented. In chapter two, feminist theories, literary criticism and review of related literature have been discussed. In chapter three, the portrayal of the female characters is discussed. In chapter four, comparative analyses of the portrayals are presented. Finally, conclusions are given in chapter five.

The main finding of this study is that women characters are portrayed in their traditional and biological roles. They are depicted as loyal housewives, mothers, mistresses, lovers and sex objects. For instance, Afework's Tobya is presented as beautiful, pious, selfless and physically and mentally strong. However, despite her tremendous positive qualities, in the end she becomes a mere housewife, her main role being bearing and taking care of children. Hiruy's Tsion Mogessa is presented as cute and intelligent. She chooses to learn writing and reading history instead of preparing *tej* and *tella* and cooking and baking *enjera*. Notwithstanding this however, after her marriage she becomes a mere housewife cheerfully performing domestic duties such as cooking and serving within the traditional milieu. Negash's Enanu, a victim of early marriage, escapes from a jealous and cruel husband to finally become a prostitute. She bears an illegitimate child for whose sake she quits her job and as a consequence she suffers from abject poverty and endless mishaps. Bealu's Lulit is first presented as proud, assertive and aggressive. After her marriage, however, she turns out to be weak, timid, selfless and a devout wife who places her husband before herself.

Even if glorified as virtuous, devout, intelligent and physically strong for thematic purposes, their ultimate ambition is marriage and they are expected to be loyal, obedient and selfless mothers. Other than in the house sphere, they don't participate in social and political life. Hence, educated, self-reliant and strong women who take part in all areas of life have not been portrayed in the four novels discussed.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of the Problem

In his work, *Contemporary Literary Theory: A Student's Companion*, Krishnaswamy (2001: 74), asserts: "In all traditions women have always been considered inferior and incapable of any serious thinking; irrespective of religion, country, race, the period in which they live..." (74). Thus, just like all women elsewhere in the world, Ethiopian women have been, ever since immemorial, considered to be inferior to men in many respects.

There is no gainsaying that Ethiopia is a patriarchal society. According to Levine (1974:54), "... nearly all the people of Greater Ethiopia consider women generally inferior, express little if any appreciation of distinctively feminine traits, and harbour many idioms of contempt for alleged female attributes". As stated by Levine, in Ethiopia, one finds many proverbs and stories that demean women. For instance, here are two such Amharic proverbs.

የሴት አእምሮኛ፣ የጅብ ቀንደኛ የለውም።

As there is no hyena with horns, there is no woman with intelligence

ሴት ሲበዛ ጎመን ጠነዛ።

Too many cooks (women) spoil the broth

The first proverb categorically asserts that all women inherently lack brain to think rationally, while the second one implies that women are talkative and sharp-tongued and as such when they gather together they sacrifice their business and duties to talking over trivialities. This implies that women are incapable of discharging their duties responsibly.

As stated above, Amharic proverbs that stereotype and belittle women are pervasive. For his under graduate thesis, Tadesse Eshetie (1980) has collected and analyzed Amharic proverbs that reflect women's inferior position. Tadesse has organized the proverbs under social, religious, economic and political categories and tried to analyze the place of women from these perspectives. The findings were that women are inferior and hold second position in all aspects of life. Similarly, for her undergraduate essay, Nuria Ibrahim (1996) has gathered and analyzed Arssi Oromo's proverbs that focus on women. Her finding is not different from that of Tadesse. The proverbs depicted women as physically and mentally weak and economically dependent on men.

Naturally, such deeply ingrained gender stereotypes do prevail not only in proverbs, sayings and songs but in literature, too. In this connection, many studies have been conducted, both at undergraduate and post graduate levels, to examine the images of women in literature. Most of these studies are, however, flawed either for lack of a clearly defined theoretical framework or for their focus on selected category of women. Others, despite their commendable effort to discuss the images of women from a feminist perspective, their coverage is either limited to only two books or books authored by one person and as such fall short of providing a comparative analysis to find out whether the images of women in literature are showing any change through time. The objective of this study is, thus, to fill this gap.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this paper is to compare and contrast the portrayals of major female characters in four male-authored Amharic novels, written during the pre-Italian occupation (1908-1935), the post war period (1941-1958) and the modern period (the mid 1950s and 60s).

The specific objective is to identify and discuss major female characters in the novels in relation to men as well as examine patriarchal assumptions and assess if new images of strong women are emerging.

The four novels are Afework Gebre-Yesus' *Toby* (1908), Hiruy Woldelessie's *Yelib Hassab: Yeberhanena Yetsion Mogesa Gabicha* (1931), Negash Gebre-Mariam's *Setegna Adari* (1964) and Be'alu Girma's *Kadmas Bashager*(1970). These books are selected, in addition to being male-authored, in the belief that they can stand as representatives of the time in which they were written.

1.3. Significance of the Study

The expectation of this research is to bring an additional perspective to the study of the images of women in literature, particularly in the Amharic novel. It is also expected to serve as an additional resource for students of literature and other researchers to conduct more studies in the area.

It can also make a modest contribution towards sensitizing seasoned, beginners and potential writers to become gender sensitive so that they can contribute through their literary works to on-going campaigns to ensure equality of women.

1.4. Limitations of the Study

To establish whether the images of women in literature are changing through time, it would have been more appropriate to consider more than four books for discussion. But, because of time constraints and the limitations of this paper in scope, only four books are considered for analysis. Besides, this paper can never claim to have addressed the different feminist perspectives in the novels.

1.5. Methodology

Basically this study is descriptive criticism. The four novels have been selected and read between lines. Then, major characters have been identified and analyzed on the basis of what they think, do and say, the narrators' comments as well as on what other characters think or say of them. Commentaries and reviews conducted on any one of the selected works or on individual female characters have been read to enrich the perspective of the discussions of this study.

The discussions and interpretations of the portrayals have been approached from a feminist perspective. In analyzing the portrayals of the female characters, an eclectic mix or a comprehensive approach of feminist perspectives have been employed. Since the authors of *Toby*, *Yelib Hassab* and *Kadmas Bashager* are long dead, the only surviving author of *Setegna Adari* has been interviewed.

1.6 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into five chapters. The first chapter deals with the statement of the problem, objectives, significance, methodology, limitations and the organization of the study. The second chapter is devoted to theoretical issues and some local studies on the images of women. The third chapter deals with the analysis of the characters in the four novels. This chapter is subdivided into four parts under which the characters in each of the novels are discussed separately in the order of the publications of the novels. The fourth chapter deals with the comparative analysis of the portrayals while the fifth chapter is devoted to conclusions.

CHAPTER TWO

Theoretical Framework and a Review of Related Literature

In this chapter, the emergence of feminism, core concepts of major feminist movements, literary criticism and review of related literature are discussed.

2.1. The Emergence of Feminism

The assumption that women are irrational and biologically or naturally handicapped was nearly universal. Women, especially in Western culture, started individual and collective struggle to counter what they called the “pernicious” attitudes directed against the female. This resulted in the emergence of feminist movement. In this regard, Stacey (1993), as quoted by Nicolson (1996: 21) says: “Feminism is essentially a reaction to, and product of, patriarchal culture and one of its significant roles has been to account for women’s Subordination”. Feminism is a movement that seeks to resist any and all forms of oppression and marginalization of women in patriarchal culture. It intends to change the traditional role and image of women to ensure the equality between men and women in the male dominated society. In this connection, Krishnaswamy (2001:74) says: “Feminism (of late called ‘womanism’) is a serious attempt to formulate the issues and find solutions to gender problems”.

The intention of feminists is to rectify the distorted images of women. Women, and to be more precise, feminists feel that the negative attributes given to women are socially and culturally constructed. They argue that differences in character traits, behavior, social relationships and social and economic status between women and men are not based on biological differences.

By disproving the view that women are irrational and inferior to men, the feminists want to achieve legal, social, political and economic equality with men. Though there are various international rights guaranteeing women and men equal rights, the feminists believe that women are still under the domination of the male sex who controls vital institutions to promote his supremacy.

Hence, the need for the feminists to continue their struggle unabated. This does not, however, mean that there is one unified feminist movement. Regarding this, Nicolson (1996:21) quotes Delmar (1986: 9) :

“Within feminism itself there is evidence of many different voices, and it is far from a unitary or static concept: there is a naming of the parts: there are radical feminists, socialist feminists, Marxist feminists, lesbian separatists, women of colour, and son on, each group with its own carefully preserved sense of identity”.

Each of these groups attempts to analyze the root causes of women's problems from different perspectives and suggest solutions accordingly. For instance, let's briefly look into the core concepts of liberal feminism, feminism and Marxism and radical feminism.

2.1.1. Liberal feminism

According to Donovan (2007: 17), “Theories developed during the so called Enlightenment or Age of reason were being put into practice: the idea, for example, that people have certain inalienable or ‘natural’ rights upon which governments may not intrude....” But since women were categorized in the Other, they were not entitled to the same natural rights as men. Thus, they learned that they can achieve these rights only through arduous struggle. To this end, women's rights activists like Mary Wollstonecraft, Sara Grimke, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony and John Stuart Mill had to develop and elaborate on a number of fundamental liberal doctrines aimed at bringing to an end the subjugation of women.

According to many feminists, Wollstonecraft, who wrote *Vindication of the Rights of Women* as early as in 1792, still remains to be the leading figure from among the women's rights activists. The central argument of Wollstonecraft's *Vindication*, which is described as a classic feminist theory by prominent women's rights activists such as Donovan, is that "women remain enslaved because of corrupt processes of socialization which stunts their intellect and teaches them that their proper purpose in life is to serve men" (24).

Wollstonecraft feels that because of such corrupt processes of socialization women are left with no choice but to cultivate their beauty, at the expense of their minds, in order to establish them economically by attracting a husband. She writes: "... Women are plunged by the prevailing opinion, that they were created rather to feel than reason, and that all the power they obtain must be obtained by their charms and weaknesses" (Wollstonecraft, 1985: 153). She adds: "Strength of body and mind are sacrificed to libertine notions of beauty, to the desire of establishing themselves- the only way women can rise in the world-by marriage" (83). She goes on to say: "To rise in the world, and have the liberty of running from pleasure to pleasure, they must marry advantageously, and to this object their time is sacrificed, and their persons often legally prostituted" (151).

Wollstonecraft believes that sound education and appropriate training would contribute towards developing women's critical thinking. In this connection she writes: "Strengthen the female mind by enlarging it, and there will be an end to blind obedience; but as blind obedience is ever sought for by power, tyrants and sensualists are in the right when they endeavour to keep woman in the dark, because the former only want slaves and the latter a plaything" (107).

While strongly rejecting ideas promoted by Rousseau and others that men and women think differently (124-125), Wollstonecraft wonders whether there is 'sex in souls' and asserts that women and men have the same moral and

intellectual core. If women do reason differently or incorrectly, it is because they have not received proper training she contends, adding, "Women cannot be confined to merely domestic pursuits.... Nor can they be shut out of great enterprises" (294).

Another liberal feminist, Frances Write, a Scotswoman, "asserts that only by thinking clearly about their situations will women be able to recognize age-old prejudices for what they are". (Donovan, 2000: 27). Just like Wollstonecraft, Write believes that "critical thinking can break through the mystifications by which women are duped into accepting a subjugated status" (27).

Sarah Grimke, like Wollstonecraft and Wright believed strongly in the efficacy of critical thinking; she asserted that women's natural rights had been denied them by men, and argued that women and men were moral and intellectual equals (29). Grimke thinks that men as a group or as a class keep women as a class under their domination because it is in the interest of the male sex to do so. In this connection she is quoted by Donovan as saying, "men condition women to please them, men deny women the possibility of a decent education and prevent their developing powers of critical analysis" (30).

Other liberal feminists, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, two of the great leaders of American nineteenth-century women's rights movement are said to have developed and refined the Enlightenment theory articulated by their predecessors, Wollstonecraft, Wright and Grimke.

Stanton rejected the "cult of true womanhood which meant, among other things, that women were weak, incompetent, and pure and that they needed male protection from the evils of the world" (33). Her central liberal doctrine is that women, as human beings, need rights in order to stand on their own. To this end, she says: "Grant us minimal basic rights and then let us take care of ourselves, our property, our children, and our homes" (33).

Harriet Taylor and John Stuart Mill were two English Philosophers who contributed to the development of liberal theory in the nineteenth century. Harriet Taylor argued for a complete civil and political equality for women, including the opening of all public offices and occupations.

In his book, *The Subjugation of Women* (1970), John Stuart Mill, said, “The subjugation of women to men being a universal custom, any departure from it quite naturally appears unnatural” (14). He adds: “The yoke is naturally and necessarily humiliating to all persons, except the one who is on the throne, together with, at most, the one who expects to succeed to it” (12). Then, he wonders: “How different are these cases from that of the power of men over women!” (12). He further underlines that the main reason of public exclusion of women lies in the male’s desire “to maintain their (women’s) subordination in domestic life; because the generality of the male sex cannot tolerate the idea of living with an equal” (50) Like other liberal theorists, Mill rejects irrational customs and prejudices and calls for providing women an opportunity to move beyond their prescribed, limited sphere.

2.1.2. Feminism and Marxism

The idea of materialist determination, usually called historical materialism is one of the central theories of Marxism. According to Donovan (2000: 80) “This holds that culture and society are rooted in material or economic conditions”. Donovan quotes Marx as saying in a preface to his *Critique of Political Economy* (1859): “the mode of production of material life conditions the social, political, and intellectual life process in general...” (80).

Marx further states that the bourgeoisie, the ruling class have a total superiority over the ruled class, the proletariat because the former has a full control of the means of production while the latter belongs to those who own no means of production and live by selling their wage-labour (81).

Based on this economic criterion, Marxists draw an analogy between the bourgeoisie and man on one hand and the proletariat and woman on the other. The reason for drawing the analogy is very clear: man is associated with the bourgeoisie because he holds stronger material or economic base while the woman is equated with the proletariat because of here economic inferiority. To prove how economic factors govern the relationships between the two sexes, Engels, as quoted by Donovan (87), states in the *Origin of the Family* that in the prehistoric, communistic time:

While there is a division of labour between the sexes (the man hunts, the woman tends to the house), within those spheres they hold equal power. They are each master in their own sphere... The woman, however, appears to be a little more equal, because the material base of that society is centered in the woman controlled gens...This communistic household...is the material foundation of the supremacy of the woman which was general in primitive times

Marxists believe that at one particular time the prehistoric, communistic matriarchate was overturned or superseded by the patriarchate. Engels elaborates this idea as follows:

The first great change in the mode of production that led to the patriarchate takeover and to the development of alienation...was the taming of animals. Because there was a greater supply of food and animal products when cattle were herded rather than hunted, materials were available for exchange. Cattle therefore became a commodity privately owned (by men) and exchanged for other goods...It was the male who benefited from this transition for all the surplus... fell to him" (87-88).

In *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1972: 221), Engels argues that the women's domestic labour began to count less in comparison to the wealth the man was accumulating in which "the latter was everything, the former an unimportant extra". As wealth increased, it made the man's position more important and he "now being actually supreme in the house, the last barrier to his absolute supremacy had fallen... This autocracy was confirmed and perpetuated by the overthrow of mother right, the introduction of father right, and the gradual transition of the pairing marriage in monogamy" (221). Marx and Engels further say in the *Selected Works: Volume Three* (1972:233) "The overthrow of the mother right was the

world-historic defeat of the female sex. The man seized the reins in the house also, the woman was degraded, enthralled, the slave of the man's lust, a mere instrument for breeding children" (233). Thus, the main reason for women's oppression is man's retention of economic superiority.

To Marxists, as the root cause of women's oppression is economic and therefore political imbalances, its solution lies in giving women access to the area of public production. This includes urging women to fully enter the public workforce, thus eliminating their confinement to private domestic labour. To this end, in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1972:139), Engels says: "With the transfer of the means of production into common ownership, the single family ceases to be the economic unit of society. Private housing is transformed into a social industry. The care and education of the children becomes a public affair; society looks after all children alike, whether they are legitimate or not".

All this would be materialized after the abolition of private ownership and the formation of what Marxists call a Communist Society. In the words of Engels, this will be realized with "the transfer of the means of production into social property" (139). This is to mean that since capitalism and the modes of production which support it are the sources of all oppression, the oppression of all classes and the subjugation of women will end with the demise of capitalism.

Though many feminists like Alexandra Kollontain, Clara Zetkin and Rosa Luxemburg strongly support the Marxists' view that the solutions of the women question were identical with the solution of the social question, there were and there are others who disagree with this. Some, though they acknowledge that women might well develop more sense of class solidarity if they worked with others instead of being isolated in their homes, they say that "a move into the factories can hardly be seen as a liberating step" (Donovan, 2000: 89). For instance, Dalla Costa, as quoted by Donovan argues: "simply entering the realm of public production, as it is, will not end

women's alienation. Slavery to an assembly line is not liberation from slavery to a kitchen sink" (92).

Others totally disagree to attribute their subjugation to a mere economic factor. They say they do not believe that "capitalism, or any other economic system, is the cause of female oppression, nor do we believe that female oppression will disappear as a result of purely economic revolution"(Ruthven, 1984:18). For this group of feminists, the root cause of their problem is patriarchy, not economic issue.

2.1.3. Radical Feminism

As opposed to Marxists, radical feminists say that at the root of women's oppression is patriarchy or male domination and not capitalism. They say that the cause for all women's suffering is male supremacy and this trend, according to them, must be reversed through a kind of a revolution led by feminists. They assert that, "feminism had to be the basis for any truly revolutionary change (Donovan, 2000:156). To materialize this, according to them, " Women should identify themselves as a subjugated class or caste and put their primary energies in a movement with other women to combat their oppressors-men; that men and women are fundamentally different, have different styles and culture, and that the women's mode must be the basis of any future society" (156).

As quoted by Donovan, in an article, *Female Liberation as a Basis for Social Revolution* (1968), Roxanne Dunbar asserts that "women are different from men that they have been conditioned to have certain 'maternal traits' such as caring for others, flexibility, non-competitiveness, and cooperativeness" (156). The radical feminists say that "the politically oppressive male-female role system is the first and original model of all oppression" (157). As such they describe marriage as a source of women's oppression. Some of the radical feminists say that since marriage is "a primary formalization of the persecution of women, we consider the rejection of this institution both in

theory and in practice as a primary work of the radical feminists” (157). The promoters of this idea are reported to have established a membership quota whereby no more than a third of the members could be living with a man.

These same feminists also lambasted love as an organization that “promotes vulnerability, dependence, possessiveness, susceptibility to pain, and prevents the full development of women’s human potential” (157). Like other radical feminists, Firestone harbours the belief that the first task of a feminist revolution must be to bring to an end “the tyranny of the biological family’ (161). According to her as quoted by Donovan, this will be realized by “seizing the means of reproduction, that is by using technology to release women from their biological destiny” (161). To this end, Firestone urges” not just for birth control but new means of reproduction using artificial devices like test-tube fertilization and artificial placentas” (161).

As is to be expected, Firestone’s ideas have faced a series of opposition. For example, her dependence on technology-artificial means of reproduction was attacked as lacking humanistic prospect. They wondered “how sex (a biological fact) becomes gender (a social phenomenon)” (164). Other feminists questioned how such an idea can be materialized under a male dominated situation. They expressed their doubt by saying: “Since technology is controlled by the male ruling class, it is unlikely that it will be used to liberate women from their biology” (164).

To withstand what they describe as deeply entrenched oppression, the radical feminists are of the opinion that women must get organized as women with the purpose of liberating their own culture and that they must “raise the banner of the female principle. We are proud of the female culture of emotion, intuition, love, personal relationship... It is only by asserting the long suppressed and ridiculed female principle that a truly human society will come about” (158).

The radical feminists believe that all women, irrespective of colour, social status or race, are victims of male supremacy. Thus, they felt it was necessary for them to get organized under one umbrella to resist male domination. In this connection, they say, "We identify with all women of all races, classes and countries all over the world" (158).

According to Millett, "the state maintains its rule through force, but also through ideological hegemony. Patriarchal ideology is that of male supremacy, which conditions women to exhibit male serving behaviour and to accept male serving roles" (159). She adds: "this ideology permeates every aspect of our culture and touches every aspect of our lives-even the most personal" (159).

2.2. Feminist Literary Criticism

Quoting Krishnaswamy, we have earlier said that in all societies, irrespective of religion, country, and race and the period, in which they lived, women have always been looked down upon as creatures that lacked all the positive qualities that men possess. It goes without saying that these distorted societal views are pervasive in languages, in literature, in proverbs and stories. In this connection, Ferguson (1977: 10) has this to say: "Literature both reflects and helps to create reality. It is through their preservation in works of art that we know what the stereotypes and archetypes have been and are; in turn. Knowing the images influences our view of reality and even our behaviour."

Feminist literary criticism, therefore, intends to explore and critique portrayals of women in any literary works. The task of feminist literary critics is to "try to explain how power imbalances due to gender in a given culture are reflected in or challenged by literary texts" (Guerin et al., 1999: 196). Kolodny in (Rice and Waugh (eds.), 2001:163), says, Feminist literary criticism involves, "...exposing sexual stereotyping of women in both our literature and our literary criticism ..."

In what follows, Kate Millett is quoted by Moi in (Jefferson and Robey (eds.), 1986: 205), as saying in her book, *Sexual politics* (1969: 25), "... the essence of politics is power ... and the task of feminist critics and theorists is to expose the way in which male dominance over females, ... constitutes its most fundamental concept of power."

What we can understand from the above definitions is that feminist literary criticism aims at analyzing literary works to see how women are portrayed in relation to men or whether the female characters are presented as stereotypes. In other words, feminist literary criticism is a scanning tool to expose the oppressive nature of stereotypical representations of women in a male dominated society.

