

***ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY***

***INSTITUTE OF LANGUAGE STUDIES***

***DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES & LITERATURE***

***(GRADUATE PROGRAM)***

**Deconstructive Discourse of Content as Reflected in  
Haddis Alemayehu's *Fikir Eske Mekabir***

**Molla Feleke Desta**

**June, 2008**

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***By***

**Molla Feleke Desta**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Acknowledgements.....	I
Table of contents.....	II
Abstracts.....	IV
<b>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1. Background to the Study.....	1
1.2. Statement of the Problem.....	2
1.3. Objective of the Study.....	3
1.4. Scope of the Study.....	3
1.5. Methodology and Procedure of the Study .....	3
1.6. Significance of the Study.....	4
<b>CHAPTER TWO: A REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS.....</b>	<b>10</b>
3.1. Conceptual Issues of Deconstruction.....	10
3.1.1. Defining Deconstruction.....	12
3.1.2. The Terminology of Deconstruction.....	14
3.1.3. Deconstruction and Language.....	18
3.1.4. Deconstruction and Literature.....	22
3.1.5. Logocentrism and the Critique of Binary Oppositions.....	23
3.1.6. Structuralism and Deconstruction/Post-structuralism.....	26
3.2. Approaches to Deconstruction.....	28
3.2.1. Feminist Deconstruction.....	29
3.2.2. Religious Deconstruction.....	31
3.2.3. Psychoanalytic Deconstruction.....	33
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: DECONSTRUCTIVE DISCOURSE OF CONTENT REFLECTED IN</b> <b>HADDIS ALEMAYEHU'S <i>FIKIR ESKE MEKABIR</i>.....</b>	<b>36</b>
4.1. Synopsis of <i>Fikir Eske Mekabir</i> .....	36
4.2. Deconstructive Discourse of Content Reflected in <i>Fikir Eske Mekabir</i> .....	38

4.2.1. Mythical Deconstruction.....	38
4.2.1.1. Deconstructive Discourse of Culture over Nature.....	39
4.2.1.2. Deconstructive Discourse of Marriage over Culture.....	45
4.2.1.3. Deconstructive Discourse of Master over Servitor.....	52
4.2.2. Feminist Deconstruction.....	63
4.2.3. Religious Deconstruction .....	72
4.2.4. Psychoanalytic Deconstruction.....	76
4.2.4.1. Regression.....	76
4.2.4.2. Denial.....	77
4.2.4.3. Repression.....	79
4.2.4.4. Dream Displacement.....	80
4.2.4.5. Dream Condensation.....	81
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS.....</b>	<b>82</b>
Bibliography.....	86
Declaration	

## ABSTRACT

*Derrida's theory of Deconstruction is a continuation of a line of thinking started by Nietzsche and running through Martin Heidegger. It has been variously presented as a philosophical position, a political or intellectual strategy and a mode of reading. Deconstruction's line of thought is marked by a radical rejection of 'Platonism' or the framework of 'Philosophical distinctions' which is inherited from Plato and dominated European thought. Deconstruction is highly considered by students of literature and literary theory after Derrida's presentation of his thesis "Structure, Sign and Play in Discourse of Human Science. By this, Derrida "decenter" any absolute knowledge and the former intellectual cosmos. Therefore, the introduction part gives the highlights of the essence of the theory of deconstruction.*

*Chapter two deals with the basic conceptual issues of deconstruction from various perspectives and its application in literature other than philosophy. In the chapter binary oppositions are considered as a meaning generating units in a text. And, chapter three gives the practical deconstructive discourse of Haddis Alemayehu's 'Fikir Eske Mekabir'. Hence, the novel is employed as a deconstructive text and reveals the socio-economic and political realities of the feudo-bourgeois Ethiopia. The conclusion recapitulates the salient points discussed in the main part of the thesis.*

*Finally, based on the findings, Haddis is a deconstructionist writer and employs Derrida's philosophical and literary notion, deconstruction in his work of art 'Fikir Eske Mekabir'.*

# CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction

### *1.1. Background to the Study*

Reading literary texts can help us gain many experiences from all over the world. However, only reading literary texts cannot give sufficient ground for us to go through the texts critically and give us an opportunity to interpret them. With regard to this idea, Diyanni (1998:1989) suggests that to improve our interpretive skills of literary works, we need to go through “various critical perspectives” that literary critics use to analyze and interpret literary works. Moreover, it is known that world literature has come across with various theories, movements and approaches that lead us to analyze, interpret and evaluate literary works. The most common approaches to literary criticism are new criticism, formalist, Marxist, psychoanalytic, feminist, receptionist, structuralist and deconstruction. All the critical features take the autonomy of a literary text, reader oriented and referential models to treat and define the meaning of a text (Eagleton, 1983:24). Besides this, structuralism was becoming an influential theory of language in the late 1960s. With this basic ground of Structuralism, the French Philosopher, Jacques Derrida formulated a new theory called Deconstruction. It was not only drawn mainly from the works of Heidegger and his notion of *Destruktion* but also from Levinas and his ideas upon the other.