Literary criticism is not an end in itself, but rather a means to an end. Its ultimate objective is to achieve the equality of women by changing existing misconceptions and assumptions people have about women. To this end, Moi says, "Feminist criticism...is a specific kind of political discourse: a critical and theoretical practice committed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism, not simply a concern for gender in literature ..." (Jefferson and Robey (eds.), 1986:204).

As discussed earlier, feminism is not a monolithic movement. In other words, there is no one unified feminist movement. We have earlier said that within feminism, there are different voices and therefore feminism is far from being a unitary or static concept. For instance, there are socialist feminists, radical feminist, black feminists, liberal feminists etc. In this regard, in Guerin et al. (1999:197), it is stated, " Feminists examine the experiences of women from all races and classes and cultures, including , for example, African American, Latina, Asian American, American Indian, lesbian, handicapped, elderly ..."

However, though women's problems may differ in magnitude and their proposed solutions, generally speaking most women have one common

agenda: they all fight for women's political, social, economic, psychological, sexual and racial freedom. Their ultimate desire is to ensure gender equality by doing away with culturally and socially constructed views. This is why literary criticism is considered to be relevant to all groups. The validity of literary criticism to all voices is stated as:

Despite their diversity, feminist critics generally agree that their goals are to expose patriarchal premises, and resulting prejudices, to promote discovery and reevaluation of literature by women and to examine social, cultural, and psychosexual contexts of literature and literary criticism. Feminist critics therefore study sexual, social, and political issues once thought to be 'outside' the study of literature" (Guerin et al., 1999:197).

Another point that deserves discussion here is whether feminist literary studies should be left only to women for analysis. Some feminists argue that the authority of female literary criticism resides only within the female critic. Showalter, an ardent supporter of this view thinks that literature written by women should be analyzed by women. She says that feminist literary criticism can be divided into two distinct varieties. The first one deals, "*woman as reader*-with woman as the consumer of male produced literature, and with the way in which the hypothesis of a female reader changes our apprehension of a given text, awakening us to the significance of its sexual codes" (Rice and Waugh (eds.), 2001:146). Showalter prefers to call "this kind of analysis the feminist critique." (146). According to her its purpose is to probe, "the ideological assumptions of literary phenomena. Its subjects include the images and stereotypes of women in literature, the omissions and misconceptions about women in criticism and the fissures in male constructed literary history" (146-147).

The second type of feminist criticism, according to Showalter, "is concerned with *woman as writer*-- with woman as the producer of textual meaning, with the history, themes, genres and structures of literature by women" (147). According to her its subjects include: "the psychodynamic of female creativity, linguistics and the problem of a female language; the trajectory of the individual or collective female literary career; literary history; and, of

course, studies of particular writers and works" (147). Showalter has coined the term gynocritic (woman centered) for such a specialized discourse.

The central idea of this notion is that women writers deserve consideration because their works have been overlooked. Showalter and her disciples argue that literature written by women should be analyzed by women because if they are left open to men they will fall victim to androcentric bias. They say that the main focus of male critics is what they think women should look like rather than reflecting the real feelings and experience of women.

As opposed to the promoters of the above idea, there are other feminist critics who disagree with such views. For one, Ruthven (1984: 11) argues:

... even this most recent of feminisms is heavily dependent on men to articulate its position, and continue to co-opt their services. In matters of theory, John Stuart Mill's, *The subjugation of women* (1869) and Friedrich Engels' *The origin of the family, private property and the state* (1884) are still treated as classic texts, and current feminist criticism would be inconceivable without Michel Foucault's work on discursive formation, the semiology of Roland Barthes, the deconstruction of Jacques Derrida, and Jacques Lacan's imbrications of psychoanalysis with linguistics."

He further argues: "In addition to these major contributions by male theorists towards the mobilizing of feminist criticism, there is the exemplary feminism of various male writers who succeeded in not being prisoners of their sex" (11). The prominent feminist critic, Moi doesn't either support the idea of leaving feminist criticism to women only. For Moi, "the words 'feminist' or 'feminism' are political labels indicating support for the aims of the new women's movement which emerged in the late 1960's" (Jefferson and Robey (eds.), 1986: 204). As stated by Moi, if feminist or feminism are political labels used to indicate support for the feminist movement, it seems that there is no valid reason why any male with the will and commitment to support women's movement shouldn't be accepted as a feminist critic. In further elaborating whether men can be feminists or feminist critics, Moi

comments: "If feminists do not have to work exclusively on female authors, perhaps they do not need to be females, either? In principle, the answer to this question is surely yes: men can be feminists-but they can't be women, just as whites can be anti-racist, but not blacks" (208).

While stating this, Moi however realizes that, "Under patriarchy men will always speak from a different *position* than women...In practice therefore the would be male feminist critic ought to ask himself whether he as a male is really doing feminism a service in our present situation by muscling in on the one cultural and intellectual space women have created for themselves within 'his' male dominated discipline: (208).

Before we wrap up the issue under discussion, let's take up one quotation from Ruthven (1984: 14).

If feminist criticism is to be a contribution to knowledge, those who write it must expect to receive adverse criticism from men as well as women, and to modify their work accordingly if persuaded that their initial hypotheses have been wrong. Many feminists, however, treat adverse criticism not as part of a process towards knowledge but as a threat to an immutable truth which is known already, believing that those who are not with them must be against them.

The conclusion that we can draw from the above arguments seems to be very clear: feminist criticism should not and cannot be seen as a 'no go area' for male critics. As it has been said time and again in our earlier discussions, gender difference is a social and cultural construct and is not a biological one. So, such socially and culturally constructed notions can be deconstructed only through culture change or social transformation. If this is the case, how can then women intend to achieve such social transformation by excluding men who are held responsible for causing the subjugation of women.

Thus, if the interest of feminists is to achieve gender equality, they need to do away with 'isolationist attitude, reject any idea to form 'men's and

women's bloc' and accept with open hand anyone, be it male or female, who wishes to genuinely promote women's cause.

2.3. Review of Related Literature

There are a number of studies dealing with the images of women in the Amharic novels, short stories and plays. Some studies undertaken at BA and MA levels are discussed below. Though this paper intends to analyze portrayals of female characters in selected Amharic novels, some studies focusing on the portrayals of women in short stories and plays are reviewed in brief in search of relevant ideas regarding how women are treated not only in novels but also in other literary works.

Yeshi Tadesse's study (1978 E.C.) focuses on the profile of women in five plays written before 1974, i.e. before the fall of the government of Emperor Haile-Selassie and the coming to power of the dergue. The plays are Mengisu Lema's *Telfo Bekisie* and *Yalacha Gabicha* and Tsegaye Gebre-Medhin's *Yeshoh Aklil* and *Belg* as well as Mekonnen Endalkachew's *Tewodros*.

Yeshi's findings tell that the feudal women characters are depicted as insincere, exploiters, snobbish and backward in their attitude. In the eyes of the feudal women, all people are not equal. The other female characters, according to Yeshi's study, are portrayed as feeble, dependent and weak creatures, preoccupied merely with love and other petty issues. . Despite her praiseworthy work, Yeshi fails to base its analysis on a clearly defined theoretical framework

Teferi Melesse's study (1978 E.C.) deals with the images of women in three post-revolution plays of Ayalneh Mulat. The plays are *Yegeterua Fana*, *Yefit Edif* and *Dubana Kil*. The playwright, according to Teferi, has depicted the women positively. The study indicates that the female characters were

portrayed as strong women involved in activities related to social, political and economic matters. Though they come from the lower class of the society, they strive to educate themselves, educate others and manage to assume responsibility in their society. The researcher, however, states that, at times, the portrayals lacked plausibility. Just like Yeshe's paper, Teferi's analysis is flawed by lack of clearly defined theoretical framework.

Jemanesh Solomon's research (1980 E.C.) covers five pre and post-revolution plays. They are: Mengistu Lema's *Bale Kabana Bale Daba*, Tsegaye Gebre-Medhin's *Yekermo Sew, Belg* and *Yeshoh Aklil* and Ayalneh Mulat's *Dubana Kil*. Jemanesh's paper blames the playwrights for copying societal stereotyping of women in their works as they are. She asserts that men playwrights like Mengistu Lema and Tsegaye Gbre-Medhin have failed to portray independent and assertive women. She states that the authors portrayed men of different personalities but their women characters are almost all weak. The women are portrayed as beautiful whose preoccupation is love and sex. If the female character, attempts to be assertive she is condemned for failing to conform to the convention.

Jemanesh suggests that Ethiopian writers need to portray women of different personalities from various angles. She strongly criticizes the idea of portraying women only as sexual lovers and mothers. She states that women characters should be treated fairly and should be shown taking part in various social activities. Of all women, Jemansh identifies one woman character of Ayalneh Mulat who she says was depicted as progressive. Even here, Jemanesh goes to a great length to show how the portrayal of this woman was rendered implausible. In spite of her detailed analysis, Jemanesh, however, fails to look at its study from a feminist or other theoretical perspective.

Askale Lema (1974 E.C.) Considers eight young female characters from eight Amharic novels for her senior essay. Askela's finding indicates that all the young women are portrayed as weak and timid who seek men's

protection. They are depicted as feeble creatures obsessed with cosmetics and glittering objects. On the contrary, men are depicted as courageous, committed to sacrificing their lives for the cause of their country.

Tensay Yigezu (1978 E.C.) looks at the images of feudal women in Haddis Alemayehu's *Fikir Eskemekabir*, Dagnachew Worku's *Adefris*, Be'alu Girma's *Kadmas Bashager* and *Yekey Kokeb Tiri* and Berhanu Zerihun's *Ma'ebel*. Tensay considers only one major feudal character from each novel for his senior essay analysis. The study reveals that all feudal characters are similar in that they are all snobbish, greedy, jealous, adulterous, pretentious and conceited. They are all conservative or resistant to change.

Mulumebet Zenebe (1996) focuses on a comparative analysis of the images of men and women characters in four novels and three short stories by five Ethiopian women writers. The short stories are *Yekirb Ruk* and *Senait* by Yezina and *Enegrewalehu* by Ymiwodish while the novels are *Mehageba* by Mekdes, *Qwasa* and *Angus* by Tsehay and *Tsilmet* by Elfinesh. The focus of Mulumebet's analysis is to find out whether the men and women characters are portrayed in a similar or different manner. Her finding is that some women are depicted as victims of the cruelty and ignorance of men while the others are subjected to suffering due to the patriarchal system. Many male characters seduce women for their physical beauty and finally desert them. The women, in turn, become desperate and resort to revenge.

She asserts that in most cases the authoresses are biased in favour of the women characters and that the feelings of the male characters are not considered fairly. She says that without convincing justification, the women characters become successful while the men fail in life. Mulumebet states that men are made scapegoats for the women's own weaknesses and naivety. The researcher says that the writers lay greater emphasis on the themes of their works at the expense of plausibility. She says the authoresses could not creatively portray plausible female characters because of lack of literary writing skills.

✓ Napoleon Kifle (2006) deals with major themes in the works of four women poets; namely, Aregash Seifu, Firmaye Alemu, Mekdes Jemberu and Senait Abera. According to Napoleon, the writers focus on general themes such as love, self-respect and integrity, moral issues, poverty, tolerance, optimism and hope. The theme of the subjugation of women is treated by Aregash and Mekdes. According to Napoleon's study, the two poets have touched upon the issue of sexual harassment and abduction and depicted the position of women in the society and how they suffer due to the traditional and backward cultural practices.

Alem Bayelign (1984 E.C) examines the images of women in a number of short stories by Yemiwodish Bekele and Yezina Worku and one novel by Tsehay Melaku. Alem's analysis shows that the female characters are depicted as beautiful and attractive and at the same time mentally strong and purposeful. The researcher says that the authoresses have depicted the feelings, problems and weaknesses of the characters. According to the researcher, at young age the women prefer to remain single, but as they advance in age, though very late, they start to realize the importance of marriage. Alem states that at times the portrayals are implausible and unrealistic.

✓ Mekonnen Zegeye (2001) analyzes the images of women in Fikremarkos Desta's four novels: *Behind the Buska*, *Evangadi*, *The Love of the Zersis* and *Achame*. Mekonnen's finding shows that the author has portrayed both strong and weak characters. Some of the characters are victims of the cultures of their society while the others are strong and liberated ones. Some characters are denied the right to own property and move freely from place to place. They are merely passive and subservient to men. The other group are strong, liberated and educated who have the freedom to travel from place to place and take part in activities like modeling, acting and research. They can withstand challenges of life and they resist any pressure that comes from males.

✓ Yihenew Melese (2004) deals with the images of women in Afework Gebre Yesus' *Tobyas* and Assefa Gebre-Mariam's *Endewotach Kerech*. The findings of Yihenew's analysis shows that though there are some portrayals that show the positive image of women, generally speaking female characters are victims of patriarchy. In *Tobyas*, though there is a general tendency to associate women with various vices, the protagonist in the novel is glorified. According to the findings of Yihenew, the protagonist, Tobyas is depicted as firm, wise, physically strong, sympathetic and creative as well as a saviour. The other characters in the two novels are portrayed as weak and coward. They are portrayed as insensitive to freedom, destructive, shortsighted, traitors, whores and cheats. In addition to accepting the domination of the male they also tend to echo the patriarchal views.

✓ Zerihun Asfaw (1997) analyses 33 short stories written between 1949 and 1985 E.C. by ten Ethiopian authors. He examines 100 women characters in view of their educational background, occupation, social class, the role given to them in the story, the setting in which the women were portrayed and their relationship to men characters. The findings indicate that most of the women are portrayed as short-sighted, feeble-minded and sex objects. However, though few in number, there are women who are portrayed positively.

From our review of the studies undertaken so far on the images of women, we can safely conclude that the findings are similar in that all women are portrayed as victims of patriarchal system. Generally speaking, the women, be it young or old, are depicted as physically feeble, short-sighted, traitors, snobbish, vindictive, jealous etc. Some women characters are depicted positively though the researchers felt that they are not portrayed in a convincing manner.

Although the researchers have made commendable effort to analyze the portrayals of female characters in Amaharic literary works, some of them lack depth and fall short of presenting critical analysis of the portrayals by

using a clearly defined theoretical frame work. Unlike the others, some researchers like Mulumebet Zenebe, Mekonnen Zegeye and Yihenew Melese have tried to analyze their studies from the feminist perspective. Particularly Yihenew Melese has made a laudable effort to show feminist interpretations of the portrayals. But still, just like the other researchers; he doesn't provide us with a comparative analysis of the female characters in the two novels to see whether the attitude of the society and the authors is changing through time.

Thus, this paper will attempt to fill this gap. In other words, this paper is different from the previous ones in that it focuses on the portrayals of major female characters in four novels and undertakes a comparative analysis to see if the images of women in literature are changing over the various phases in the development of Amharic Novel.

CHAPTER THREE

The Portrayal of Major Female Characters in Four Amharic Novels

The objective of this chapter is to discuss and analyze the portrayal of major female characters in the selected novels from the feminist point of view. While the main focus is on central characters, minor characters are also addressed either in detail or in passing depending on their relevance and contribution to the topic under discussion. The novels are discussed in the order of their publication and synopsis of each book is provided to help facilitate the discussions.

3.1. *Lib Weled Tarik (Tobyia) (1908)*

3.1.1. Tobyia

3.1.1.1 The Synopsis of the Novel

This novel, believed to be the first Amharic prose fiction, tells about the conversion of a powerful Muslim king and his followers to Christianity because of a charming, beautiful, selfless and a devout young Christian girl—Tobyia.

In a war of attrition between Christians and Muslims, the Christians were defeated, their king and three of his generals or Dejazmachs and most of his soldiers killed while the remaining soldiers left in complete disarray. The fourth Dejazmach, the only surviving higher official, is taken prisoner and turned into slavery by the conquerors. At home, his wife and his twin children, a girl and a boy, hear that their father's enslaver was willing to free him provided that the ransom he demanded is paid. His family makes a futile effort to raise the money though to no avail.

The Dejazmach is later freed when an unknown merchant pays the ransom. Shortly after the father's happy reunion with his family, Wahid, his son, separates from his father, mother and twin sister to find the charitable merchant and thank him for his benevolent deed. But all his effort to find the merchant boils down to nothing when he falls into the hands of enemies who sell him to slavery.

When Wahid fails to return home, the father, accompanied by his daughter, Tobya, embarks on an unknown journey to find his lost son. But they are caught by a young Muslim king whose invading army is involved in merciless killings and capturing of people and plundering and ravaging the resources of the Christian land.

Fortunately, the young king treats the father and his daughter with kindness. As Tobya was dressed like a boy, the king doesn't realize that she was a woman but attracted by her charms and physical appearance, he appoints her as his courtier. As she gains popularity around the royal palace, the other courtiers become jealous and falsely accuse her of attempting to seduce the king's cousin. For this she is made to appear before the king either to reject or accept her alleged involvement in the sexual scandal. To save his daughter and himself from impending punishment, the father is left with no option but to reveal to the king Tobya's real identity.

When the king realizes that Tobya is female, he wishes to marry her and as part of his effort to make her happy in order to accept his marriage proposal, he manages to find Wahid and the generous merchant. But when the king, through her father, offers her a marriage proposal, she turns it down saying that she cannot marry a non-Christian person. Thus, the young king, along with his followers, is converted to Christianity and Tobya happily accepts his proposal. The king also makes Wahid marry his cousin.

In what is to follow, the portrayals of four female characters-Tobya, the two kind women, and the king's cousin- are discussed. The Dejazmach's wife is

not considered because nothing significant is said about her. But, first, chauvinistic views reflected in the novel are discussed in brief.

3.1. 1. 2. Manifestations of Chauvinistic Views in the Novel

The story is set in an environment where women are considered to be inferior to men in many respects. This assertion is evidenced by the fact that the novel abounds in expressions, comments and arguments that imply that women are weak and incompetent who need men's support and protection. Such patriarchal assumptions are reflected by both the male and the female characters and the narrator himself. A few examples from the novel are provided below to support this assertion.

On one occasion, as Wahid was traveling to find the merchant, the sun sets and darkness settles down. As he was by himself and as there was no trace of people in the area, fear grips him. He takes everything that he saw through the darkness for a hyena, a leopard, a lion and it seemed to him that the imagined wild animals would spring at him and crush him to death. At one time, he even falls down imagining that he has been struck by a lion. When he regains consciousness and when he realizes that all what happened was his own troubled imagination, he feels happy that nobody saw him in such a hysterical state. Then, he wonders:

በገዛ ፍርሃቱ ወንድ ልጅ ሆኖ እንዴት ይወድቃል(15)

How can a man fall down because of a self-inflicted fear?

Interpreted from a feminist perspective, Wahid's remark is a clear reflection of patriarchal assumptions that elevate men and demean women. For Wahid, a man, even amidst imminent danger, is not expected to show fear and cowardice just like a woman. Thus, for Wahid, valour, courage and gallantry are the traits of the male sex while fearfulness and spinelessness are women's attributes.

The father also shares similar views with his son, Wahid in reflecting the socially and culturally constructed views regarding women. When he decides

to leave home to search for Wahid, Tobyra expresses her wish to accompany him. But he rejects her idea by arguing:

አንቺ ሴት ልጅ ገና ሮራሪቃ ነሽ፤ አንቺን ጸሐይና ብርድ አግኝቶሽ፤ መንገድ መትቶሽ
ውኃ ጥግትና ረኅብ ተጨምሮበት እንዴት ቸለሽ ከእኔ ጋር አገር ላገር መዞር
ይሆንልሻል? (24)

You are a young girl still in your tender years. In the face of extreme cold and heat and the thirst and hunger that accompany it, how can you stand such a long and arduous journey?

But she declines to give up her insistence on traveling with her beloved father. Finally the father was left with no choice but to yield to her demand. The mother, who was quietly listening to the arguments between the father and the daughter, poses a question to her daughter:

እውነት ልጄ እርግጥ ጉልበትሽን ትተማመኝዋለሽን? (25)
My child, do you really trust your strength?

What is worth considering in her is that the father and the mother didn't show similar concern when Tobyra's twin brother, Wahid left home alone to look for the merchant. Being born from a well-to-do family, both Tobyra and Wahid have never been exposed to any hardships before. Then, if Wahid has the stamina and determination to resist fatigue, hunger, thirst, the scorching heat of the day and the biting cold of the night, why can't his twin sister possess these qualities to bear the suffering which her brother endures. Of course, there is no justifiable answer to this. There is no doubt that the father and the mother were merely resounding the socially and culturally constructed views that women are inferior to men even in situations where sexual difference doesn't count much.

Such patriarchal assumptions are reflected not only by the father and the mother but also by the narrator himself. For instance, as the father and Tobyra watch helplessly the advance of the invading army towards their hiding place, they were highly disturbed and terrified. Commenting on this, the narrator says that the worries and fears of the Dejazmach, a former hero, was not for his own life but for the sake of his daughter's well-being. The narrator farther says:

...ከሴት ጋር የዋለ ሴት ነውና የልቡን መስራት እንደማይሆንለት አውቆ ወይኔን ብቻ ይዞ ተቀመጠ። (33)

Since one who is in the company of a woman is the same as a woman himself, he knew that it was not possible for him to fulfill his manly wishes and, thus, he had no choice but to merely entertain his sorrow.

We know that , though a hero of his time, the Dejazmach is now a vanquished army general, There is nothing that he can do to stop or withstand the countless and strong advancing enemy army. Thus, his being with a woman cannot be an excuse for his inability to fulfill his desire or to do any heroic deeds. Hence, by making such a remark that belittles women, the narrator was merely reflecting his bias against the female sex.