This theory is applicable to many disciplines beyond language and literature. Nevertheless, it is a particular kind of practice in reading and a method of criticism and mode of analytical inquiry. The domestication of manipulating any work of art with this theory is an open and intermediate entity (Eagleton, 1983: xxx vii). Moreover, Deconstruction’s central concern is not only a radical critique of the Enlightenment project and of Metaphysics, including in particular the founding texts by such philosophers as Plato, Rousseau and Husserl, but also other sorts of texts including literature. Deconstruction identifies in the Western philosophical tradition a “logocentrism” or “metaphysics of presence” which holds that speech - thought (the logos) is a privileged, ideal, and self- present entity, through which all discourse and meaning are derived. This logocentrism is the primary target of deconstruction. A central deconstructive argument holds that, in all the classic dualities of Western thought, one term is



privileged or “central” over the other. The privileged central term is the one most associated with *phallus* and *logos*. The best logos which are given by Derrida in Eagleton are *speech* over *writing*, *presence* over *absence*, *identity* over *difference*, *fullness* over *emptiness*, *mastery* over *submissiveness*, *feudal* over *tenant*, etc (1983:24). To Derrida these logocentrism (binary oppositions) are in a play of functional relationship to generate more meaning in the text (work of art).

Different works on the theoretical and critiques of deconstruction have initiated the study. Hence, the researcher humbly believes that Haddis Alemayhu’s novel *Fikir Eske Mekabir* lends itself to be analyzed as a deconstructive discourse. Therefore, special focus is to be given on the above novel by employing extracts that exemplify the theory at hand.

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

It is obvious that, Haddis Alemayehu is the known Ethiopian writer who has classic works of art. These classic works of art attract literary critics and researchers for analysis and further interpretations. To do so, literary critics need various literary theories and approaches to treat a work of art accordingly. Among these literary theories and approaches, ‘deconstruction’ is to be found as a tool for exposing, demystifying an existing practice present in the social activities, a concrete proposal of the verification of truth, knowledge, objectively held by most post modernist theoreticians. Based on this, deconstructionists agree that everything is a social construct and there is no any point in trying to distinguish between the natural and the merely cultural. Eagleton further says, “If there are no beliefs and values not bound up with power, then the term ideology threatens to expand and vanishing the point” (1983: 205). Therefore, the purpose in deconstructing a literary text is to see what the text can show us about the ideologies of which it is constructed (Tyson, 1999: 253). What is more important is that the preceding theories and approaches of literature argue that any pieces of writing or any signifying system has no origin and that authors merely inhibit a pre-existing system (*‘langue’*) that enables them to make any particular sentence story (*‘parole’*). In the literary works, the authors to unmask a prevailing ideology would describe cultural, political, biological, religious and other similar binary oppositions that emanate to and for the prevailing system. These things can help the researcher to pay a particular attention to the selected text. Therefore, this study deals with a deconstructive discourse of *Fikir Eske Mekabir*.

### ***1.3. Objective of the Study***

The general objective of the study is to investigate how *Fikir Eske Mekabir* is manipulated in deconstructive discourse by using the theoretical frameworks and critiques of deconstruction. Besides this, to show how the writer deconstructs the prevailing ideology or set of cultural assumptions are emphasized in identifying the logo-centric paradigms those are used to portray deconstruction. Moreover, the specific objectives of the study are:

- Identifying the various approaches and methods that are circumscribed to deconstruction.
- Analyzing the binary oppositions (logo-centrisms) that are found in the text based on the parameters of their cultural, religious, political, psychological, etc settings of the theory of deconstruction, as how they are to be expressed or revealed by the author.

### ***1.4. Scope of the Study***

This study will not treat the whole plot of *Fikir Eske Mekabir* as a literary work of art. Rather, it deals with the points, which are relevant to the theory of deconstruction by focusing on the texts that most reveal gaps, inconsistencies, or contradictions; and characters that are over personifying and or submissive to show the system in question. By taking binary oppositions portrayed by Haddis such as landlord over tenant, culture over nature, culture over religion, man over woman, etc; and the different ideological perspectives of the characters, how the system is deconstructed as one over the other, and those having a relevance with the theory are analyzed. Thus, the whole plot, theoretical and narrotological aspects of *Fikir Eske Mekabir* are not the concern of this study.

### ***1.5. Methodology and Procedure of the Study***

This thesis is based on a scrutiny of *Fikir Eske Mekabir* by applying deconstructive discourse as a method. It is divided into four chapters and a conclusion. In chapter one, the overall introduction of the thesis is scrutinized in order to provide the reader with the background, objective and scope of the study. In the second chapter, an attempt has been made to review researches that were conducted on the text at hand. In addition, in chapter three also an attempt has been made to bring light on the theoretical frameworks and notions of deconstruction. It is

hoped that this chapter will enable the reader to understand deconstruction better as poststructuralist literary theory, philosophical notion, its critical assumptions with respect to language, literature, etc.

In chapter four, *Fikir Eske Mekabir* is treated as a subject for analysis based on the theory of deconstruction. Here, different extracts are taken to examine how the author uses deconstruction focusing on different binary oppositions in the social, political, religious and moral spheres of the society. The extracts found in the study are from the Amharic original of *Fikir Eske Mekabir*. Therefore, the researcher has tried his best to make translations as close as possible to the original. In order to enable the Amharic- English readers for better understanding and appreciation of the author's work in the original, the quoted sources are included in the research as they are with their equivalent attempted translations in English. Besides this, proper nouns (names of characters, place names, etc) are written in the conventional English Alphabet so that it can help foreign readers. In the conclusion, the salient points of the study are raised and summarized with supplementary ideas from the researcher.

Furthermore, the researcher first investigates Haddis's novel, looking for relevant excerpts that can fit themselves to the manifestation and depiction of binary oppositions in the cultural, political, religious, and psychological ...elements that suffice to the theory of deconstruction. These excerpts are then being selected to show how the text is interpreted and analyzed. Following a thorough discussion of deconstruction, the relationship between various pragmatic paradigms and their significance difference are analyzed and investigated in the main part of the research.

### ***1.6. Significance of the Study***

The researcher believes that the study can be useful in:

- Familiarizing deconstruction as a literary theory and generating meanings differently.
- Encouraging literary critics to differentiate deconstruction from other literary theories.
- Encouraging literary scholars, psychologists, anthropologists, sociologists, etc. to create or strengthen the relationship between “*deconstruction*” and other

disciplines for better understanding the author's feelings and his symbolic expressions implied and used in the selected work of art.

- Deciphering the hidden insights that are inscribed in the selected text.
- Serving interested researchers as a scaffold for more elaborate studies.

## CHAPTER TWO

### A Review of Related Literature

#### 2.1. A Review of Research Works

Literary researches conducted on *Fikir Eske Mekabir* so far by taking one literary theory as a means of scrutinizing the hidden insights of the novel are scanty. Nevertheless, a number of senior Essays (both in **DELL\*** and in **DFLL\***), M.A Theses, and PhD Dissertations have been made since its publication. Most of these researches tried to deal with the different aspects of this work of art. Among these aspects, thematic analysis, narrative techniques used, language used, figures of speech used, characterization, conflict, setting, etc, and comparative study with other Ethiopian novelists are some of them; and are the major topics of these researches. Since these researches are too many and do not have a direct relevance to this study, the researcher does not include all of the researches conducted by using *Fikir Eske Mekabir* as a source material. Nevertheless, by considering their relevance for literary researches in the future and by giving value to them, the researcher has reviewed those researches conducted at the postgraduate level. These research works are as follows:

As far as the access of reading of the researcher is concerned, the first research that was conducted on *Fikir Eske Mekabir* was Assefa Aregahegne's M. A. Thesis. In his thesis entitled, "*The Origin and Development of Amharic Literature*" (1981\*), Assefa presented the overall historical and critical accounts of the origin and development of Amharic literature in general in respect to different genres. With respect to *Fikir Eske Mekabir*, Assefa concludes that *Fikir Eske Mekabir* is a work of remarkable artistic merit; its harmony of settings, characters, its manipulation of literary techniques, apart from its social significance, will always secure a special place for it in the world of Amharic literature (1981:37).

The second researcher who has done his literary research on Haddis's works is Zerihun Asfaw (1983). Zerihun's M.A.Thesis "*Literary Styles of Haddis Alemayehu and Bealu Girma*" is mainly based on the literary styles of Haddis.