The points discussed above are but a few examples of the many chauvinistic views that undermine women's equal status in the society where the novel is set. Paradoxically, however, in the novel there are female characters that depart from the stereotypes discussed above. These characters are portrayed as physically strong, virtuous, selfless, pious, firm, decisive, kind-hearted and generous. Now, we will start our discussion with the portrayal of Tobya.

3.1.1. 3. The Physical and Mental Strengths of Tobya

As discussed above, the ingrained view is that women are physically and mentally weak when compared to men. The protagonist, Tobya, however, manages to disprove the inbuilt belief that women are inherently incompetent and irrational and lacked strength of body and mind. Let's try to substantiate this assertion by raising some instances of what Tobya does and say to prove her physical and mental strength.

To begin with, when her mother and father attempt to discourage her from taking part in the search for Wahid, she displays her skill and power of argument to convince her parents to do what she thinks is right and proper. In his effort to make her change her mind, the father tells her that her idea

cannot be materialized because she is a young girl in her tender age who was brought up with much comfort and luxury and, hence, if she is allowed to go with him she would not be able to endure the thorns of the wilderness, thirst, hunger, the heat of the day and the cold of the night. He insists that she will easily get tired on the way and obstruct his mission to find Wahid. But Tobyra refuses to yield to her father's argument and expresses her determination to go with him by saying:

አባየ ለእኔ አታሰብ እንኳን ድሀነት ጌትነት ይለመዳል፡ ሁሉም ልጅ ነኝና
እለምደዋለሁ።(25)

My dear father, do not worry about me. It is possible to get used even to life of luxury let alone to poverty. I am still young and can easily get used to new conditions of life.

She further argues that unlike the dissolute and the corrupted type of rich people, the disciplined and intelligent person can easily get used to poverty and hard life and that however arduous the journey will not be difficult for her. She tells her father that if she is left behind, her worries about her beloved father and brother would almost kill her. So she contends that it is much better for her to go along with her father and participate in the search for Wahid. Because of her resolve and rational argument, she makes her father accept her request and by doing so she exhibits her power of argument and her resolve to do what she thinks is right.

Again, when she, along with her father, embarks on the search for Wahid, she proves her ability to translate her words into action. Contrary to her parents' fear that, if she is allowed to go with her father, she will prevent him from walking at a 'male's pace', she copes remarkably well in the arduous journey to find Wahid. During her travel with her father, at no time does she say she is tired, hungry, or thirsty. By his own admission, the father says:

ምን ልብሰሽ ብቻ ልጄ ጉለበትሽም የወንዶችን ሆነ እንጂ (27)
My daughter, not only your clothes but your strength has also turned out to be that of men

From the father's comment, we can gather that he is admitting in earnest that his daughter was able to resist any hardships on an equal footing with him.

Besides her physical strength and ability to convince others, Tobya also proves to be intelligent and creative. For instance, when her father gives her his consent to go with him, she suggests that she wears men's clothes in order to avoid any danger that may happen to her because of her being a fair sex. Unlike her father and mother, she appreciates the society's and the enemies' attitudes towards women. This amply demonstrates her ability to anticipate impending danger.

Furthermore, Tobya's intelligence and her ability to rationalize situations and forward solution to problems at a critical time is revealed when she and her father were about to fall into the hands of the invading Muslims. At one time, as they were on their way to search for Wahid, they see behind them a massive cloud of smoke and dust caused by the invading Muslim forces that were advancing forward on their way killing men, taking women captives as well as burning Christian houses, churches, crops and plundering property and taking domestic animals.

Riding on a horse, Tobya and her father attempt to escape the enemy though to no avail. The father and the daughter were not only unable to run away from the enemy but also they were at a middle of a large interminable plain where there were no trees and places to hide. Some distance from them, they could see a desolate hill rising sharply from the middle of the plain. The hill was small but very high. The father, though a former hero army general with a lot of experience, fails to see the possibility of this hill to serve as a sanctuary for both of them. Instead, it is the young Tobya who brilliantly understands the strategic importance of the hill when she says:

አባዩ! ይኸ ወሬሳ የሚመታው ጦር መቼም ሁሉ በከብት ነው እንጂ በግር አይገሰግስም።
ከብት ያለው ሰው ሚዳ ሚዳውን ይጋልባል፤ መንደር መንደሩን ይዘርፋል እንጂ ሰውና
ከብት አህል። ወርቅና ብር ከሌለበት ኮረብታ ያሞራ ኩስ ሊዘርፍ አይመጣም። ስለዚህ
እኛም ከዚያ ወጥተን መግቱን ብናሳልፈው ይሻላል። (32)

My dear father! An invading army involved in looting resources is likely to march forward with the use of horses and not on foot. Those who use horses will ride on the flat area, plundering each village. Otherwise they will not find it useful to climb the hill where there are no people, no livestock, no grain, no gold or silver to plunder but only vultures' waste. So it is better for us to hide ourselves there to let the trouble pass.

Surprised by Tobya's brilliant idea, the father agrees to her suggestion. Leaving their horse behind, the father and the daughter climb up to the top of the hill and from there they watch the large Muslim army pass by endlessly on both sides of the hill with no one attempting to climb or even look at their hiding place. This hill helps the two not only to escape the imminent murder by the blood thirsty soldiers but also to observe the infinite number and might of the enemy army. Perturbed by the number and might of the enemy forces, they conclude that there was nothing short of a miracle that can withstand the enemy. As we will see later the only force that confronts this mighty army is the charm and beauty of Tobya and her unflinching trust in God.

The two keep their eyes open for the whole day to see the army marching forward and as the sun sets, the last contingent, that comprises the Muslim king and his escorts, decides to pass the night at the bottom of the hill. This of course shatters the hope of the two who expected to be safe after the tail of the enemy soldiers passes their hiding place.

To further worsen the fears of the two, flanked by his officials, the young Muslim king climbs the top of the hill to inspect the surrounding area. To his surprise, he finds the two in the desolate place but luckily saves them from his officials who were eager to murder them like their other fellow Christians. Though no explanation is given as to how they came to know each other's languages, according to the narrator, the king treats them kindly and invites them to go with him and advises them to take care of themselves lest they be killed by the blood thirsty soldiers.

Thus, due to Tobya's brilliant idea, they were saved from being murdered or from being taken captives. In fact, as will be discussed later, it is their encounter with the king that causes the complete freedom of all the Christians and their country.

Besides, because of her unwavering trust in God, she is known for her confidence and stability of mind. This helps her to console and encourage her father in times of heightened tensions. According to the narrator, when the father observes the cruelty of the enemy, he becomes disturbed and is worried for the fate of his daughter. Having observed this, Tobya, however, tries to console and encourage her father by saying:

አባየዋ እግዚአብሔር ከዚህ ቀደም ተአምር ሠርቶ አንተን ተባርነት አውጥቶ ደስ አሰኘን፤ እግዚአብሔር የማይጨርሰውን ነገር አይጀምርም። አሁንም፣ እርሱ እንደጀመረ በታምሩና በምሕረቱ ያድነናል፤ ተክፉ ነገር ይሰውረናል፤ አሁንም አትባባ አይዘህ! ክርስቶስ አላንድ ጊዜ ታምር አይሠራም ይመስልሃል?...። አሁንም አይዘህ! አሳባችንን ለእርሱ አንተውለት። (31)

My dear father, in the past, God has made us all happy when He freed you from slavery through his miracle. God doesn't start that he doesn't intend to complete. Now also, He will save us, He will protect us from evil through His miracle and mercy. Now, too, don't worry, be of courage. Do you think that Christ does not perform miracles more than once?... Now again be of courage! Let's leave all our worries to him.

What we can gather from the above discussion is that Tobya has succeeded in disproving her parents' assumptions that as a girl she will fail to endure the hardship of the long and strenuous journey and thereby prevent her father from accomplishing his task of finding Wahid.

3.1.1. 4. Tobya: A Paragon of Beauty

In addition to her physical and mental strength, Tobya is portrayed as exceedingly beautiful. Her beauty was such as would make one believe that God must have taken special pain in creating her. In this regard, the narrator says:

እግዚአብሔር ደስ ያለው ዕለት ተጨንቆና ተጠብቦ ሠርቶ ነፍስ የዘራባት ትመስላለች
እንጂ ጠቢያ እንደ ሰው የተፈጠረች አትመስልም ነበር።... ጠቢያ ሥጋ ተመልበዳ
በስተቀር ዐመጳ ከነኪሩበል የቅርብ ዘምድና የሚቆጠር ነበር። (47-48)

It seems as if God has created Tobya, when he was in a good mood, with all the care and attention to details (of her body). But in no way does she look like an ordinary human creature. Apart from the fact that Tobya bore human flesh, she looked like a close relative of the cherubim as regards to her behaviours.

In further describing her beauty, the narrator compares her eyes with the morning star, her eyelashes with the grass that grows during the *belg* season (small rains season), her lips with the blooming morning rose, her teeth with the glistening snow, and her waist with that of the queen bee. Besides, her nose, her hair her legs, her fingers and her neck are described as exceedingly beautiful. After all these descriptions, the narrator says that it is in vain to try to describe Tobya's beauty with full elaboration.

When the king first meets the father and his daughter, he takes Tobya for a male because she was dressed like a boy. According to the narrator, as the old proverb goes, "even angels fall in love with the beautiful" and so does the king like Tobya very much and decides to make her one of his courtiers though without imagining that she is a woman.

As Tobya gains swift popularity at the royal palace because of her charm, beauty and good behaviour, the other courtiers harbour jealousy and conspire to accuse her of illicit relationship with the king's cousin. As this was a serious accusation, the father was left with no option but to reveal to the king her femininity in order to falsify the enemies' accusation. As the king was already bewitched by her beauty and charms, this revelation makes him feel extremely happy and starts to think in earnest to marry her.

In order to make her happy and thereby win her heart, he manages to find her lost brother, Wahid and makes him one of his chief courtiers. On Wahid's request, he also manages to find the merchant who paid the ransom for the release of the father. Having done all these, the king asks the father and Wahid to give him Tobya in marriage. Stunned by the king's unexpected

demand and knowing well Tobya's firm stand on matters of religion, the father was, however, unable to give an immediate answer to the young king who has done them so much favour. Thus, he asks the king to give him time to think it over. On hearing this, Tobya was overwhelmed by surprise as she has never thought that such a great king would think of seeking the hand of a poor Christian girl. Nonetheless, putting aside the king's wishes, for Tobya, it was unbecoming of a truly Christian girl to marry a pagan irrespective of his wealth and power.

The next question is: Will this helpless young girl manage to resist the demand of the powerful and wealthy Muslim king? This is to be discussed in the next sub-topic.

3.1.1.5. Tobya: the Selfless Redeemer

For a poor girl like Tobya, an offer to be the wife of a powerful and rich king is too good to resist. But Tobya does decide not to accept such a tempting offer. Though she seriously acknowledges the king's favour and his kindness, she refuses to marry him because she thinks marrying a pagan is tantamount to committing the worst crime. For her, marrying a non-Christian person amounts to denying one's religion and undermining the Heavenly glory for the sake of worldly pleasure. Of course, she realizes that this decision can mean risking her life and that of her father and brother.

Thus, after offering a solemn prayer for God to protect her father and her brother from any harm, she writes a letter to the king expressing her decision not to accept his offer. While rejecting his offer, she, however, attempts to be more diplomatic and systematic in her approach in order not to embarrass him and in order to avoid any confrontation. To this end, she starts her letter with the polite term 'my lord' and then she writes about his greatness, the vastness and enormity of his power and his wealth. Then, she wonders how such a great and a highly respected king condescend so much as to aspire to have as his wife a poor girl like her. She goes on to write:

ይህ ነገር ቢፈጸም ለዕኔማ እጅግ ክብርና ከፍተኛ ማዕርግ ይሆንልኝ ነበር። ነገር ግን ለእርስዎ መሆን አልገባምና ይተውኝ። (64)

If this was to happen, it would have been great honour and privilege for me. But leave me alone because I cannot be a suitable match for you.

Having said this, she provides further reasons why she doesn't wish to marry him. She says neither the worldly honour nor pleasure can tempt her into marrying a person who has not been baptized in the name of Christ. She says she would rather extend her hand to God rather than marry a person who doesn't believe in God. By doing so, Tobya exhibits her unparalleled devotion to God and hence to Christianity and her strength to resist any earthly pleasure and comfort.

When the king learns that his offer has been turned down, desperations and frustrations engulf him. He gets confused and doesn't know what course of action to take. According to the narrator, he refrains from marrying her forcibly because he knew forced marriage would not sustain. He also realizes that it is unbecoming of a king of his stature to try to achieve whatever he wishes by force. He also remembers the promise he made earlier to let them go home at any time and he felt that it is unexpected of him to take his word back.

Notwithstanding all these considerations, however, he could not give up his idea to marry her because he was in a fervent love with her. According to the narrator, he felt that his kingdom, his crown, his riches and his entire royal splendor became irrelevant as compared to Tobya. Because of his love for Tobya, he was disturbed throughout and as a result he suffered from restlessness, chronic headache and stomachache. He was so troubled that he began to avoid people. Except Wahid no one was allowed to see him. He spent hours and hours in meditation. He understood clearly that Tobya wouldn't change her mind at all unless he became a Christian. Thus, after going through tremendous psychological crises and prolonged suffering, he decides to make a hard decision, i.e. to convert himself to Christianity and

marry Tobya. Then, he sends Wahid to tell her about his decision. On hearing this news, according to the narrator, Tobya says:

ጠቢያ ከእርስዋው ንግስትነት ይልቅ በእርስዋ ምክንያት ያን ያህል ትልቅ ያረመኔ ንጉስ ክርስትያን በመሆኑ ደስ አላት...። እግዚአብርሃም አመሰግናች። (65-66)

Tobyas was very happy not because she was going to be a queen but because for being a reason for the conversion of the powerful pagan king to Christianity. For this she thanked God.

After securing Tobya's consent to marry him, the Muslim king issues a proclamation officially declaring his conversion to Christianity and calling upon his followers whether to follow suit or to retain their faith. Luckily for him and Tobya and her people, all his followers agreed to accept Christianity. On observing this, he was delighted and proclaimed that henceforth 'Christians are to rule and never be ruled'. On this, the narrator comments:

ባንድ ነጋዴ ሰበብ ሁሉ ዳኑ፣ ባንድ ሴት ምክንያት ሁሉ አመኑ። ባንድ ንጉስ ቃል አትላቅቶ ቆመ። (68)

All were saved because of one merchant. All believed because of one woman. Ethiopia came into existence because of the word of a king.

What we can gather from the above discussion is that because of her charm and beauty, her selflessness, her unwavering trust in God, and the concern for the safety and well-being of her family and fellow Christians at large, she has succeeded in subduing the powerful king and his mighty army. Had it not been for her, the Christians would have probably lived for many years under the subjugation of the invaders. Because of her, the perennial wars and the mutual killings and destruction between the two belligerents have come to an end and as a result peace and tranquility have prevailed in the land of the Christians.

However, such unparalleled achievement by a poor girl is likely to cast doubt on the plausibility of the story. For instance, in his dissertation, Fikre Tolossa (1982:64) argues, "From a realistic point of view, the conversion of the Mohammedan king to Christianity for the sake of Tobya's love is

incredible." While such arguments seem to be valid, there are also other questions that are likely to be asked by a critical reader. For instance, even if we assume that the king has changed his religion because of his love for Tobya, how is it possible for all the king's followers to agree in unison to accept Christianity following a one-time declaration by the king? Naturally there will be some if not all who would oppose the king's call because it is unlikely that the multitudes of his followers would think in the same way. These are just some examples of the many inconsistencies which are likely to mar the credibility of Tobya's triumph over the king.

Leaving the issue of plausibility as it is, from the feminist perspective, Tobya is, however, portrayed positively. She is elated for her piety and virtuous deeds. Her courage, farsightedness, indomitable spirit and her selflessness implies that she is morally, rationally and socially equal to men. The fact that Tobya has exhibited the qualities of devotion, sacrifice, faith and boldness can signify that she is equal in conviction and dignity worth as that of the men. In other words, Tobya's intelligence, physical strength, selflessness disprove the patriarchal assumptions that tend to look at women as materialistic, irrational, weak and dependent.

Notwithstanding her tremendous good qualities, after marriage, she is made to play the traditional role of a loyal wife. Though she had displayed her skill as a courtier at the royal palace, she ultimately becomes a mere housewife charged with bearing and taking care of children while her brother is appointed as the second man in the newly formed Christian government hierarchy. The author's major concern might not be to undermine the role of Tobya but the implied meaning of the portrayal is that whether women are strong, rational, far-sighted or courageous, their ultimate fate is to bear and take care of children and look after the house.

3.1.2. **The Two Kind Women**

Apart from Tobya, there are two unnamed minor female characters that are portrayed positively. Though they are far from possessing the larger-than-life qualities of Tobya, they have acquired positive traits for their kindness and sympathetic attitude towards people in need of help. Of the two, the first woman is acknowledged for her humanitarian deeds when she saves Wahid from possible death.

On one occasion, as Wahid was on his futile journey to find the kind merchant, in the middle of nowhere, the sun sets and darkness falls. As he was by himself and as there was no trace of people in the area, fear grips him quickly. Besides, he was tired, thirsty, hungry and exhausted. As he was helplessly sliding and crawling down a hill clenching grass, and thorny plants, by accident he comes across a pond at the bottom of the hill and as he tries to quench his thirst, he encounters a mule which broke loose from a merchant's camp.

As if to have understood his suffering and exhaustion, the mule makes herself available to him to make use of her. Wahid accepts her "offer" and rides on her hoping that it will take him to a place where there are people. Unfortunately for him, he is soon caught by the attendants of the mule and thinking that he is a thief, they beat him mercilessly and depart leaving him on the verge of death. As he was lying unconscious in the deserted merchant's temporary camp, the unnamed woman who was in the area to collect fireweed comes to his rescue.

When she sees him from a distance, she takes him for a dead person. But as she comes closer and closer to him, she realizes that he was still alive. Shocked by what she saw, she cries and beats her chest in sorrow. She runs to her house to bring water and milk. With the water she makes frantic effort to soften his dried cracking lips and to make him drink some milk.

After Wahid regains consciousness because of her tireless effort, she calls her husband, who was plowing his farmland in the nearby area, to help her take him to their house. Wahid is nursed and provided all the necessary care and support by the woman and her husband.

When he recovers fully from his serious injuries, he decides to leave and the couple provides him with food for his journey and advises him to take care so that he doesn't fall again in the hands of cruel people. As part of their advice and warning, they tell him that their only son has been captured and sold into slavery by Muslim merchants. In expressing his thanks for their extraordinary support and help, he says:

እግዚአብሔር ካላችሁ አደስቀርሳችሁ። ተምስጋና በቀር እኔ የማደርግላችሁ ነገር የለኝም። (20)

May God repay you for whatever you have done for me. Except expressing my thanks, there is nothing that I can do for you in return.

Before departing, Wahid takes the name of the couple's lost son. The couple is later rewarded when Wahid finds and makes their son his chief courtier when he is appointed as the king's top official.

From the above analysis, we can see that the woman is portrayed as kind and selfless. When she finds Wahid lying on the ground helplessly, she doesn't leave him to his fate. In fact she even takes the risk of being implicated in the beating and possible murder of the boy. Instead of running away, she comes closer to him and when she observes the severity of Wahid's injuries and bruise, she cries, beats her chest and begins to tend to him leaving her business aside. She even asks her husband to stop his work and join hands in helping the boy who is unknown to both of them. The couple's kindness and selflessness is exhibited even more when they let Wahid sleep in their private bed.

As mentioned earlier, there is another unnamed woman in the novel who is portrayed as kind and hospitable. When Toby and her father approach a house seeking an accommodation for one night, this kind woman who happens to be the owner of the house and who had evidently been crying at the time, rushes towards them to ask where they were coming from and whether they have any news. Toby's father declares that they don't have any significant news worth telling and shows her the direction they had been journeying. The father and the daughter are later to learn that the woman was crying on hearing the news that the Muslim forces were marching forward to invade the country for the second time.

When the woman realizes that the man and the girl were waiting to hear from her regarding their request, she tries to put her grief aside, and invites them to stay in her house by saying:

እኛው በቤታችን እስትናዝበት ድረስ የእግዚአብሔር እንግዳ እንደለብ ቢያድርበት ይቻለዋል፤ ተነገ ተሠልስት ወዲያ ግን ማን ያውቃል? (27)

As long as we have a command over our house, any God's guest is welcome to stay in it as he pleases. However, who knows what is to happen tomorrow or the day after tomorrow.

What we can gather from what the woman says is that she is always ready to fulfill God's wish by making her house open for Guests. But this time, she is not sure whether she will continue to have a say over her house and property because she fears that they may be burned, destroyed and looted by the invaders.

The woman's husband is also no less hospitable than his wife. When the two guests settle in the house, the husband who was sitting on a stool calmly and thoughtfully joins them and asks them to excuse him for not paying the attention deserved to guests. He says he was carried away by thought over the impending destruction by the invaders. He tells them that the pagan king and his army were advancing forward to invade their country and convert all the Christians to his religion and annihilate those who refuse to be converted.

The father and daughter become highly disturbed by this news. But they are comforted by the immense hospitality accorded to them by the rich peasants. They were provided with lavish dinner. Besides, the modesty and the entertaining hospitality of the couple were more than anything else. This made the father and his daughter to relax and feel at home. Also on their departure, the two guests were provided with abundant food and drinks for use on their way.

Just like the woman discussed earlier, this woman, too, is portrayed as kind, hospitable and generous. She renders extraordinary service to her guests' even amidst the impending danger. The woman's kindness is vividly depicted when we see her grief and sorrow on one hand and the effort she makes to please, comfort and make her guests feel at ease. Like the kind woman discussed earlier, neither her name nor her physical description is given. Nonetheless, her kindness and generosity speak louder than anything else.

3.1.3. The King's Cousin

The king's cousin is another minor female character worth considering. As the young Muslim king had lost his parents while still a child, he was brought up by his uncle who had a daughter of his age. Besides, the king and his cousin loved each other as a brother and a sister and as such they had no secret to hide from each other. Their relationship is so close that he would not leave her behind even in times of war. This being the case, during the second invasion, too, she was with him. This enables her to meet and talk to Tobyra when she became a courtier.

When Tobyra, assumes her responsibility as a courtier, she soon starts to gain popularity and draw the attention of everyone around the palace. Of all, however, it is the king's cousin who gets attracted most by Tobyra. She easily falls victim to Tobyra's beauty and charm and with each passing day her love towards her increases though without realizing that she was falling in love just with a woman like her.

In the hope that her brother would one day make it possible for her to marry Toby, she tells him openly about her feelings towards her. She only doesn't want her old father to know that she is in love with a *kafir*. But, as far as she is concerned, she is willing to marry Toby irrespective of her religion. This means for the king's cousin, love is more important than religion or any other considerations.

Despite this, however, she lacks courage to make her love known to Toby. Though she spends a lot of time with Toby, she doesn't take any initiative or make any effort to talk to her or show her any indication about her love. What she does instead is she always talks in appreciation of Toby by telling her brother that she has never seen such an extraordinarily handsome and cultured young man.

When people who were unhappy with Toby's popularity design an evil scheme to deceive her into entering the tent of the king's cousin and then accuse her of illicit sexual relationship, the king, though Toby's femininity has been revealed to him by her father, decides to dismiss her from her position to make his uncle and her accusers believe that he has taken the allegation seriously. While this news brings happiness to Toby's enemies, it apparently turns out to be very sad news to the king's cousin. After hearing Toby's "dismissal", she weeps and weeps all day long and could neither eat nor drink.

Though the king knows that his cousin's love is in vain, he could not, however, reveal to her about Toby's identity lest the secret leaks to others. So, in order to mitigate the suffering of his sister he thinks of deceiving her into marrying Toby's brother, Wahid. On many instances, the reader is told about the complete resemblance between Toby and Wahid. For instance, on one occasion the father tells the king that the two twins looked like each other so much that it was difficult even for the parents to distinguish the one from the other. Also, when Wahid and the king met face-to-face for the first time, the king is surprised to see that the two are similar in almost all

respects though, according to the narrator, there is a slight difference between the two:

ጥቂት ዋሕድና መቢያ የሚለያዩበት በአተያይ፣ በአነጋገርና በንቃት ብቻ ነበር። መቢያ ምንም ልሽሽግህ ብትለው ነገሯ ሁሉ ወደ ሴትነቷ ያደላባት ነበር። (59)

Wahid and Tobya were identical though they slightly differed in their manner of looking, talking and agility. However hard Tobya tried to hide her femininity, the delicacy and temperament of a woman was visible in her.

For the king, the resemblance between the twins is more important than their slight differences, and, thus, he says:

እንግዲህ ለእሁቱ ባል አገኘሁት መቼም እርሷ ሌላ መሆኑን አትለዩውም፤ ያው የወደድሁት መቢያ ተመለሰልኝ ብላ ነው ደስ የሚላት። (59)

I have now therefore found a husband for my sister. She will not be able to tell that he is a different person. She will only be happy thinking that her beloved Tobya has been reinstated in his former position.

Based on this assumption, the king tells his cousin that if she is really in love with Tobya, he can recall him to the palace. When she hears this she becomes extremely happy and a ‘flood’ of tears rolls down her cheeks and, according to the narrator, she tells her brother:

...እውነት ጨርሳ ደስ ይበላት ያልህ አንደሆነ በመቢያ እጅግ ፍቅር አድሮብኛልና ለእርሱ ሚስትነት አብቃኝ። ሌላ ነገር አላስቸግርህም፣ ጌትነቱም ሁሉም ይቅርብኝ እንዳንዲቱ ገረድህ ሠርቼ አገለግልሃለሁ። (61)

If you want me to have complete happiness, enable me to become ‘his’ wife because I am seriously in love with ‘him’. I’ll not bother you about anything. I am ready to renounce my royal privileges and serve you as one of your cooks or maid-servants.

What we can gather from the above quotation is that, to materialize her marriage to Tobya, the king’s cousin is determined to do anything and to sacrifice anything including her pride, privileges and even her religion.

Having concluded that his cousin will not be able to make a difference between Tobya and Wahid, he decides that the wedding ceremonies of the two-the king and Wahid- takes place on the same day. And just on that day,

the king arranges a meeting between Wahid and his cousin for the first time. When the king's cousin sees Wahid in his new costumes of honour, she never doubts who she is looking at is not Tobya. She completely takes him for Tobya though she thinks he has slightly increased in height since she saw him last. Otherwise, for her he was Tobya. It was him and no one else. Then, as usual because of happiness she bursts into tears.

Now for the king, all is well except that his cousin might wonder why her husband's name is changed from Tobya to Wahid. To avoid such possible confusion, the king tells his cousin:

ሰሙ ዋሕድ ይሁን ብያለሁና የባልሽ ስም እንደተለወጠ ዕውቁው። ዋሕድ ማለት አረመኔና አማራ አንድ ሆነ ማለት ነውና። የእርሱም ስም ለእኔ ሚስት አድርጌዋለሁ። (69)

You need to know that your husband's name is changed. I have declared your husband's name to be known as Wahid. Wahid means the pagans and Amharas have united as one. I have given your husband's name to my wife.

As usual she happily accepts what her brother tells her and she says:

እሺ መልካም ስም ነው፤ መልካም ትርጉም አለው። (69)

Alright, it is a good name, it has a good meaning.

Then, according to the narrator, the wedding ceremony of the four—the king, Tobya, Wahid and the king's cousin—took place on the same day and their marriage turns out to be a very happy one for many generations to come.

What is bizarre in the above discussion is that the king's cousin is easily deceived by her brother into happily marrying a man she doesn't really love. She loves Tobya but she marries Wahid. Here what easily comes to the reader's mind is the king's insincerity and his cousin's naivety or foolishness. In fact the king seems to have the habit of undermining women's intelligence. He also seems to fail to recognize that women are the real owners of their body. For instance, when he wanted to marry Tobya, he asked her father and brother to give him Tobya in marriage though Tobya being a strong woman rejects the very idea of marrying a pagan. Again, the

king promises Wahid to 'give him' his sister in marriage. This implies that for the king women just like men do not have a say over their body and fate. For him women are just like commodities to be 'given' and 'taken' by men. The king's cousin as she lacked Toby's intelligence easily falls victim to her brother's manipulation. When she meets Wahid for the first time, she fails to observe the difference, however slight, that exists between the two and she easily takes Wahid for Toby and resorts to crying because of 'happiness'. When her brother advises her to convert to Christianity in order to marry Toby, she agrees happily and she starts to pursue education on Christianity. When he tells her about the exchange of names between Wahid and Toby, she agrees without complaint. She doesn't even bother when she hears that her lover's name has been given to her brother's wife. What is worse is that she even fails to rationalize how a man's name can be used for a woman.

Besides, instead of explaining or providing any indication to Toby about her love, she tries to achieve her wish of marrying her through the intermediary of her brother. Instead of making a little effort to achieve her desires by herself, she waits idly for her brother to do things for her. Because of her weakness or inability to do things by herself, she expresses her wish to give up her royal privileges and reduce herself to a maid-servant.

Interpreted from the feminist critics' point of view, the king's cousin is portrayed as a victim of patriarchal ideology. She is portrayed as dependent, naïve, irrational and as a stupid and weak who is fond of crying to express her happiness or sadness. She is a creature who doesn't have any ambition other than love and marriage.

As indicated in 2.1.3, love for the radical feminists is an organization that "promotes vulnerability, dependence, susceptibility to pain that prevent the full development of women human potential". However, for instance, for liberal feminists, love is a natural phenomenon. This implies that just like men, women can love and be loved. They can marry, bear and rear children

for this is a biological fact. But these are not the only opportunities open for women. While loving, marrying and bearing children, they can desire, compete and occupy any position open for men. Unfortunately, the main preoccupation of the king's cousin remains to be love and marriage.

3.2. *Yelib Hassab: Yebirhanena Yetsion Mogessa Gabicha*

This section focuses on the portrayal of the protagonist, Tsion Mogessa in Hiruy Woldeselassie's *Yelib Hassab: Yebirhanena Yetsion Mogessa Gabicha*, written in 1931-about 23 years after the publication of Afework's *Tobyä*. But first the synopsis is presented.

3.2.1. The Synopsis of the Story

In Bulga Awraja (province) at a locality called Atisa there lived a man called Kibret. His first wife being barren, adulterous and of bad behaviour, he divorced her according to the provisions of *Fitha Negest* and married another woman with whom he lived happily because she was a woman who fears God and respects and adores her husband. After two years, she bore him a girl baby who was named Tsion Mogessa.

At the age of seven, Tsion Mogessa is given a chance to make a choice as to what type of education she would like to pursue. She chooses to learn writing, reading and handicraft instead of household chores such as grinding flour, spinning cotton by hand and brewing *tej* and *tella*. Accordingly, she learns reading and writing at a school run by a priest while an old nun helps her to practice handicraft.

In the meantime, a young man falls in love with her and proposes to marry her. She tells him that since she is only 13 years of age she is too young to marry. Though she declines to marry him at the moment, she nonetheless

expresses her willingness to marry him if he can wait until she is 15. He complies with her wish and later on they marry and bear four children. Having presented the synopsis of the story, an attempt is now made to show whether the protagonist is portrayed as a stereotype or as one who violates the norms accepted in a patriarchal society.

3.2.2. Tsion Mogessa's Views towards Education

When Tsion Megossa is seven, the father and the mother agree that it is time for their daughter to follow certain training but they disagree over the type of education that their daughter must pursue. The mother wants her daughter to learn spinning cotton, baking *enjera*, cooking, preparing *tej* and *tella* while the father wants his daughter to learn reading books, writing and handwork.

When the husband and wife fail to reach an agreement, the father doesn't try to impose his will on his wife according to the norms of a patriarchal society. Instead, they agree to call their father confessor to intervene. He in turn advises them to leave the decision to the seven-year old child by saying:

...የዛሬ ዘመን ልጆች እንደ ቀድሞ ዘመን ልጆች አይደሉም፤ ስለዚህ ለጽዮን ሞገሳ የሚሻላትን ትምህርት ለይቼ ለመናገር አልችልቸም። ዳሩ ግን ለልጅ ይታየዋልና አርስዋን ራስዋን የትኛው ትምህርት ይሻላል ብለን ብንጠይቃት ሳትነግረን አትቀርም ብለው መለሱ (2) ።

This day's children are not like those of the old generation. So, I cannot precisely talk of what kind of education is good for Tsion Mogessa. But, since children have intuitive knowledge, she would probably be able to tell us if we ask her directly as to what kind of education she would like to pursue.

In keeping with the priest's suggestion, Tsion Mogessa is asked to tell what type of education she would like to follow. The family's father confessor is surprised by the young girl's brightness and intelligence when she puts the question back to them by saying:

...እኔ ልጅ ስለ ሆንሁ የትምህርቱን ዓይነት ሁሉ ለይቼ ለማወቅ አልችልምና የትምህርቱን ዓይነት አንዳንዱን እየለያችሁ በተራ ብትነግሩኝ ለመምረጥ እችላለሁ... 4)

As I am a child, I am not in a position to differentiate all the types of subjects. Therefore, I will only be able to make a choice if you could tell me the types of subjects one by one.

Then, the priest asks her whether she would like to learn baking *enjera*, spinning cotton and preparing *tej* and *tella*. She says she is not interested in learning such tedious, cumbersome and dreary work. She argues that there is no reason why she should choose to engage herself in such tiresome work when she could easily buy *injera* or bread in the market for a small amount of money. She also says she doesn't want to involve herself in the wearisome and lengthy process of brewing *tej* and *tella* when she could easily buy soda water or wine. She says if soda and wine are not available she prefers to drink clean water to preparing *tej* or *tella*.

When asked whether she would like to learn reading books, writing and handicraft, she responds happily in the affirmative. She contends that by reading books she will be able to know the history of "our ancestors, our country" and works of modern civilization. In the spiritual sphere, she says, reading books will help her to understand the Trinity of God, the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ for the sake of human beings and his Resurrection.

Speaking about why she likes to learn writing, Tsion Mogessa says writing will help her to record her thoughts and her activities, write letters to her parents, relatives and friends when she is away from them and compose fiction and write history which she thinks will be of great service to herself and her people.

Explaining to her father, mother and the family's father confessor why she likes to learn handicraft, she says sitting idle will only make her sick but if she engages herself in some activities, she will be able to maintain her health by making all her sensory organs perform their natural duties. She further says that learning handicraft will help her knit mufflers, scarves and sweaters for herself and her children and

even for sale so that she can use the proceeds for buying food and drinks.

The father is highly delighted to see that things have gone his way while the priest is surprised to hear such intelligent arguments coming from a seven-year old child. The father confessor, then, compares her to Mary who was hailed for preferring to hear the Words of God to doing household chores. According to the Bible, it happened that Jesus entered a certain village where he was welcomed by a certain woman called Martha. She had a sister called Mary who preferred to sit at His feet to hear His Words. Martha who was preoccupied with household work complained that her sister was not helping her. To this, Jesus says, " Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her". (Luke: 38-42)

Likewise, the father confessor praises Tsion Mogessa for making the right decision, i.e. for choosing to learn not household chores like her mother but reading and writing, knowledge which will not be taken away by anyone from her.

Then, with the blessing of her parents she learns reading and writing by an old priest known as Aba Wolde Hiwot, a local community children's teacher. After learning reading and writing for two years, she spends another two years in revising and consolidating what she learned. In addition to reading and writing, she has also learned handicraft by an old nun called Wolete Kidan. Again, with her choice and the approval of her parents, she goes to Debrelibanos Monastery to pursue spiritual education for another two years.

From the preceding discussions, it is likely that one will raise many questions regarding the plausibility of what Tsion Mogessa says and does? For instance, is it possible for a seven-year old rural girl to speak with such an in-depth knowledge about the importance of reading and

writing? Is it also possible for uneducated peasant parents to give so much freedom to their seven-year old child?

In this regard, in his dissertation, Fikre Tolosa (1982: 71), finds it difficult to believe that a seven-year old child can make such rationalizations and analysis of situations. He says, "It is indeed unlikely for a seven-year old nineteenth century peasant girl from the remotest part of Ethiopia to speak such things some of which even her parents themselves would not comprehend."

In a similar manner, while discussing Afework's *Toby*, Fikre argues that the conversion of the Muslim king to Christianity for the sake of Toby's love is incredible. In this regard, he contends, "...his conversion to Christianity is not convincing" (64). In trying to refute Fikre's argument, Taye Assefa (1986 :26), in his dissertation, quotes Tzvetan Todorov as saying regarding verisimilitude " a relation not with reality (as is truth) but with what most people believe to be reality-in other words, with public opinion..." (26).

Taye further argues, " Afawarq's novel was written for an audience whose outlook, unlike that of its more skeptical counterpart in twentieth century Europe, was not conditioned by the cause and effect premises of a scientific culture" (26).

Taye's argument seems to hold some truth in regards to our discussions of Hiruy's *Yelib Hassab*. Just like Afework's *Toby*, this novel seems to have acceptance by a society that strongly believes in God's absolute determinism. Like Afework's *Toby*, Hiruy's novel abounds in words, phrases and sentences that express strong beliefs in God's omnipotent power. For instance, when Tsion Megossa, who is a devout Christian like Toby, tells her parents that she has decided to go to Debrelibanos Monastery to pursue spiritual education, they express their fear that she might opt to become a nun. Then, she consoles them by saying:

ማናቸውም ነገር ሁሉ ያለ እግዚአብሔር ፈቃድ ሊደረግ አይችልምና በደብረ ሲባኖስም ቢሆን በዚህም ቢሆን ለእግዚአብሔር ሁሉም አንድ ነው። ሕይወቴ ፈቃዱ ካልሆነ በፈቃቸውም ቢሆን መሞቴ አይቀርም ፤ ፈቃዱም ከሆነ ከዱር አራዊትም ጋራ ብቀመጥ አልሞትም (18) ።

For there is nothing that can happen without the will of God, be it in Debrelibanos or here everything is the same for God. If God wills, my death can just happen in front of you. And if He wills, I can live with wild animals and yet they cannot cause me any fatal harm.

Throughout, the novel is replete with such expressions that show God's unrestricted influence over human lives as well as over human actions and movements. Thus, for the priest, the parents of the protagonist and the community where the novel is set, Tsion Mogessa's actions and deeds are guided by God. Therefore, it seems that there is no reason for the protagonist's community and for all those who share the Christian values and ideals to doubt the actions and speeches of the protagonist.

In addition to the points raised above, the priest's emphasis of the sharpness of mind of the present generation and his emphatic use of the Amharic saying: "ለልጅ ይታየዋል", which implies that children are able to intuitively know in advance what is good or bad, is likely to contribute towards the plausibility of the portrayal of the protagonist.

Notwithstanding this, however, as stated by Fikre Tolosa, for a critical reader, most of what Tsion Mogosa says and does are inconceivable.

3.2.3. Tsion Mogessa's Outlook towards Marriage

Tsion Mogessa's all-round knowledge is not limited to what is discussed above. She is also well acquainted with the knowledge of the right age of marriage, the disadvantages of early marriage and the proper way of child upbringing.

One day a well-behaved young man of good stature named Birhane is mesmerized by Tsion Mogessa's charm and beauty when he sees her

by accident. Like Afework's Tobbya, Tsion Mogessa's physical beauty is not described in greater detail. She is generally appreciated mostly by Birhane and neighbours and relatives for her charm, beauty, for the beauty of the manner of her talking, for her righteous actions and her vast knowledge attained through education. These descriptions are given sparingly throughout the novel.

Attracted by these qualities, Birhane one day approaches her and explains to her about his wish to marry her. Surprisingly, Tsion Mogessa doesn't get flabbergasted for being directly asked by a young man to marry he even though for such practice is unusual in the traditional Ethiopian society. Instead, the 13 years old rural girl is astonished for receiving a marriage proposal before she reaches the age of 15 which she thinks is the right time for a girl to marry. Though she doesn't in principle oppose his marriage proposal, she tells him that she is too young to marry at this stage.

Birhane wonders why she wants to wait until she reaches 15. In responding to his question, she adequately exhibits her knowledge of the dangers of early marriage by telling him:

፲፮ ዓመት ሳይሆንኝና አካለ መጠን ሳልደርሰ... ባል አግብቼ የፀነሰሁ እንደሆነ ሕፃኑ ብርቱ አይሆንም፤ እኔም በደህና ለመገላገል አልችልም። ምናልባትም እስከ ሞት ያደርሰኝ ይሆናል... (11)።

If I marry and get pregnant before I reach the age of 15 and attain puberty, the child will not be strong and I'll not be able to deliver safely. Probably this may even cause my death.

But Birhane fails to appreciate her argument and says:

ምን ነው ካንቺ የሚያንሱ ሴቶች በ፲ ዓመታቸው ባል እያገቡ በደህና አየተገላገሉ ይወልዱ የለምን። ባንቺ ብቻ ምን መጥቶብኛል... (11)

But why! Aren't women younger than you getting married at the age of 10 and yet bear children safely. What makes it different with you?

To this, she responds:

ወዳጄ ሆይ፤ ይህስ እውነትና መልካም ነገር አይምሰልህ። ምናልባት አካለ መጠን ሳይደርሱ ባል የሚያገቡ ሴቶች ምናልባት ከመቶው ዘጠናው ሞተው አስኑ በደህና ተገላግለው ይሆናል (11) ።

Oh my dear friend! Don't think this is right and a proper practice. Of those who marry before puberty, perhaps 90 per cent of them might have died while only 10 per cent delivered safely.

To further elucidate her point, she cites the example of a tree. She says while young, a tree can easily be uprooted and thrown by a small child. But many saws and axes will be required to cut a fully grown tree.

When he fails to convince her to marry him right away, he comes up with a new suggestion. He tells her that if she agrees to marry him, he would promise not to commit any sexual relationship with her until she reaches the age of 15. When she hears, according to the narrator, such improper and unrealistic idea, she becomes unhappy and blames him, though with respect, for his naivety and lack of maturity. In further extending her argument she says:

ወንድና ሴት ባንድ ቤት ተቀምጠውና ባንድ አልጋ ተኝተው በግብረ ስጋ ሳይገናኙ ይኖራሉ ብለህ ብትናገር አእምሮ ያለው ሰው ከሆነ እውነት ነው ብሎ እንደምን ሊቀበልህ ይችላል። እሳትን በገለባ ውስጥ ቢሸጉሉት ገለባው ሳይቃጠልና ሳይነድ ይቀራልን (13) ።

How do you expect a person with the right mind to believe you when you say a man and a woman can live under the same roof and share the same bed without committing sex? If you put fire inside chaff, isn't it inevitable that the chaff will burn and burst into flames.

Though described by the narrator as cute and sharp minded endowed with modern knowledge, Birhane is ridiculed and outsmarted in all the arguments and counter arguments conducted between him and Tsion Megossa. When he loses in all counts, he is left with no choice but to give in to her demand to wait for two long years. After two years, they get married in line with the rules and regulations of the Christian Orthodox Church. The wedding ceremony was modest and alcoholic

drinks were not served. Just one year after their marriage, i.e. when she is 16 years of age, she becomes pregnant and gives birth to a baby boy safely and without serious labour.

As is to be expected, besides her awareness of the consequences of early marriage, her comprehension of modern child rearing is also superb. Being educated, the narrator says, Tsion Mogessa has kept herself well and as a result she was healthy. Her child who depended on breast feeding was also healthy though he was briefly sick when he was ten months old.

When her baby boy gets ill, people advise her to treat him with a variety of traditional medicines. But she rejects this and with the consent of her husband she comes to Addis Ababa to have her child diagnosed by a doctor. Her child is cured with the help of the doctor who also gives her detailed orientation on what to do when children are ill as well as on how to nurture and take care of children. When she returns home, she shares her newly acquired knowledge with her neighbours and community.

All in all, Tsion Mogessa bears two boys and two girls. The two boys go to the nearby town of Debrebirhan to read the Psalms of David, while the two girls are taught at home the Psalm of David and handcraft by their mother. According to the narrator, the two girls were confined to the house to help their mother in the household work.

From the foregoing discussions, we can gather that Tsion Mogessa is portrayed as a devout Christian, a firm, intelligent, responsible wife and mother and knowledgeable woman. Furthermore, she is acknowledged for her fear of God, loyalty and high regard for her husband.

This being the case, however, the plausibility of many accounts of the story seem to have been undermined particularly by the detailed and in-

depth knowledge of some sophisticated issues by the rural based protagonist. For instance, no explanation is given about her profound and comprehensive knowledge about the serious risk of child marriage. Her knowledge about early marriage, for example, turns out to be almost the same as the following research result conducted under the title, "Causes and Consequences of Early Marriage in the Amhara Region", by experts in July 2006.

One of the many sufferings early married women face is the physical pain associated with sexual intercourse due to the physiological immaturity of the sexual organs. Physical pain during intercourse, obstetric fistula due to youthful delivery, when girls are not physically matured, and other complications due to pregnancy are among the many health-related problems faced by young married women.

Besides, we are told that at one time she has traveled from her village to Addis Ababa by herself to have her child examined by a doctor. But no explanation is given as to how she came to know about the doctor. Given her rural background, how did she manage to travel all the way from her locality to Addis Ababa by herself? These are but few examples that seem to have marred the plausibility of the story.

The improbabilities of some accounts of the story seem to have been caused because of the primary focus given to the intended theme rather than to its credibility. In the preface to the novel, the author, Hiruy Woldeselassie, explains his purpose in writing the novel as follows:

የልብ አሳብ የተባለ አጭር መጽሐፍ ዋና ምሳሌነቱ ሚስት ስለማግባትና ልጅ ስለመውለድ፤ ልጅንም በጥንቃቄና በትምህርት ስለ ማሳደግ ነውና ሚስት ለማግባት የሚፈልግ ወንድና ባለ ለማግባት የምትፈልግ ሴት አስቀድመው ይህን መጽሐፍ በቅንነትና በማስተዋል ቢያነቡት ወደ መልካም ፍጻሜ የሚያደርስ ምክር ያገኙባቸዋል።

Since the main exemplification of this short book, entitled *Yelib Hassab*, is about man's marriage, bearing children and educating and bringing them up with care, any man or woman who wants to marry can get long lasting advice if he/she reads it in earnest and meticulously.

Due to this, we see the author's didactic aim being explicitly reflected in the portrayal of the protagonist. Besides, though the novel raises current

women's issues such as the danger of early marriage, the importance of marriage based on mutual consent and understanding, the importance of marriage between couples in the same age bracket, the need to provide educational opportunity for women, it fails to give the heroine a chance to go beyond the confines of the house. In this regard, the narrator says:

ከዚህም በኋላ ብርሃኔ የውጭውን እያሰናዳ ጽዮን ሞገሳም የውሰጡን እያስተነተነች ትዳራቸውን አቃጎተው በፍቅርና በደስታ ይኖሩ ጀመር (41)

Afterwards (after their marriage) Birhane took charge of the outside home activities while Tsion Mogessa assumed full responsibility of managing the household chores and subsequently they started to enjoy deep marital bliss.

In such a clearly polarized woman's place as the home and man's as the outside home, Tsion Mogessa was made to play its biological role as a wife and mother. As a housewife, her duties will obviously include grinding flour, cooking, preparing *tej* and *tella* and nurturing children. At the beginning of the novel she refuses to learn baking *injera*, preparing *tella* and *tej*, clearing seeds from cotton and spinning by hand. Instead she prefers to learn reading, writing and handicraft. But after her marriage we don't see her applying what she learned in keeping with her choice and aspirations.

The feminists would have certainly liked to see her reading, writing history and fiction books instead of doing household chores which she hated most. But this didn't happen because the natural development of the character was curtailed for thematic purpose.

Thus, from the feminist critics' point of view, Tsion Mogessa was portrayed as a stereotype, i.e. as a loyal and a responsible housewife and a loving mother.

3.3. Setegna Adari

3.3.1. The Setting of the Novel

This novel, which deals with the experience of a woman who earns her living as a prostitute, is written by Negash Gebremariam, a journalist by profession. Speaking to this writer about his motivation to write the novel, he said he wrote it in reaction to people who attempted to humiliate prostitutes. He said his colleagues, being regular night-club-goers, used to write articles that disgraced and misrepresented the prostitutes. Such disparaging articles, he says, made him ask himself, "What would these women say if they were able to write about their customers and their experiences?" Hence, according to him, he decided to write the experiences of the prostitutes and to be related from the point of view of the heroine.

Since he wanted this story to be told by the central character, under the Pseudonym, Enanu Agonafir, he had to totally disassociate himself from the novel. Thus, Enanu Agonafir was made to take up the real author's place. In her introduction to the novel, she says she wanted to use an assumed name, first and foremost, to show that it is the voice not of one individual but of all prostitutes, and secondly, to avoid being scoffed at by others.

Enanu being his mouthpiece character, essentially this novel, therefore, represents the views of the real author, Negash Gebremariam.

3.3.2. Enanu Agonafir: A Victim of Circumstances

In Assefa Gebremariam's *Endewotach Kerech*, Yeshialem jilts her husband in favour of prostitution. Likewise, Birhanu Zerihun's Abeba, in *Hulet Ye'enba Debdabewoch* turns herself into a prostitute by migrating to Addis Ababa leaving behind her newly born baby and her husband. A minor character in *Setegna Adari* tells Enanu that she became a prostitute not because of a broken marriage or economic reason but because she flirtingly ran away from her well-

to-do family to ultimately become a commercial sex worker. Unlike these women, Enanu, nevertheless, becomes a prostitute because of the pressure exerted on her by her parents and two husbands.

She was born in Gojam and brought up in Dessie. Her parents gave her in marriage to a man when she was only 12 years old. Unable to bear his jealousy and beatings, she decides to migrate to Addis Ababa to live with her aunt. As she was traveling along with ten people by a sluggish Italian truck, a middle-aged bald man approaches her and enquires about her name, life history and whether she has been to Addis Ababa. In response to his query, she says:

እኔም አንደኛ በየዋሕነቴ፤ ሁለተኛ በዚያን ጊዜ የምደብቀው ምንም ምስጢር ስላልነበረኝ የሆዴን ዘርዘራ ነገርኩት።... አዲስ አበባን ከዚህ ቀደም አይቸው አላውቅም። አክስቱም የምትኖርበትን ሠፈር ገና ጠይቁ ማግኘት አለብኝ ብየ ሳጫውተው፤ የሰውየው ፊት ፈገግ ብሎ ጥርሱ ብልጭ አለ። አንድ ጥርሱ ሸራፋ መሆኑን ተመለከትኩ። (9)

Being naïve and as I had no secret to hid, I told him everything open-heartedly. When I told him I have never seen Addis Ababa and that I was yet to know the residence of my aunt, the man smiled and his teeth glittered. I noticed that one tooth was partly broken.

Having realized her naivety and innocence, he comforts her by promising that he would help her meet her aunt. When they reach Addis Ababa, she knows that she had nowhere to go except accepting his invitation to go with him to his house. He fails to live up to his word to help her find her aunt and she understands that being a stranger to the city, she could not dare to try to find her relative on her own. Thus, she lives for two-and-half solid years with the man. Surprisingly, all these years it was not clear to the naive woman whether she was a wife or a maid-servant.

አንዳንድ ጊዜ ሚስት፤ አንዳንድ ጊዜ ደግሞ ገረድ መሆኔን ዘወትር ይሰማኝ ነበር።...መጠዋ ጫን ያለው ቀን << አግራን እጠቢኝ >> ይላል። ገረድ መሆኔን ይሰማኛል። አልፎ አልፎ ሳይሰክር ወደቤት የመጣ እንደሆነ << ሴት መከበርና ነፃ መሆን አለባት! >> ከማለቱም በላይ የሴት ባልትናዬን ያመሰግናል። ያደንቃልም።...እዚህ ላይ ሚስት መሆኔን ይሰማል። (9-10))

I used to feel at times as a wife and at times as a maid-servant. When he came home drunk, he would say, "wash my feet." Then, I would feel that I was a maid-servant. When he rarely came home sober, in addition to saying, "women should be respected and freed", he would praise and appreciate my cooking....This time I would feel like a wife.

Being inexperienced and immature, she might be deceived into considering herself as a wife when this insincere man flatters her. But the truth is her status ranks below a maid-servant. Literally, he treats her like a slave and a 'prisoner' confined to his house to carry out household chores and serve as a sex object. She says he is generous and frank but no information is given to testify this assertion. In fact out of his monthly salary of 150 birr, he gives her only 50 birr for their house expenses while he allocates 60 birr for his cigarette and drinks. She says, whenever she asks him to go to school like her immediate neighbours, he would frown and say: 'Is it in search of youngsters?' Also, if she happens to come a bit late from the market, he would ask mockingly, 'Haven't you found your aunt yet?'

This man thinks that Enanu is his property who must be kept under his strict control. If she is given the opportunity to learn she might become self-reliant and subsequently she may leave him. So, he must keep her at home and she must remain ignorant in order to be easier for him to control and possess her.

As usual, one day he comes home drunk and asks for her advice by saying: <<ቤት-ሠርቼ-ከኪራይ-ቤት-ለመውጣት-ስመኝ-በዙ-ዘመን-ሆነኝ። ገንዘብ-እንዲጠራቀም-ምን-ትመክሪኛለሽ?>> (11) "I have been hoping for years to construct my own house and free myself from living in a rented house. What do you advise me to do in order to save money'. She gives him a short and a brilliant answer by saying: << ጠጁን ትቶ በጊዜ ወደቤት መግባት ነው >> (11) "Quit *tej* and come home early'. On hearing this, he glares with anger accusing her of calling him a drunkard, he picks a stick and beats her mercilessly without giving her time to explain what she meant by what she said. She manages to run away from him and passes the night with the neighbours. The next morning he hesitates to allow her to enter his house. After serving this man as a maid-servant and as an object for his sexual satisfaction for two-and-half years, she is driven out without any money and property.

Afterwards, she seeks 'refuge' with her old woman friend and manages to find her aunt. She also finds a job at a *tej* house, with a monthly salary of 10 birr with free provision of food and lodging. At the outset, the owner of the *tej* house, Bayush Yidengitu orients her as follows:

እኔ ቤት ምንም ሥራ የለብኸም። ጧት ቡና ታፈያለሽ። ቀንና ማታ ጠጅ ትቀጂያለሽ። ሆኖም አንድ ነገር ማወቅ የሚገባሽ አለ። የአዲስ አበባ ሰው ቁልና ተክለ ጁል የሆነ ሰው እምብዛም አይወድም። ሳቂ፤ ተጫወቺ፤ መጠጥ የሚጋበዙሽን ሁሉ እመቤት አትበይ። መጠጥ የሚጋበዙሽን ደፍረሽ ለመጠየቅ አትፍረ፤ አትፈረም። በተረፈ የራስሽን ገንዘብ አያያዝ ካወቅሽበት፤ ጎረምሳው ሞልቷል (13) ።

In my house, you don't have any work to do. You will prepare coffee in the morning. You will serve *tej* during the day and evening. But there is one thing that you need to know. The people of Addis Ababa don't like foolish and clumsy people. Be cheerful and jovial and don't turn down any invitation for drinks. Don't feel shy and don't be afraid to ask people to buy you a drink. Otherwise, if you are able to smartly handle your money, there are plenty of youngsters.

In essence, the old and the well-experienced prostitute is advising the naive rural woman to develop a skill in making customers feel at ease and happy in order to make them drink more, spend more money and also make them come again to enjoy her cheerfulness and her body whenever they need. In other words, Bayush is training Enanu to make her an established prostitute.

After receiving Bayush's orientation, Enanu assumes her new task of serving *tej* to customers and at the same time meeting sexual needs of those interested in her. After serving for eight days, she says that every part of her became *tej*- her clothes were smudged with *tej*, her body smelt *tej* and her stomach was full of *tej*. The now matured Enanu also recalls with pain that customers started to call her '*tejie*' (my *tej*) instead of calling her by her real name which was given to her by her parents. This implies that when a woman becomes a prostitute she loses not only her reputation, her dignity and pride but also her real name, her identity.

After working as a waitress and a prostitute for two years and four months at the *tej* house, she contracts Syphilis. When Assefa's Yeshialem in *Endewotach Kerech*, contracts gonorrhoea she fails to see a doctor because of

her boss's advice. Enanu, however, though her boss strongly advises her to use traditional medicine, she modestly rejects her suggestion and gets cured by a doctor. Interpreted from the feminists' point of view, this indicates that the central character is a strong woman who is capable of making an independent decision. Though well-treated by a doctor, greedy neighbours, however, spread mean rumors around saying that she has inflicted a dangerous disease that can never be cured. Because of this mendacious rumour the number of her clients and that of the *tej* house is drastically reduced. Subsequently, her boss pays her her monthly salary and asks her to leave. Following this, she goes to the wider market of prostitution-the red-light quarter of Wube Bereha. Here, she is employed at a modern bar that sells not *tej* but other alcoholic drinks like whisky, cognac and gin.

This clearly shows that Enanu became a prostitute not because of her own will but primarily due to the crime committed against her by her parents who denied her an opportunity to pursue her education by marrying her off at early age to a cruel man. Besides, the insults, beatings and mistreatment by her two husbands have forced her to move from place to place to secure a means of living.

3.3.3 Denial of Expectations

At the bar, Enanu is employed to work as a waitress and as a prostitute. As a waitress, she, along with her colleagues, is expected to induce more and more people to flow to the bar and lure them into consuming as much alcoholic drinks as possible. As all the waitresses are not paid fixed monthly salaries, their income essentially depended on their ability to attract, tempt and give sexual gratification to customers.

As she is not any longer naïve and is a sharp minded woman, Enanu tries to acclimatize to the new situation through observation and listening to what others say. In this regard, she says:

በእንግዲነቱ ምክንያት ጥቂት ግር ይበለኝ እንጂ፤ በውቤ በረሀ ለመኖር የሚያስፈልገውን
ዘዴ ስምንቱን የሥራ ንድፍን እየተመለከትኩ ቶሎ መግር ቻልኩ። (25)

Though initially I was slightly perplexed because of being a new to the situation, I was able to learn fast from my eight colleagues all the intricacies required to live in Wube Bereha.

Thus, from her observations, Enanu finds prostitution to be a highly competitive profession at the red-light district of Wube Bereha. Women vie with each other to attract more clients by wearing fashionable dress, shoes and modern ornaments, of course, physical beauty and appealing postures being the primary pre-requisites for bewitching more and more men. She is well aware that her physical appearance and behaviour are the two most important things that are likely to give her competitive edge over her rivals. Speaking about her physical appearance, she says, from what she heard from her friends and what her mirror tells her, she cannot be described as an ideal beauty. But they tell her that she is attractive, slim and tall. She has a short nose, pretty round face, snow-white teeth, big eyes and dark and thick eyebrows that looked as if they were painted by an eyebrow-pencil. Besides, she is good-mannered and reserved from exhibiting uncultivated behaviour. Realizing that no bar girl can survive the competition without capturing the attention of men, she carefully selects shoes and clothes that would prominently feature her protruding teats, thighs, buttocks and legs. In her words: << ...ጡቴንና ደረቴን፤ ዳሌዬንና ባቴን የሚያደንቁ ወንዶችና በጣም የሚመኙት ሴቶች በብዛት አጋጥሞኛል። (33) >> “I have come across many men who appreciate and women who envy my breasts, chest, legs and buttocks”

Fully aware that many are those who are bewitched by her posture and manner of dressing, she feels that she has no reason to flirt around or chatter on or display any indecent act with the intention of attracting clients sexually. Because of this, Enanu has now become a center of attraction. Besides, she has become well accustomed to the way of life at Wube Berha. When she first joined the bar, she was laughed at and ridiculed for not knowing how to dance. Now, she has learned that. Thus, she has succeeded in displaying great luxury in her manner of dressing and attracting many

adorers. This phase can probably be described as the peak of her success as a prostitute.

But, as years pass by, life at Wube Bereha becomes monotonous and repetitive to her. All what she sees and hears becomes dull and boring to her: always raucous music and raucous squabbling, endless flow of customers of all sorts, immense consumption of whisky just like water. One day goes and another day comes. Hence, to avoid such routine life and to materialize her long time dream to continue her education and thereby to find another decent job, she, with the consent of her boss, joins a private day school. After completing sixth grade, she also starts to learn typing to widen her employment opportunity.

Unluckily, her effort to relinquish her ill-reputed job is cut short when she falls in love with a man. In full realization of the peril that love can cause to a prostitute, she says:

...የሰውነት ሁሉ ምርኮኛ የሆነው የሰው ዘር እንደመሆኑ መጠን፤ አንድ ቀን ተሸንፏል።
በመያዜ አሁን የምገኝበትን ያልታሰበ የስቃይ ኑሮ ሊያስከትልብኝ ችሏል። (58)

As a human being who is the prisoner of all mistakes, I was one day overcome by love and as a result I now find myself exposed to unexpected life of suffering.

When she falls in love with the man, she abandons all her clients and she sticks to her new lover. Her source of income dries up and she has to rely only on 100 birr that her lover gives her out of his monthly salary of 250 birr. Consequently, she quits her education and thereby her hope to become self-reliant shuts. Besides, she finds it very difficult to live on such meager income. Her suffering doesn't however end here since this is only the beginning of much greater misery that is to come later.

Enanu makes another stupid mistake: she bears an illegitimate child. Consequently she decides to move to 'Gedam Sefer', a shabby area populated by 'low level' prostitutes and street vendors of all sorts such as *enjera*, *shiro*, green peppers, potatoes and tomatoes. She hires a two-room

house where she can sell alcoholic drinks in a small scale. But she finds it difficult to sustain her living and that of her child with the small amount of money that she gets from her child's father and the daily sales of three or four glasses of alcoholic drinks. For fear of another pregnancy, she decides to abstain from sex. Thus, she had to withdraw money from her savings. Finally her savings diminish and she starts to live a miserable life. Deplorably, her suffering doesn't end here for she is yet to be smacked by a succession of misfortunes.

Her husband dies in a car accident. To overcome her financial crisis, she breaks her decision to abstain herself from sex. Subsequently she is impregnated by a man that she never remembers his face or his name. This forces her to perform illegal abortion, which almost resulted in her death had it not been for a doctor's help. When she returns home after being hospitalized for two weeks, she finds her house stolen and after a while her son dies of illness.

Now, one may be tempted to ask: why do such endless calamities strike her? Do these mishaps happen to her because of her follies or because of God's wrath or because of the author's intention to show others what prostitution does to women? On her part she doesn't seem to understand why she is exposed to such endless suffering. At one time, after watching helplessly her child die in front of her at the hospital, she says:

በኔ ሚስጂን በሆንኩት ሴተኛ አዳሪ አስተያየት እግዚአብሔር ቢጠላኝ ነው ስል ሀሳቤን ወሰንኩ።...አምላኬን ምን በድዌው ይሆን? ይህስ ሁሉ ፈተና በእኔ ላይ እንዴት ሊደርስ ቻለ? ብዩ ፈጣሪዬን በልቤ በማማረር ከሆሰጥታሉ ህንጻ ወጣሁ። (98)

In the opinion of a poor prostitute like me, I concluded, it must be because God hates me....I left the hospital building by complaining to my God from the bottom of my heart, 'What harm could I possibly have done to my Lord? And how is it that all this trials could fall on me?

At first, Enanu thinks that she was destined to go through all these ordeals because God is angry with her though she doesn't know the reason why. However, after the burial of her child and when she realizes that there is

nothing that she could do about what happened, she starts to rationalize and to think with a clear-head. She recalls that after migrating to the city to escape the inconvenient rural life, she was able to enjoy improved life with money she obtained by doing a job that doesn't require much physical and mental effort. But this life is short lived. She wants to find out why.

በአንድ ፊት ደግሞ ዓለም በሚነቅፈው ሙያ ተሰማርቼ ሥጋዬን ረፍት በመንሳት፤ ለመንፈሴና ለሕሊናዬ ሀፍረትን፤ ለባህልና ለልማድ ነውርን በማሸጋገሪ፤ በደለኛ መሆኔ ይሰማኛል። ይህም ሆኖ የመኖር፤ የማደግ፤ የመሻሻል መኞት እንዴት ሊኖር አይችልም? የእኔ ዕድል ከቀሩት ጓደኞቹ የተለየ ሆኖ ከማደግ ይልቅ መውደቅን አስከተለ። ይህ እንዴት የእኔ ስህተት ሊሆን ይችላል? በዚህ ዓለም ስንት የሚገርመኝ ነገር አለ? (104)

On the other hand, I feel guilty for denying my body rest by engaging myself in a universally abominated business, for bringing about shame upon my spirit and conscience and for passing on immoral practice to culture and norm. That being the case however, how can't there be the ambition to live, grow and improve? My luck, unlike that of the rest of my friends resulted in my failure rather than in my progress. How can this be my fault? How many things are there in this world that surprises met?

From her words, we can see that while admitting that she has transgressed social and religious values, she is bitterly criticizing herself for denying her body comfort and respect by involving herself in the most hated and despised trade. Having made this confession, however, she marvels why her ambition to grow and improve becomes wrong. She wonders why she is destined to fail while her friends who are engaged in the same profession grow and prosper. Enanu's argument is absolutely sound and logical for there are commercial sex workers who succeed in life just like other women involved in other business activities. Hence, it is difficult to argue that her suffering is the result of God's wrath. Her anguish was rather intended to show that prostitutes never succeed in life and that women, unlike men, are vulnerable to mistakes. This argument can further be supported by the following points.

Though she was awfully frightened of becoming pregnant, she repeatedly fails to see a doctor to seek his advice regarding contraceptives. No convincing reason is given for this for we know that when she contracted syphilis twice she was cured with the help of a doctor. This shows that she is well aware of the value of modern health service. Despite this, when she

becomes pregnant for the second time, she thinks of committing suicide and wonders: << ...ሀኪም ቤት ለመሄድ እግራን የያዘው ምን እንደሆነ አላውቅም ። >> (84) “I don’t know what prevented me from going to a hospital.” Also, for fear of becoming pregnant, she refrains herself from indulging in sex at the expense of the badly needed income. Again, wasn’t it easier for her to seek a doctor’s advice and thereby ascertain the flow of her income without any fear and worry? The possible explanation for this seems to be that she was destined to make mistakes in preparation for her imminent downfall. Another possible explanation is that Enanu's mistakes are reflections of patriarchal assumptions which imply that women are inherently exposed to committing fatal follies.

Again, after begetting her child, it was possible for her to hire a maid-servant who would take care of her child and start her work at her previous work place or look for another one for there were plenty of bars at Wube Bereha. For sure there is no justifiable reason why she couldn't continue her work after bearing her child. After all, the reader is told that because of her well-built physical appearance and good manner, she was well liked by her boss and her customers. Really, she was unjustifiably made to move to the disheveled area of Gedam Sefer only to speed-up her impending downfall. Thus, it seems that the series of mishaps that befall Enanu are necessitated by the didactic objective for writing the story. The intention seems to be to show that though prostitutes temporarily succeed in displaying great luxury in their dresses, shoes and ornaments, their ultimate fate is infliction by venereal diseases, bearing illegitimate children, suffering from illegal abortion and impoverishment.

In the preceding discussions, we have seen the ordeals that Enanu has gone through. In the following sub-topic we will talk about her representation.

3.3.4 Enanu's Representation

Though Enanu comes to the city as a naïve and an unsophisticated rural woman, she manages to easily and quickly familiarize herself with the intricacies of urban life. As a bar girl, she displays her incredibly high capacity to rapidly understand her environment, to observe and describe customers' behaviour and their interest. This is partly attributed to her realization that knowledge can be acquired through observation, seeing and listening. Speaking about her experience during her first evening at the bar at the red-light-district of Wube Bereha, she says:

ትምህርት የሚገኘው ከማየት፤ ከማድመጥና ከመገንዘብ ስለሆነ...ጨለምለም ወዳለው ማዕዘን ጠጋ ብዬ ከተቀመጥኩ በኋላ ፤ የወንዶችና የሴቶች ሁናቴ መመልከት ጠቃሚ ሆኖ አገኘሁት።
(26)

As lessons can be learned through seeing, observing and listening, I found it useful to sit in the darker corner to observe the way the men and the women behaved.

Enanu has such a sharp mind that within five days of her stay at the bar, she demonstrates her ability to cleverly identify and describe the various customers in terms of their age, physical appearance, actions, manner of talking and other peculiarities. Here is an example of how she describes one category of the customers. <<ሁለተኛው ደግሞ ላሞች መካከል እንደቆመ ኩርማ ሲገማለል ከብትነቱና ግብዝነቱ ጎልቶ ይታይበት ነበር።>> (29) “While the second category postured around like a bull standing among cows conspicuously displaying his animal-like behaviour and hypocrisy.”

The narrator is so intelligent that she is also able to understand the behavior, expectations and interests of the customers. According to her, some are pretentious and hypocrites, some are showy, some are generous while others are stingy. Thus, such an in-depth knowledge of the customers' behaviour helps her to gainfully engage them and at the same time to harmoniously serve their needs and respond to their enquiries. Besides, she is endowed with great skill in involving men in serious discussions. Unlike her colleagues, she hates wasting her time playing cards, gossiping, backbiting, going to fortune tellers and flirting around. Whenever she gets

the chance, she likes to raise serious issues, subjects of national concern such as the problem of prostitution or matters related to marriage. In the course of her discussions with different people, she prefers listening to talking and even during a heated debate or argument she dislikes interrupting people even if they go off the point. In this connection, she says: <<ከመከራከር አንዳንድ ትምህርት መገኘቱ ስለማምን፤ የሚናገረኝን ሰው ተሎ ዝም ለማሰኘት አልፈልግም። >> (56) Because of my conviction that some lessons can be drawn from arguments, I prefer not to disrupt people hastily in the middle of discussions.”

She realizes that some of her customers are irritating and insulting. They also trample upon the dignity of others at will. And yet when she encounters such arrogant and rude people she handles them skillfully and with utmost patience. Here is one such example. On one occasion, a married man decides to pass the night with her and in the course of their conversation, he wonders why an attractive woman like Enanu fails to lead a happy marital life instead of earning her living as a prostitute. Though tired of such comments by the radio, newspapers and individuals, she responds to him by saying: <<...የሚያገባኝ ደኅና ሰው ቢያጋጥመኝ ህሬውኑ አገባ ነበር>> (55) “...If I could get a suitable man who wishes to marry me, I would have married right today.” The man was quick to say: << እንኳን ደኅናው መጥፎውም በተገኘልሽ። አንድ ወንድ ካለበደ በስተቀር እንዴት ያራዳ ሴት ያገባል? >> (55) “Let alone a suitable man, it would have been good if it was possible to get a bad one for you. Unless one goes crazy, how could he marry a woman like you?”

Being a realistic and a tolerant woman, she doesn't become angry by his conceited and irksome remarks. Instead she wonders why he thinks it would be wrong for a man to marry her. In an inhumanly manner, the man says that it is not proper for one to marry her because, for one, the entire Ethiopian people know her or have slept with her. Secondly, since she is inflicted by various diseases she will not be able to beget children. Thirdly, she is addicted to cigarette, alcoholic drinks and uncontrollable desire for sex and lastly, she is not different from him for she has forgotten all about

household tasks. Disregarding most of the points he raised, she poses a question on one point. << ልጅ እንዴት አልወለድም? >> (55) “How is that I can’t beget a child?” To this he responds :<< መኪና በሚመላለስበት መንገድ ላይ እንዴት ሣር ይበቅላል? >> (55) “How can grass grow on a busy road?”

When she cites concrete examples of long time prostitutes who begot children, he says that this must have happened with the help of medicines and the intercession of Saint Gabriel. When she asks him whether such medicines would fail to work for her, he realizes the seriousness of her challenge and discontinues the ‘discussion’ by switching to another ruthless question. As he was undressing himself to sleep with her, he asks her whether she is completely free from any disease. She becomes tempted to say: what about you? But since she realizes the need to be patient with her customers, she suppresses her temptation and entertains him with modesty. Astonishingly, after some time she finds herself inflicted by syphilis by this cruel and pretentious man.

Such encounters are usual occurrences for the heroine. It is also usual for her customers to wonder why the narrator and her colleagues fail to marry or look for other decent jobs. But, for instance, when the issue of marriage is raised they all agree that it is inappropriate for any man to marry a prostitute. When discussing issues related to finding a job for prostitutes, they initially pretend to know every thing and to have ready made solutions for every problem. But when the narrator challenges them by raising brief but critical questions either they withdraw their discussions or simply say, the government must do something about it. Fed up by the harsh criticism of the media and individuals, the narrator says:

... እኛም እንደየአቅማችን ሥራ እንድናገኝ የሚደግፈን አንድ ድርጅት ወይም አንድ ዘዴ መፈጠር አለበት። ይኸ የማይቻል ቢሆን በዚህ በምናውቀው ሞያ እራሳችንን ለማሰተዳደር ስለምንሞክር አትውቀሱን፤ አትንቀፉን፤ አታስቸግሩን፤ ከልብ ወይም ከአንጀት ያልሆነ ተቆርቋሪነታችሁንም አታሰሙን። (77)

....An organization or any other method must be created to help each of us find a job according to our ability. If this is not possible since we must try to support ourselves with the profession that we know, don't blame us, don't criticize us, don't bother us and don't

make us listen to your hypocritical concern that doesn't emanate from the bottom of your heart.

This is an expression of the central character's frustration over the pretentiousness of men or the society at large. The newspapers, the radio and the society at large try to unfairly hold the prostitutes responsible for not getting married or for not looking for a decent job. The narrator's disappointment grows even more when she sees men advising prostitutes to get married though they strongly believe that they are not eligible to become wives because they are of bad repute. This is the reason why she tells them with emphatic to stop shedding crocodile tears.

3.3.5. Enanu's Fate

Following the death of her son and going through untold mishaps, Enanu becomes exhausted and dejected. But being a strong and realistic woman, she manages to withstand her suffering. As a sensible and pragmatic woman, she decides to accept whatever happened to her with courage and brace herself for future challenges. In her words:

እግዚአብሔር ለሰው ልጅ ከሰጠው ዋና ዋና ባሕሪዎች ሁለቱ ትዕግስትና መርሳት ናቸው። እስከዛሬ ድረስ እንድቆራመድና ራሴን እንድረሳ ያስገደደኝ የልጄ ነገር ነበር። ከእንግዲህ ወዲህ ቢሻኝ ለምኝ፤ ብፈልግ ግርድና ተቀጥራ ለመኖር ስለምችል፤ ራሴ ፈጅሞ አርነት እንደወጣ ቆጠርኩት። (103)

Patience and forgetting (Putting sorrow out of ones mind) are two of the major human traits given by God. It is because of my preoccupation with my child that I was forced to lead a miserable life and disregard myself. From now on, I totally feel relieved for I can earn my living either by being employed as a maid-servant or by begging.

Though she says she felt liberated from 'enslavement' after the death of her child, her life however, remains the same as before. As usual, she continues to make her living by selling a few pints of alcoholic drinks in her single-roomed cabinet like dilapidated house. Haunted by fear of becoming pregnant again, she totally stops sexually entertaining her customers. As a result it becomes difficult for her to sustain a living by mere sales of

insignificant amount of alcoholic drinks. At times, she becomes so bankrupt that she fails to provide herself with regular meals and she had to take *enjera* on credit. At times she and her impoverished neighbours had to deliberately put a lot of sugar in their coffee in order to suppress their hunger.

Just like her prostitute friends, she either stands or sits in the cold and in the dark for long hours to wait for customers without losing hope. Some of the guests who visit her 'bar' are relatively good while some of them are bad and insulting who sometimes like to pick a quarrel with her and leave without paying for what they drunk. So her life turns out to be so precarious, bleak and gloomy. Apprehensive about her future, she asks an old prostitute: << ሸርሙጣ ስታረጅ ምን ይበጃታል? >> (115) "What is the fate of a prostitute when she grows old?" The old woman who roams from house to house with the support of a stick to beg responds, << እንደኔ ትሆናለች >> (115) "She becomes just like me." This old woman has apparently lost her beauty, grace and the charm that used to lead so many lovers to their feet. So now she earns her daily bread by begging and entertaining the young prostitutes by recounting to them her story and her past experience. So will Enanu become like this old woman if she gets the chance to live until she grows old?

Speaking about the future prospect of prostitutes, the heroine thinks that if prostitutes don't die at early age, their destiny will be one of the following four. However rare, some save money, construct a house or open a hotel for use during their old age. Some somehow manage to find a husband before they grow old and their beauty withers away by immense alcoholic consumption and illness. Others advance in age without accumulating any wealth and ultimately die desolately, while others give their illegitimate children to their different fathers or relatives and desperately go back to their respective villages to die there wretchedly. And which one of these does Enanu think her future will be?

በሚያስደንቅ ፍጥነት ቶሎ የወደቀውን የራሱን ሕይወት ስመለከተው ከእርጅናው ሳልደርስ እመንገድ እንደምቀር ሕሊናዬ ይነግረኛል። (116)

When I see the incredibly speedy downfall of my life, my conscience tells me that I will die before I advance in age.

While expressing her fear of dying at early age, she however hopes to continue her education and work with social service providing institutions or women's associations to raise the awareness of women on the danger of prostitution. She thinks this will be possible if she finds a publisher and buyers of the novel she intends to write.

So, will she be able to achieve her long time dream to quit prostitution or will she continue to suffer and die in abject poverty. This is open for speculation. But her moral, strength and good intention makes her a strong and responsible woman.

3.3.6. Recapitulations of the Discussions

As can be gathered from our discussions, the protagonist is portrayed as a victim of circumstances. She became a prostitute not because of her choice but because of the mishandling of her parents and her two husbands. She is forced by her parents to marry at early age, thereafter to be exposed to beatings and mishandling by her cruel and jealous first husband. Again, despite her desire to lead a marital life, she is treated like a 'slave' or a 'prisoner' and later beaten and driven out by her second 'husband'. Thus, because of the cruelty of men she is left with no choice but to become a prostitute, one of the most socially abhorred businesses.

Later, from her bitter experience, she realizes that prostitution is a degrading and a dehumanizing trade. The realization of this motivates her to continue her education so that she could secure a decent job. It is also the appreciation of this problem that prompts her to discuss the perils of prostitution with different people though none of them helps her to find a way out of the hated business.

Enanu is a woman of 'ill repute' with low level academic background. And yet she is a responsible, realistic and an intelligent woman who is capable of understanding and analyzing the sufferings of all women involved in the profession. What makes her different from her colleagues is her ability to sense the problem and discuss it openly and courageously with different people in search of possible solutions to it. Regrettably, notwithstanding her intelligence and her desire to quit prostitution, she is unable to make it. This is because in order to show the ugly face of prostitution, she must make mistakes, she must fail and ultimately she must suffer. The patriarchal assumption being that women are weak and susceptible to errors, Enanu is made to make a series of blunders that led her to her doom.

Though men such as her father and two husbands have contributed to her endless suffering, nothing much is said about them. In fact, ultimately it is the innocent Enanu who is made to take the brunt of the evils of prostitution. After all, is it right to associate prostitution with women only? Isn't it evidently clear that men too have their own contribution to the expansion and perpetuation of prostitution? What we see in Negash's *Setegna Adari* is women being blamed and being described by the customers as "women of ill repute", who are unfit to mix with the society through marriage or otherwise. But such customers, whether married or unmarried, have the freedom to drink, dance, and sleep with different prostitutes as they wish and roam throughout the night around the red-light-district of Wube Bereha and Gedam Sefer and yet unlike the women prostitutes they are free from any blame. What we see in *Setegna Adari* is the perils of prostitution being discussed in relation to women only as if it has nothing to do with men.

3.4. *Kadmas Bashager*

This popular novel by Bealu Girma was written in 1970. It is dominated by male characters and Lulit is the only major female character in it. Thus, the discussion focuses on this woman. Since the other women characters are

made to play minor roles, they are considered only in passing. Before starting to discuss Lulit, first the synopsis of the story is presented.

3.4.1. The Synopsis of the Story

Kadmas Bashager deals with the desires and aspirations of a young man who wants to be an artist instead of a civil servant. A holder of an A. M. degree in political Science from a university in the United States of America, Abera Worku thinks that he is born to be an artist and becomes bored and frustrated for not pursuing his true calling in life.

His feudal mother and his traditionalist and childless brother, Abate, wants the restless Abera to settle in one job, hold a higher position in the civil service structure, construct his own house, marry a woman from a well-to do family and have children in order to perpetuate his family line. On the other hand, his long time intimate friend, Hailemariam advises Abera to quit his job and fully commit his time and energy for the realization of his artistic inclination. Hailemariam, who studied with Abera both at home and abroad, says that he is prepared to share his monthly salary with Abera. Hailemariam, whose artistic inclination is writing, says, unlike Abera, he can do his writing and his office work simultaneously.

In the meantime he marries a young lady called Lulit who readily supports his decision to quit his job to fully focus on his artistic work. Just like Hailemariam she tells Abera that he doesn't have to worry about financial matters for they can live on her income. Following Abera's marriage to Lulit, envious individuals spread rumours that Lulit has made it a habit to have illicit sexual relations with different people. Blinded by jealousy and anger and based on wrong information, Abera goes to a hotel and kills a woman believing that she is Lulit. He gives himself up to the police and is later sentenced to three years imprisonment. To his dismay, he realizes Lulit's innocence. Having excused him for what he did, Lulit goes to the prison, presents him paint brushes as his birthday gift and expresses to him her

determination to wait for him until his release. Abera, however, discourages her not to do so and advises her to lead her own life.

After receiving the paint brushes from Lulit, he returns to his cell though not as the old Abera, but as a new person who saw beyond the horizon of the prison. In other words, it was with a new vision and mission that he returned to the prison.

3.4.2. Chauvinistic Reflections in the Novel

Kadmas Bashager is stuffed with remarks and comments that debase women. For instance, at one time, Abera remarks: << ወኔያችን ሞቶ ሀሞታችን ፈሶ ሴት ሆነናል >> (135). “We have become spineless and cowardly like women”.

Commenting on Abera’s worries regarding his decision to quit his job relying on Lulit’s monthly income, the narrator says:

...ወንድ፣ በዚያም ላይ የእለት አንጀራ አቅራቢ ባል በመሆኑ፣ በሴት ጥላ ስር ወደቆና የሚሰት ጥገኛ ሆኖ መኖሩን ሊቀበል አልቻለም (134) ።

Being a man and on top of that being the family’s daily bread earner, it became difficult and unacceptable for him to fall under the hegemony of a woman, depending for his living on a wife.

This implies that man is superior to woman in every sense of the word and that he is inherently obliged to earn bread for the family while the woman is inherently destined to live within the confines of the house. For ailemariam women are irrational and incapable of using their mind to make conscious decisions. In this regard, while talking to Abera, he says:

ምናልባት አታውቀውም አንጂ እንደሴት በደመ-ነፍስ ብቻ ነው የምታስበው። አንዳንድ ጊዜ ጭንቅላትህን ተጠቀምበት (82)።

May be you don’t know it but (the truth is) you think only instinctively like women. At times you need to make use of your mind.

Having tried to look at only few prejudiced remarks and sayings that abound the novel, we now proceed to the discussion of the central character, Lulit.

3.4.3. Lulit: A Mysterious Woman

The reader is first introduced to Lulit at the Genet hotel night club. It is Easter Eve and women and men of all sorts have gathered at the night club which was full of cigarette smoke, full of deafening noises coming from people, glasses, bottles and the musical band. After sitting at a just vacated table, Abera and Hailemariam are deeply immersed in discussions about their weakness, their lack of courage and their future engagement. To their irritation, they are joined by the Shakespeare's Iago-like Gedlu. As Hailemariam is exchanging unfavourable words with Gedlu, nicknamed Machiavelli by his friends, Abera is talking to Hailemariam half-heartedly for his big eyes were distracted by the sight of a woman sitting not far from them. This woman happens to be Lulit. Describing the way in which she was sitting, the narrator says:

ለጠረጴዛ ጎረቤት ሰጥታ እግርቿን አነባብራ ተቀምጣለች። ክንድን ጠረጴዛው ላይ አስደግፋ መዳፋሪ ላይ ጋደም ብላለች። አውራ ጣቷ ክብ አገጫ ስር ገብቶ በሌላ ጣቷ ጉንጫን እንደማክክ አያለች ትተክሳለች-ሀሳብ የያዘው ወይም የተገረመ ሰው ይመስል።

ጥቁር፣ የሚያብለጨልጭ ቀሚሷ የሻማውን መብራት ሲሰብ፣ እንደ አልማዝ የሚያበራው ጉትቻዋ መልሶ ይወረውረዋል። በተለይም የወርቅ ቀለም ካለው ነጠላ ማማዋ ውስጥ ለብቻው ሾልኮ ወጥቶ የሚታየው አውራ ጣቷ የባለጌ ልጅ ምላስ ይመስል ሰው ላይ ያሾፋል፤ ይቀልዳል። (37)

With the table on her side, she sat with crossed legs, her elbow on the table and her head leaning against her palm. Placing her thumb under her chin, she was soothingly scratching her cheek in a thoughtful manner-like a person deeply immersed in thought or like someone caught by surprise.

While her shining black dress attracted the light from the candle, her ear jewelries that scintillated like diamonds reflected it back. Her big toe, which appeared prominently out of her golden sandal, seemed to ridicule or make fun of people just like the tongue of a naughty boy.

As Abera continued to speak to Hailemariam half-heartedly, his gaze remained fixed not only on the manner of her sitting but also on some of her sensitive bodily organs. He was unable to turn them to Hailemariam from

where they were fixed. <<በአይኖቹ የተራቆተውን ደረቷን ፣ረጅም አንገቷን፣ክብትክሻዋን፣ የጽጌረዳ እምቡዋ የመሰለውን ከንፈሯን ይዳስሳል<< (37) # “With his eyes, he was fondling her uncovered bosom, long neck, circular shoulders and lips that looked like a blossoming flower’.

Lulit is well aware that Abera was looking at her with evaluative and sexual intent. They try to stare at each other though they avoid direct eye contacts. The momentary glances of the two are described by the narrator as follows.

እሷ ሀር ስትል ያያታል። አንዳንዴም አይኖቻቸው ይጋጫሉ። ሲጋጩ ሁለቱም ከመቅጽበት ሀር ይላሉ፣ ይጋጫሉ፣ ይመለሳሉ። (37-38) #

When she turns her eyes away, he stares at her. At times their eyes meet head on. When their quick looks collide head on, they both turn their eyes away instantly. Their eyes meet head on again, they turn them away again.

Such momentary looks at each other continue until communication is enhanced through eye to eye contacts and without verbal communication, Lulit gives Abera her consent to dance with him. As they dance, the reader is given more information about Lulit's physical appearance and her character traits. The details are given by the narrator as observed at close range by Abera.

As far as her physical appearance is concerned, she is not extremely beautiful as such. But she is attractive with an imposing feature. She has a slender waist, a short forehead, a musical voice, large radiant eyes, and a straight nose with a little bend upwards at the lower end.

As they danced together, Abera holds her so tight, so close but what he feels is only his own warmth. As far as she is concerned, she was as cold as ice. She was either unable or unwilling to respond to his emotional feelings. He can see her shinning beauty and yet he cannot feel her warmth; physically she was so close and yet mentally she was far away. Frustrated by her failure to reciprocate his emotional feelings, he dances with her only following her steps and not to the tune of the music. He asks for her name

for the third time and she only responds by saying with a melodious voice, ' what for do you need my name, let's simply dance'. Angered by her response, Abera suddenly says, ' You can go to hell with your name' and tries to go leaving her at the dancing floor. But being an assertive woman she would not let him go. She holds him tightly and overwhelmed by anger, she says, <<ማንም ወንድ ለሌትን ተራምዷት ሊሄድ አይችልም"? >>(41) 'No man can ever go walking over Lulit'. He is unable to free himself from her tight grip and says, <<አንቺ ማንሽና! >> (41) 'Who do you think you are' and she responds, <<ለሌት ታደሰ።>> (41) "(I am) Lulit Tadesse."

Then, he says, ' so what' and tries to free his hand from her grip for the second time though to no avail. When he understands that she would not easily let him go, he starts to dance again following her steps and holding tight her slim waist with his sweating hands. The aggressive Lulit is irritated by his attempt to leave her disrespectfully in the dancing floor. She feels that her pride has been trampled upon. Thus, she wants to make it clear to him that she is not the type of a woman who can easily submit to men's wishes. In response to his arrogance, she tells him emphatically: <<እንኳን አንተና ማንም ሱሪ የታጠቀ ወንድ ሜዳ ላይ ጥሎኝ ሊሄድ አይችልም! >> (41). "Let alone you, no man wearing trousers can ever go living me in the middle of nowhere." By this she is trying to imply that Abera is not a real man- he is less than a real man. Hence, she is challenging his manhood. To her insulting remarks, he responds calmly by saying, <<እኔ ማን መስዩሽ ነው! >>(41). "Who do you think I am?" She says that she knows who he is and that she has heard many things about him from his secretary, Senait Adera. She tells him about her knowledge that he first worked with the Ministry of Education; afterward he joined Addis Ababa University, next he was employed by the Ministry of Information and now he is working with the Ministry of Interior.

She goes on to say that Senait and other women who knew him at the different institutions where he worked has told her that he exhibits conceit and arrogance on women and that he never pays attention to them until they

go down on their knees to beg him. Having said this she warns him that she is different from these kind of women by saying: <<ማወቅ ያለብህ እንም እንዳንተ ኩሩ መሆኔን ነው። >>' (42). "What you need to know is that I am also as proud as you are."

As they continue to talk and dance, he gets frustrated by her coldness, her irresponsible attitude as well as by the continuous flow of sweat from his hands and body. Notwithstanding that she is still close and yet as cold as ever and distant; he suddenly 'burns' with sexual urge. Afterward, he and Hailemariam, who was immersed in deep thought, rush to the prostitutes' district so that Abera can find a vent for his highly charged sexual desire.

From the preceding discussions, what easily comes to mind is that though presented as sex object, Lulit is an aggressive and assertive woman. Observing her behaviour, it is, however likely for one to raise many questions? Why does Lulit show unconventional behaviour while dancing with Abera? Why does she refuse to tell her name to a man with whom she agreed to dance? Why does she look so distant and so cold? Is she a born eccentric? Abera tries to get an answer to these and other questions from his secretary, Senait who is a close friend of Lulit.

3.4.4. Lulit: the 'Seductress'

To know about Lulit, one day Abera asks his secretary to tell him all what she knows about this mysterious girl. To his surprise, his secretary is infuriated by her boss's interest in knowing about Lulit, and she says, <<ወንድ ሁሉ ስለሷ የሚጠይቀኝ ለምነድን ነው? እኔ አላዋለድኳት! ወይስ አቃጣሪዋ ነኝ? >>(74). "Why do all men ask me about her? I was not there while she was being born! Or am I a go between for her?" Though taken by surprise over her capricious reaction, he later realizes that she was doing this because of her interest in him. He waits calmly, and after she cools down, she gives him the following information.

ሉሊትን አይቶ የማይመኛት የለም... ስለሉሊት አውቃለሁ ማለት ዘበት ነው። የሚያውቃት የለም። ኑሮዋ ሁሉ በሚስጠር የተዋጠ፤ የተዘጋ መቃብር ናት። ትዝ እንደሚለኝ ንግድ ትምህርት ቤት በነበርንበት ጊዜ አንድም የሴት ጓደኛ አልነበራትም... በውበቷ አልነበረም። በቁንጅናም ቢሆን ከማንም አትበልጥም ነበር። ግን ያያት ሁሉ ይመኛት ነበር። ልሙትልሽ ይላት ነበር። ለዚህ ሲሉ እሌኞቻቸውን እርግፍ አድርገው የተውም አይታጡም። (76-77)

There is no one who happens to see Lulit but who doesn't desire her... It is impossible to know about Lulit. There is no one who really knows her. Her whole life is surrounded by mystery. She is a closed vault. When we were at the Commercial School, as far as I can remember, she never had a single female friend... It was not for her beauty for beauty wise, she was not better than any one else. But everybody who saw her used to desire her. They used to say 'let me die for you'. It is more likely that there were who completely abandoned their fiancée in preference to her.

Senait goes on to tell Abera about Lulit:

በመጀመሪያ ወንዶችን ፊት አትነፍግም። እንዲያውም እየሳቀች በማግባባት አንዲቀርቧት ታደርግ ነበር። ወንዱ የልብ ልብ ተሰምቶት ሊጠጋት ከጀመረ በኋላ ግን ዞር ብላ አታየውም። እርግፍ አድርጋ ትተውዋለች። (77).

She never turns down men at first encounter. In fact she used to approach them with beaming face in order to lure them into coming closer to her. Nevertheless, when men come closer to her believing that she is interested in them in earnest, she never pays any attention to them. She just abandons them completely.

In farther explaining to Abera about Lulit's behaviour, Senait cites an example of what she did to a banker. The bank employee, according to Senait, was in serious love with Lulit. Though she had totally 'discarded' him, this poor banker, however, always waited for long hours leaning on the school walls merely to see her. In fact, some mischievous girl students deceived him into buying them ice creams by lying that they will call Lulit for him. Feeling highly sorry for the man, one day Senait appeals to Lulit to stop punishing the man and at least to tell him to his face that she doesn't love him so that he can look for other alternatives. To this, Lulit says with sarcastic and cold smile, <<ወንዶች ሲሰቃዩ ማየት ደስ ይለኛል፤ ባይገባሽ ነው እንጂ እነሱም ክፉ ጨካኞች ናቸው-አረመኔዎች! >> (77) "It gives me satisfaction to see men suffering. It is because you don't understand, they are dreadful and pitiless-beasts! "

Having intently listened to what Senait said, he finally asks her if she knew anything about her parentage. Senait says she knew nothing about her family but that from friends who studied with Lulit at the Menen School she has come to learn that Lulit is not her original name though she can't remember it now what its first name was.

What we can gather from the revelations by Senait is that Lulit has numerous admirers and she has made it her life's purpose to deceive and entrap men into loving and worshiping her like a goddess and when she makes sure that they have fallen in love with her she 'closes' her eyes to see them. She disregards them tragically and she derives utmost satisfaction from their suffering. For Lulit, according to the narrator: <<ወንድ እግሩ ስር ተንበርክኮ ሲለምናት፤ ሲማለዳት፤ ሲያመልካት ከማየት የበለጠ ደስታ የሚሰጣት ነገር የለም።>> (92 "There is nothing that gives her happiness other than to see a man kneeling down on her feet and imploring and pleading for her acceptance).'

Gedlu, nicknamed Machiavelli for his intrigues, is one such victim of her odd desires. Gedlu, a notorious rumour monger and schemer, has abandoned his first poor wife to marry an old wealthy woman from whom he takes an abundant amount of money to lavishly spend it on Lulit. For three consecutive years, Lulit enjoys his money and attains happiness and contentment from the ordeals that he goes through to achieve her real acceptance and posses her.

Unfortunately for Gedlu, despite his generous financial support and his tolerance to endure her torment, she becomes fed up with him and wishes to abandon him totally. She does this because her mission is not to stick to one person but to entrap as many men as possible to make them suffer from her love. So, who will be her next victim?

3.4.5 Lulit: From a Sadistic Seductress to a Sensual Lover

Though Lulit tried for so long to abandon Gedlu, she was unable to do so because whenever one of her admirers tried to approach her, he would intervene and find a way of sending him away. This time, in order to free herself from Gedlu's tenacious grip and at the same time to punish and subdue Abera for his pride and arrogance, she secretly tries to strengthen her relationship with the latter. According to the narrator: <<በገድሉ ምትክ አበራ አግሯ ስር ተንበርክኮ ወደላይ አንጋጦ ሲማለደት፤ እንደጣኦት ሲያመልካት ላንዳፍታ ታያት).’#>> (92 “For a moment, she visualized Abera, in place of Gedlu, going down on his knees and looking upwards soliciting and worshipping her.”

To quickly put her two pronged objectives into action, she gathers courage to ask Abera to marry her. But Abera is dumbfounded by Lulit’s sudden marriage proposal. He was astounded by Lulit’s unexpected proposal because first and foremost she made this offer right after she went to bed with him for the first time. Secondly, he was not interested in marriage for he was preoccupied with the idea of quitting his job in order to become a full-time artist. For that matter his feudal mother, W/ro Bafena and his traditionalist elder brother, Abate have repeatedly been exerting maximum pressure on him to get married and beget children to continue the family line. But he has long resisted this pressure to avoid any and all engagements that could distract him from performing what he calls his natural calling.

Nevertheless, his fight against marriage is ended when Lulit throws a marriage proposal in front of him. When she observes that he was speechless, she asks him why he was quiet. His response was, “how could it be?” She was quick to ask: “Am I lower in status to you?” He replies: “I don’t mean that...” “Or is it because I am not a virgin”, she asks. After asking this question, she becomes furious; she is overwhelmed by wrath and looked like a wounded wild animal. Then, she says with rage and with heavy drops of tears: <<ልጃገረድ ባለመሆኔ ነው እንጂ! እናንተ አረመኔዎች ደም ካላፈሰሳችሁ መቼ ይሆንላችኋል! >> (107) “(The reason is) it is because I am not a virgin! You

brutal (creatures) you never get satisfied unless you shed blood (unless you deflower girls).”

Abera tries to explain to her why he doesn't wish to accept her offer by saying firstly, they have not known each other properly and secondly, he is planning to quit his job to pursue his mission in life which is art. As a strong woman who is determined not to easily give up her idea, she tells him that she is ready to support him financially to pursue his artistic inclination. She says her monthly income which is 400 birr will be enough for both of them. Regarding the importance of the need to properly know each other before marriage, she says:

<<ከዚህ የበለጠ ደግሞ እንዴት ልታውቀኝ ትችላለህ? አንድ ሴት ከራሷ የበለጠ ምን ልትሰጥህ ትችላለች? ወይስ ፍቅር ካለቀ በኋላ ስለጋብቻ እናስብ ማለትህ ነው? >>
(108)

“More than this, how would you like to know me? What else can a woman give you more than herself? Or do you mean to say that we need to think about marriage after (our) love fades away?”

Having left no stone unturned to convince Abera to accept her proposal, she succeeds in making her argument heavily weigh on his mind. While listening to what she says, Abera ponders over his mother's, elder brother's and sister-in-law's eagerness to see him married. Abera's brother, Abate, despite his marriage to many women, most of them virgins, was bitter for not having a child. His last wife, Elfinesh who is very close to Abera was day-in-day out cursed by her husband and mother-in-law, Bafena for her inability to bear the family a child. Abera's mother who was advancing in age has always been pushing Abera to get married so that she can see her grandchildren. Based on all these considerations and to avoid being a burden to Hailemariam who has already promised to share his monthly salary with him if he quits his job, he finally concedes to Lulit's suggestion.

When Abera announces to his family of his decision to marry Lulit, his brother is quick to reject the idea saying that Lulit is not Abera's match because of her 'inferior' class and low family background. Besides, Gedlu has concocted a smear campaign saying that Lulit is a thief and sexually insatiable woman who has turned herself to the level of a prostitute. As this

malicious campaign has been reverberated by the rumour-monger Tesema, Abera's colleague, it falls on the ears of Abate. Thus, Abate beseeches Abera never to think of marrying Lulit. But later when he realizes that Abera will not change his mind, he accepts his decision. He even borrows money to organize a wedding party and advises his brother not to use any birth control methods.

In an unexpected turn of events, after marriage, we see a totally different and transformed Lulit. Her intent in marrying Abera was to find a way of avoiding Gedlu and to punish Abera for his pride. But after their marriage, she falls in love with her new husband and gives up her initial plan to punish him. She fully supports him and encourages him to put into practice his artistic inclination. She makes her hard earned savings of 1300 birr available to Abera to use it for repaying the money borrowed by his elder brother for their wedding ceremony. But she extends her full support to him without even making sure that Abera has a talent to become an artist. Hence, one is likely to wonder why she fails to question herself or ask Abera whether he really has the potential to become an artist. Abera himself is always doubtful whether he would be able to become a successful artist. But Lulit hastily and passively takes his word for granted and devotes her time, energy and money to support his cause and she even declares that she would be much happier to live with a successful man who struggles to know himself rather than live in comfort and luxury with a man who doesn't strive to know his real calling. Obviously, her act seems to be suggestive of her passivity, dependence and inability to analyze things critically.

Besides devoting her money to Abera, as a gesture of her trust to him, she also confides to him why she decided to be cruel and hard to men. She reveals to him the secret that she withheld for years without even telling to her close friend, Senait. As she told Abera, her story goes like this:

She was born in Ambo locality, where the Awash River has its source. Though very young, one morning her mother sends her to fetch water during

which she was caught and raped by a stranger. After a while, her relatives find her lying on her back unconscious and soaked in blood. Her step-father settles the case by receiving a small amount of money from the rapist. Her mother dies just a week after she was raped. In less than a year since the death of her mother, her step father gives her in marriage to a man who flogs her bitterly and sends her back to her house in a humiliating manner when he finds her deflowered. Subsequently, she flees her home and arrives by accident at the Ambo Agricultural College. Students of the College and a foreigner help her join the Menen School. Next, in order to secure a quick job and subsequently get money and buy ornaments and fashionable clothes, she joins the Commercial School of Addis Ababa. She vows to use her beauty to avenge her untold suffering in the hands of men. She thinks her original name; Chaltu Tolosa is not an appropriate name for a black goddess. Hence, she changes her name from Chaltu Tolosa to Lulit Tadesse.

Accordingly, she starts to punish men by luring them into loving her though without reciprocating their love. Lulit's hatred towards men is understandable. But, of course, the way she tries to take revenge on her enemies is open for discussion. One may argue that instead of letting the men she hated most 'defile' her body by willingly allowing them to have sex with her, it would have been better for her to find some other means of avenging her suffering. Her choice seems to imply that women are weak and that they have no other means of punishing their enemies other than using their beauty and sexual organs. In fact, though, to a certain extent, she succeeds in punishing men by making use of her beauty as discussed later, it is she who ultimately suffers from the mechanism she pursued to penalize others. It is her promiscuous behaviour that becomes a cause for Abera's colleagues' to wage a slanderous campaign against her. In turn, it is this defamatory campaign that becomes a cause for Abate's and Abera's skepticism about her loyalty

In any case, putting aside all her past deeds, she has now changed her mind not to be cruel to Abera. As a sign of her true love to Abera, she has given

him herself, her whole-hearted support, her hard earned money and the top secret that she withheld for years. These are concrete evidences of her desire to live happily as a loving and responsible wife.

Deplorably, her desire and the support she makes to help her husband achieve his dream doesn't seem to have received the deserved recognition. In fact her husband considers her not as a supporter and equal partner but as a burden who nags him over petty and inconsequential issues. On one occasion, when Hailemariam makes inquiries about Lulit's health, Abera responds:

ዘወትር የት ነበርክ? ለምን አመሸህ? የት ትሄዳለህ? ምን ታስባለህ? ምን ሆነሃል? ይህ እንዲሁ...የ የለም። ለቅሶ ቤት ውሰድኝ። ጠጉር ሰሪ ቤት አድርሰኝ-ሰንት ጣጣ! ያገባሁት ምናልባት ሰላም አገኝ እንደሆነ በማለት ነበር...ሆኖም ጀርባዬን አሽቶ የሚያጥብልኝ ሰው በማግኘቴ ሳልደሰት አልቀረሁም። (129-30)

Always (Lulit nags me with the question) where were you? Why were you late? Where do you go? What are you pondering over? Are you okay? There is scarcity of... There isn't...Take me to the bereaved family's/persons' house. Take me to the beauty saloon—countless unimportant issues. I married hoping to get peace (of mind)...However I am happy though for getting someone who rubs (massages) my back while taking bath.

So, for Abera Lulit is not an equal partner with whom he can discuss serious issues. As far as he is concerned, she is only good at diverting his attention from contemplating over serious subjects by raising insignificant issues. The clear implication of this is that Abera, as a man, dwells on serious issues while Lulit, as a woman, is mainly preoccupied with trivialities. Of all her contributions Abera finds his wife to be useful only in massaging his back and, of course, afterwards in satisfying his inevitable sexual desire.

Differences such as the ones discussed above are always the source of misunderstanding between the two. For example, one day as he was sitting idly and pondering over something, she tries to remind him that one day he has promised to take her to the Ghion Hotel. Suddenly he explodes with anger and shouts at her telling her that he is not going to submit to her demands. Terrorized by his sudden infuriation, she bursts into tears and

runs to the bed room with shock. Next he asks her for an excuse and tries to remind her that he had earlier told her how difficult it would be to live with a person 'who hasn't known himself'. Surprisingly, instead of telling him, whatever the reason, he doesn't have any convincing reason or right to shout at her, she says she cried not because of what he did to her but because she felt sorry for him. She says she feels happy when he shouts at her but, according to her, what doesn't make her happy is to see him sitting alone absorbed in thought. Besides, without having any reason to be afraid, she tells him that she is frightened and panicked and asks him to embrace her, to hold her tight for it is only under his embracing arms that she feels safe and secure. This is what makes Lulit a weak character, an irrational lover and a wife who entertains or enjoys pain to ensure the happiness and well-being of her husband. After all she should have known that his reason for marrying her is not because he loved her but to satisfy his family's interest and to gain material support from her.

Unfortunately, Lulit is mistreated not only by her husband but by the people around her, too. Abera's elder brother, Abate is skeptical about her loyalty to her husband and he doesn't think that she is an equal marriage partner because of her family background. Abera's feudal mother never believes that Lulit is a match for Abera. She is fond of teasing Lulit by sarcastically asking her about her family's background and whereabouts. Abera's friends', spearheaded by the notorious Gedlu, launch a malicious campaign against her.

What is worth mentioning here is that Abera is known for dating three or four girls a day and he is a frequent visitor to the prostitutes' house. Hailemariam is fond of enjoying sex with maid-servants and prostitutes. Abera's colleagues are highly obsessed with sex and they have a habit of gathering at their offices to gossip about sexual intercourses they enjoyed with women the previous day, the previous evening, the previous night etc. Abera's brother, Abate has made it a habit to marry young virgins every time. This being the truth, however, they all talk with exaggeration about

Lulit's sexual behaviour. When it is done by the men, it is tolerated but when it comes to women it becomes a surprise. This is, of course, a reflection of the prevalent chauvinistic views in a patriarchal society.

Although well-aware of his colleagues' intrigues and evil schemes, Abera easily falls victim to their malicious campaign. One day the rumor-monger Tesema tells Abera that Lulit is not a loyal wife and he goes to the extent of telling him that a certain person has seen her entering a room with someone at a hotel in Kotebe locality. While initially Abera seems to have rebuffed Tesema's information, in reality this fatal information begins to gradually penetrate deep Abera's mind. From the day he heard this information, his attitude towards the innocent Lulit changes. He starts to wonder over the manner of her dressing. He asks himself why she spends so much time to dress excitingly. He starts to easily glare with anger and Jealousy. He begins to interpret every word that comes out of her mouth negatively. His frustration reaches a dangerous level when one day he contemplates killing himself with a pistol. He even goes to the extent of feeling sorry for placing so much faith on Lulit.

It was one morning. As Abera was driving to take Lulit to her office, he tells her that the next day is his birthday. He drops Luit at her office and goes to his workplace to take his last salary as he had already submitted a resignation letter. After collecting his salary, he calls his wife to be told she is not in her office. He drives to her office, again, to be told by the guard that she has just left with a man driving a 1959 model black Opel. As he was fuming with jealousy and suspicion he even fails to remember that his long-time and cherished friend, Hailemariam drives the same car. As soon as he gets the information that Lulit has left with a man, what easily comes to Abera's mind is the hotel at Kotebe. Without wasting time, Abera drives fast to Kotebe and by mere coincidence he finds a 1959 model black Opel parked at the hotel compound. After locating where the owner of the car is put, he breaks into the room and shoots to death a complete stranger woman.

Abera gives himself up to the police and subsequent to the crime so many tragedies happen. His mother dies of sudden shock and his brother kills himself after killing Hailemariam whom he consistently accused of being responsible for 'Abera's unconventional behaviour. Lulit suffers from distress. At first, she decides not to see Abera again thinking that the accident has happened during a squabble over a woman. But when she realizes that this is not the case, she excuses him.

Though too late, Abera regrets terribly when he learns that the man who took Lulit from her office was his best friend, Hailemariam. That deadly morning, Lulit has asked Hailemariam to give her a ride to buy Abera paint brushes as his birthday present. In fact, since she was short of money she had to sell her gold necklace in order to buy Abera the paint brushes.

Abera is given a three-year term imprisonment and having forgiven him for what he did, Lulit goes to the prison to meet him. After an emotional meeting, Lulit expresses her determination to wait for him until his release. But he disagrees to her suggestion and tells her that she is free to lead her own life. Then she presents him the paint brushes and departs leaving him behind. Abera collects the paint brushes and goes back to his prison cell as a person who can see light at the end of the tunnel. According to the narrator:

ወደመህን ቤት የተመለሰው የድሮው አበራ ሳይሆን ሌላ ከመህን ቤቱ አድማስ ባሻገር የሚመለከት አበራ ነው። ምክንያቱም፤ አዲስ ህይወትና የመኖር አላማ ይህ ነበር የተመለሰው። ሌሊት ያመጣችለትን የሰአለ መሳሪያዎች ስጦታ ከፍቶ እጁ እየተነቀጠቀጠ አንድ ባንድ ተመለከታቸው። (185)

It was not the same Abera who returned to the prison booth, but another Abera who could see beyond the horizon of the prison. It is so because it was with a new life and a new objective to live that he returned. With shivering hands, he opened the (bundle of) of presentation of painting tools Lulit brought him and observed them one by one.

The obvious implication here is that, as there is nothing that will distract him now from his work, Abera will succeed in achieving his long time

cherished dream. In a sense, by setting Lulit free to lead her own life, he is also setting himself free to focus on his artistic work. What is worth noting here is that Lulit's contribution is significant to Abera's likely success. Her presentation of the paint brushes represents her support and serves as a source of inspiration for Abera to see behind the horizon. Nevertheless no explanation is given as to what Lulit's fate would be.

From the foregoing discussions, what conclusions can we draw regarding the portrayal of Lulit? From the feminist critics point of view, was she portrayed as a weak or strong character? Was she portrayed as an intelligent, a serious and responsible woman or as a passive and irrational one?

In recapitulation we can say that Lulit is initially portrayed as proud, assertive and aggressive woman who is determined to avenge the suffering that she went through in the hands of men. However, after her marriage, in a complete turn around, she becomes a sensual and irrational lover and a selfless and devoted wife. She is depicted as a woman who wishes to be proud not on account of her success but on her husband's achievement. By her husband she is seen as a woman who is preoccupied with petty issues and who lacks knowledge and intelligence to engage him in serious discussions. Judging from the feminist critics' point of view, she is portrayed as an irrational lover, unreasonably selfless, weak, dependent and timid who seeks her husband's protection to feel safe and secure.

CHAPTER FOUR

A Comparative Analysis of the Novels

In this chapter, the women characters discussed earlier are compared and contrasted in view of their educational profile, physical appearance and personality traits, their attitude towards marriage and the role they are made to play. But before taking up these points, we first analyze the chauvinistic stereotypes exhibited in the novels under discussion.

4.1. Reflections of Chauvinistic Views in the Novels

Generally speaking Negash's *Setegna Adari* and Hiruy's *Yelib Hassab* have less remarks and sayings that stereotype women as compared to Afework's *Tobyia* and Bealu's *Kadmas Bashager*. In Hiruy's *Yelib Hassab* sayings or remarks that misrepresent women are almost non-existent while in Negash's *Setegna Adari*, there are rare biased sayings in favour of the male sex. As discussed in 3.1 and 3.4 of chapter III, one finds several comments and remarks in Afework's and Bealu's novels that demonstrate men's superiority over women.

For instance, Afework's *Tobyia* is replete with stereotypes that attribute passivity, dependence, cowardice and weakness to women and gallantry, intelligence and endurance to men. Written many years after the publication of *Tobyia*, *Kadmas Bashager* also contains several pejorative stereotypes about women. In both the novels, such distorted images of women are reflected by the characters, both men and women, and the narrators themselves.

What is worth noting here is that despite the expansion of modern education and the assumed introduction of modern ideas with it, it seems that the authors' biased view towards women has not changed much. This can be attested by the existence of numerous denigrating remarks against women in *Kadmas Bashager*, a novel written as recent as in 1970.

4.2. Physical Appearance and Personality Traits of the Characters

የወንድ ልጅ ሃብቱ ልብ-ገጥሴት ልጅ ሃብቷ ውበቷ

The wealth of a man is his bravery while that of the woman is her beauty.

Such gender stereotypes seem to have heavily influenced the portrayals of the female characters of the four writers. Though the characters discussed may vary in the degree of the descriptions of their beauty, they are all portrayed as beautiful, charming, slender and young.

As discussed in 3.1, Afework's Tobya is described as exceptionally beautiful. Her eyes are compared with the morning star, her lips with the blooming roses, and her teeth with the glistening snow and her waist with that of the bee. Besides, her legs, her fingers and her neck are described in detail as extraordinarily beautiful. Her physical appearance and agreeable behaviour are compared with that of the angel. It is her extreme beauty accompanied by her piety and sweet personality that compels the powerful Muslim king to abandon his religion to marry her.

Though the physical appearance of Hiruy's Tsion Mogessa is not described in detail as that of Tobya, she is generally depicted as beautiful and attractive. She is appreciated by the narrator; her would be husband, Birhane, her neighbours and relatives for her charm, beauty, for the good manner of her talking, for the righteousness of her actions and the sharpness of her mind. These are the positive qualities that motivate Birhane to seek her hand.

Likewise, Negash's Enanu is described as pretty, slim and tall. She has a short nose, a good-looking round face, snow-white teeth, and big eyes. Her eye-catching tits, bosom, legs and buttocks make her a center of attraction. As a prostitute and as a sex object, it is her physical attractiveness coupled with her decent behavior that gives her a competitive advantage over her

colleagues. As discussed in 3.3.3, she says, it is her physical appearance including her protruding breasts, buttocks, attractive chest and legs that make men hunger for her and women envy her.

Just like the other characters, the physical appearance of Bealu's Lulit is given in great detail. She is depicted as an attractive young woman with magnificent bodily feature. She has a slender waist, a short forehead, a melodious voice, large radiant eyes, a straight nose, a long neck, attractive bosom and lips that resembled like a blossoming flower. These are the attributes, together with her fascinating ornaments that enable her to bait men and avenge her suffering by the male sex.

In view of the feminists, the primary concern of men to be loved and appreciated by women is not as such their beauty but rather their courage, their physical strength, their ability to think rationally, their responsibility to care for the family as bread earners, their concern for the progress of arts and their heroic deeds. For instance, in her eulogistic poem, Afework's *Toby* praises the Muslim king not for his beauty but for his heroism, the enormity of his power and his kindness. Negash's *Enanu* says she hates a man who acts like a woman. For her, a physically strong and muscular man is desirable. Bealu's *Abera* can be bald with teeth discolored by smoking; and yet women do swarm around him. Lulit takes pride not in his beauty but in his determination to tend to his natural call and in his physical strength. Whenever she feels frightened, she asks him to embrace her and to hold her tight with his strong arms so that she feels safe and secure.

Thus, it is because of their physical desirability that the female characters are able to allure lovers, husbands, admirers and public attention. In other words, for a woman to succeed in life she must be beautiful and attractive. In this connection, as discussed in 2.1.1, the liberal feminist, Wollstonecraft (1985:153) says, "women are plunged by the prevailing opinion that they were created rather to feel than reason, and that all the power they obtain may be obtained by their charms and weaknesses."

4.3. Prevalent Attitudes towards Marriage

As discussed earlier, Wollstonecraft(1985: 83) underlines, “ strength of body and mind are sacrificed to libertine notions of beauty, to the desire of establishing themselves—the only way women can rise in the world—by marriage.” Likewise, in almost all instances not education or participation in social or political activities but marriage that seems to be the ultimate desire and goal of the female characters being discussed in this paper. Almost all the characters yearn for marriage to achieve final satisfactions and success. For instance, Tobya’s success is achieved through marriage to the king. The king’s cousin expresses her wish to abandon her royal privileges and even reduce herself to a maid-servant to ensure her marriage to Wahid.

Similarly, Hiruy’s Tsion Mogessa achieves final satisfaction from her marriage to the young man, Birhane. Negash’s Enanu suffers through out her life for falling out of marriage. Even after her broken marriage, she wishes to remarry though no one wants to marry a prostitute. Bealu’s Lulit, though after staying single for a long time, she finally swallows her pride to ask Abera to marry her. After her marriage, when misunderstandings crop up between her and Abera, she leaves no stone unturned to save her marriage from braking although to no avail.

But even to achieve happiness by marriage the women need to have not only beauty but also devoutness, self-sacrifice, ability to bear children and compliance with socially accepted norms of behaviour. While women who possess these qualities are rewarded with marriage others who lacked them are doomed to destitution. Besides, the sole purpose of marriage being procreation, those who are unable to beget children are also cursed and estranged. Let's substantiate what has been said with some examples.

Afework's Tobya is given the privilege of being an instrument through marriage for the conversation of the Muslim king and his followers to

Christianity because of her beauty, chastity, faithfulness and selflessness. Similarly, because of her beauty, devoutness and trust in God, Hiruy's Tsion Mogessa is prized with marriage to the young man, Berhane and later blessed with four children. These two young ladies have unwavering trust in God for they believe that human lives and their actions are completely governed and pre-determined by Him. For them their protector and guardian is God and Only God.

As a prostitute and a sex object, Negash's Enanu is able to attract men because of her physical desirability. But she is not blessed with a happy marital life probably for 'falling' out of marriage and for engaging in a profession that is detested by the society. Many of her customers ask her why she fails to lead a happy marital life instead of working as a prostitute. Paradoxically, none of them believes that a prostitute can qualify to be a wife for she has tarnished her name by failing to observe social norms and values. Others such as the first wife of Tsion Mogessa's father are doomed to humiliation for being barren, adulterous, for their lack of fear of God and failure to respect and adore their husbands.

The fate of Bealu's Lulit doesn't either seem to be much different from Negash's Enanu. Being a beautiful young woman, she is able to attract many adorers and lovers. However, because of her promiscuous and aggressive behaviour she is unable to lead a happy marital life despite her relentless effort to achieve it.

The conclusion that we can draw from the above discussions is that women who conform to the values and norms of the society are rewarded with marriage and social acceptance while the 'rebels' fall prey to human gossip and ultimately to be unsympathetically disregarded to become human 'garbage's' just like Enanu. The estrangement of a prostitute is so severe to the extent that even some people felt that the son of a prostitute should not be given a burial ground at the Christian Church Cemetery.

Having discussed this, next we will consider the educational profile of the female characters discussed in the four novels.

4.4. Educational Profile of the Characters

As discussed in chapter II, feminists and more particularly liberal feminists believe that sound education and proper trainings play a key role in developing women's rational and critical thinking, in strengthening their ability to act independently, in power sharing and in defying the mystification by which they are hoodwinked into accepting a subjugated status. The liberal feminists' emphasis that women's mind need to be enlarged and strengthened through education so that there will be an end to women's dependence and blind obedience. With this in mind, we tried to analyze and compare the educational background of the female characters being discussed in this paper.

To begin with, no information is given about *Toby*'s educational background. But we do know that she has some kind of education for we see her writing an excellent letter to the Muslim king. If her strong faith in Christianity and her knowledge of religious terminologies are any indications, it can be assumed that she has attended some kind of church education. It is difficult to surmise that she has pursued modern education because, according to a brochure by the Ministry of Education, Menelik School, the first ever modern school in Ethiopia, came into existence in 1900, the year during which *Toby* was published.

Unlike that of *Toby*, the educational background of Hiruy's Tsion Mogessa is clearly stated. According to the narrator, she has learned reading, writing, reading the Psalm and received training in handicraft. Unlike her predecessors, Enanu has pursued modern education though she dropped out after completing sixth grade. Of all the three characters, Bealu's Lulit, has the highest educational status. However, unlike the men of her contemporaries such as Abera and Hailemariam who are MA degree holders,

she has only a diploma in secretarial science from the Commercial School of Addis Ababa.

What we can see from the above information is that all, except Lulit, have low level educational status. Despite this, however, Tobbya and Tsion Mogessa are portrayed as intelligent, firm and relatively purpose oriented women. Enanu, notwithstanding her low level academic background, manages to develop, to a certain extent, her power of thinking and understanding things through observation and listening. Paradoxically, Lulit's college level education doesn't seem to have helped her much to develop her rational thinking. The possible explanations for the above inconsistencies seem to have been caused due to the authors' objective in writing their respective novels. For instance, Tobbya's portrayal is highly charged with religious values probably because of Afework's high esteem for Christianity. She is highly idealized and as such she is portrayed as larger-than-life character who says and does things that are likely to be considered as impossible by critical readers.

The exemplification of Hiruy's novel being about marriage and proper child upbringing, Tsion Megossa, as the author's mouth piece, was made to have an in-depth knowledge about the danger of early marriage and the benefits of learning reading and writing. Likewise, Negash's aim in writing his novel being to discourage women from becoming prostitutes, his character is made to conduct serious talks with her customers about the evils of prostitution by intermittently using high-sounding English words. Thus, in the first three novels—*Tobbya*, *Yelib Hassab* and *Setegna Adari*, especially in the first two novels — what we see is heavy authorial presence in what the characters say and do.

On the other hand, Lulit's inability to live up to her educational background seems to have been emanated from the author's view towards women. It seems that, for the author, irrespective of their education, women are inherently weak both mentally and physically. This is evidenced by the

manner in which Lulit is portrayed and by the various disparaging remarks that abound his novel. For example, as discussed earlier, for Hailemariam women are irrational who think instinctively. For the narrator, women are dependent on men even for their daily bread and for Abera, Lulit is only good for massaging his back and satisfying his sexual desire.

Thus, what we gather from our discussions is that in all the novels we find characters only of low academic status.

4.5. Gender Roles

In all the four novels, women are presented in their traditional roles. In other words men are associated with the public sphere while women with the domestic sphere. Especially after marriage, women are portrayed mainly as loyal and obedient wives, child and home care takers and sex objects. This can be supported with the following examples.

After his marriage to the king's cousin, Wahid, being a man, is given a high government post while Tobbya and the king's cousin were made to assume their biological and traditional task of delivering and rearing children.

Hiruy's Tsion Mogessa opts to learn writing, reading and handicraft instead of cooking, grinding flour and preparing *tej* and *tella*. However, after her marriage her husband takes charge of the public sphere while she assumes household duties which include cooking, brewing *tej* and *tella* and nursing children. Similarly, her two sons were made to follow the steps of their father while her two daughters were confined to the house to help their mother in the routine household work.

Negash's Enanu has changed her roles many times. First, she was a housewife for three years. Next, with her second husband, she assumes a three-faceted role--a 'wife', a maid-servant and a sex object. When she starts work at the *tej* house and the bar at Wube Bereha, she assumes the complex

role of a waitress, entertainer and a prostitute. After begetting a child, she quits her job and as a devoted mother she begins the task of nursing her child.

Professionally, Bealu's Lulit is a secretary. But because of her determination to entice men into loving her, she turns out to be a sex object. After her marriage to Abera, she assumes the role of a wife and takes charge of the household activities in addition to her office work as a secretary. In fact nothing much is said about her profession. Rather than a secretary, she is very much known for her role as seductress and sensual lover.

Generally speaking, what we can conclude from our discussions is that all the women are beautiful, have low level academic background, aspire to achieve happiness from marriage, child bearing and child rearing and their sphere of activity is confined to the house.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

In the preceding four chapters, an attempt has been made to discuss the portrayals of major female characters in four Amharic novels published during the pre-Italian occupation, the post war period and the modern period. From our discussions, we can generally conclude that though there are women who are portrayed positively for religious, moralistic or other thematic purposes, others are depicted as weak, dependent, sex objects, as well as irrational and sensual lovers.

When we look at Afework's *Tobyä* (1908), though full of highly prejudiced views against women, the heroine and the two women are glorified for their piety, religious zeal, selflessness and kindness. But the Muslim king's cousin is depicted as naïve, dependent, weak, irrational and stupid creature whose main preoccupation is love and marriage. Such contrasting portrayals seem to imply that good qualities such as physical strength, courage, intelligence are granted only to the devout Christians and not to all women. In this line, Tobyä is endowed with the positive qualities merely because of her unflinching trust in God while the Muslim girl seems to have been denied these qualities because of her lack of faith in Christian values. Tobyä, because of her classic beauty and devoutness, succeeds in the conversion of the pagan king and his followers to Christianity.

Likewise, in Hiruy's *Yelib Hassab*, the devout Christian women are exalted while those who fail to respect God and their husbands are blamed and excommunicated. For instance, the first wife of Tsion Mogessa's father is divorced because of her unchristian deeds while his second wife, Tsion Megossa's mother, was glorified for her faith in God and respect for her husband. Similarly, her daughter, Tsion Mogessa is presented as firm, intelligent and far-sighted due to her unwavering trust in God and good -mannered behaviour.

In his novel, *Setegna Adari*, a novel written 56 and 33 years after the publication of *Tobaya* and *Yelib Hassab*, respectively, Negash presents us with a woman who is different from her predecessors in many respects. Unlike *Tobya* and *Tsion Mogessa*, *Enanu* lacks religious dedication. Besides, she becomes a prostitute, a profession abhorred by her society. The purpose of writing the story being to discourage others by demonstrating the ugly face of prostitution, she is made to commit a series of mistakes that make her fall irreversible. She strives to continue her education with the aim of securing a decent job but discontinues her education when she falls in love and begets an illegitimate child. She starts to save money with the objective of opening a hotel of her own but her effort again fails to bear fruit. As a result, though a victim of her society, for thematic purpose, she is made to bear the brunt of social evils.

In Bealu's *Kadmas Bashager*, a novel written 62 years after the publication of the first novel, *Tobya*, we are presented with an educated, sophisticated, assertive and aggressive young woman. First, she is portrayed as proud and aggressive woman who looks down upon men and who makes them suffer by tempting them to love her though without reciprocating their love. She is so confident and liberated that she even assumes the initiative to offer a marriage proposal to *Abera*. But her aggressiveness, assertiveness and conceit come to an end when she falls in love with the protagonist, *Abera*. After her marriage she turns out to be weak, dependent, selfless and an irrational lover. Suddenly, the once conceited and arrogant woman begins to feel insecure and becomes so timid that seeks *Abera's* protection even in situations where there is nothing to be afraid of. The message of this portrayal seems to be very clear—*Lulit* has initially tried to 'invade' the male territory. Thus, there was the need to make her know her 'real' place through love and marriage which requires being weak, dependent and placing her husband before herself.

When we further try to look at the similarities and differences of attitude towards women during the three periods, what we find is that during the pre-Italian occupation (1908-1935) women are expected to be physically beautiful, virtuous and pure. Chastity, loyalty, devoutness, righteous of action, respect of norms are highly valued. In this regard, Tobya and Tsion Mogessa are highly glorified and idealized for possessing such qualities.

In *Setegna Adari* (1964), a novel written during the post war period, we find a woman who is entirely different from Afework's Tobya and Hiruy's Tsion Mogessa. She is different from these highly glorified and idealized women in that she lacks their classic attributes. Unlike them, she is described as weak and 'impure' for her being a prostitute. As revealed in *Kadmas Bashager* (1970), a novel written during the modern period, the attitude towards women is highly prejudiced as reflected in the portrayal of the central character, Lulit. In this novel, women are essentially looked at as irrational, weak and as mere sex objects.

Finally, the finding of this paper is that, chauvinistic stereotypes are heavily reflected in the portrayals of the female characters discussed in all the four novels, written during the three periods. Women are portrayed merely in their biological and primordial roles. They are depicted mainly as mothers, wives, mistress and sex objects. Even if glorified as strong, virtuous, intelligent and independent for religious or other thematic purposes, their ultimate fate is to be loyal, obedient and selfless lovers, wives and mothers. Other than in the house sphere, we don't see them taking part in any social or political activities. The purpose of marriage is solely procreation and if they fail to live up to this social expectation they will face open condemnation. Women are expected to adhere to socially accepted norms and values but if they happen to depart from these expectations, their destiny is to fall prey to gossips and disparaging remarks or to suffer from utter poverty and destitution just like Enanu and Lulit.

Thus, educated, self-reliant, rational and liberated women who participate in all spheres of life have not been portrayed in the four novels discussed.

Thus, since the finding of this paper indicates that women are still misrepresented in the four novels discussed, further studies need to be taken to find out if there is any change in the portrayals of women in novels written after 1970.

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DECLARATION

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

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