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\* **DFLL**: Department of Foreign Languages and Literature \* **DELL**: Department of Ethiopian Languages and literature  
\*(1981). The Years written here after are in accordance with Gregorian calendar

In the style of Haddis, Zerihun has used the stylistic devices used by the novelist such as figures of speech, syntactical features and diction. He thinks that these stylistic devices are appropriate and effective for the writer's purpose. In the work, Zerihun proposes that the stylistic selection of Haddis are geared towards giving the sought effectiveness which brings to the fore his ideas, messages, values and his cast of mind. In addition, "the style discloses vigorously the lives of the characters and their roles in the society in which they exist" (1983:10). At last, he concludes that the readability and the grace of Haddis's novels in general *Fikir Eske Mekabir* in particular is gained by his creative utilization of the resources of his language and the stylistic devices he has chosen.

Fikre Tolossa (1983) in his PhD Dissertation entitled "*Realism and Amharic Literature (1908-1981)*", did his research on Amharic literature by implementing the literary trend 'realism'. In his work, he has seen some Amharic novels by taking 'realism' as a parameter. Among the fifteen authors of Ethiopia examined in the research, Haddis has given more emphasis especially to "the first realist novel" (1983:183), *Fikir Eske Mekabir*.

Fikre used "truthful details" as parameters to reveal 'realism' in the novels he has chosen. However, he does not seem to be aware of the binary oppositions of these works of art as a means to generate more meaning for 'realism'. In his research work, Fikre says the following about Haddis and his novel *Fikir Eske Mekabir*.

1. Haddis Alemayehu has managed to expose the most important contradictions of feudal Ethiopia by employing different techniques in writing his novel.
2. Haddis Alemayehu's predecessors tell us that their heroes and heroines fall in love at the first sight where as Haddis does not tell us about his hero and heroine are in love but rather show that they are indeed in love, which develops gradually from day to day.
3. *Fikir Eske Mekabir* demonstrates a certain degree of plot innovation in Amharic novel.
4. The language of Haddis Alemayehu has its own unique features; it is free from foreign expressions and is full of life and vigor. At last, Fikre thinks that Haddis is an objective idealist (1983:183-207).

Taye Assefa (1986) in his PhD Dissertation examined ten Amharic novels by giving a chapter to each. He tried to demonstrate the strengths and the weaknesses of these novels by focusing on the characterization, narrative structure and nature of narrators. In the seventh chapter of

his work, he presented the details of *Fikir Eske Mekabir* and stated the following main issues about it.

1. *Fikir Eske Mekabir* is a very popular novel that presents a panoramic picture of traditional Ethiopian society with a prophetic vision of change and a defiant voice that speaks out against feudal despotism, exploitation and ignorance (1986:142).
2. It is a loosely structured work that is wanting in design.
3. The central action of the novel revolves around the love relationship between Bezabih and Seble Wengiel.
4. *Fikir Eske Mekabir* has a densely populated social world. As its characters are drawn from various lifestyles, it presents a wide cross-section of the Ethiopian society of early twentieth century (Ibid, 150).

In his M.A.Thesis entitled “*Haddis Alemayehu as a Social Critic*”, Tsegaye Hailu (1987), takes Haddis as a social critic. Tsegaye studied Haddis’s reaction to his “socio-political milieu” and his extent of criticism in the social, political and religious affairs. In doing so, Tsegaye provides a useful analysis of the points undertaken for consideration. However, everything is seen from the author’s perspective while he was analyzing. In addition, he seems unaware of the contradictions and the oppositions in the work that are used to portray the social system of feudalism. Tsegaye’s work is worthwhile for the present research in identifying the critical points in each social system that will be considered as a meaning generating unit of binary oppositions.

The other research work is Wondwosen Adane’s (1998) M. A. Thesis. In the thesis, he considered Kassa Damtie (*Gudu Kassa*) as the ‘Christ-figure’, an almost ‘God-sent figure’, and ‘symbolic messiah’ resulting from an incarnation design sketched by the author’s use of language and effective manipulation of “religious imaginary”(1998:89). According to Wondwosen, Kassa is considered as the ‘Christ-figure’ because he has a Christ-like commitment and endurance symbolizing man’s trap and freedom. Wondwosen examined that, the ‘Christ-figure’ (Kassa Damtie) is depicted as a social critic and rejected reformer. Moreover, the portrayals of Kassa Damtie in such a way by subverting the existing social order of the feudal system are analyzed for the sake of depicting him as ‘Christ-figure’.

However, the subversive functions of portraying Kassa in his everyday lifestyles are useful for this research to emanate meaning through binary oppositions, inconsistencies and differences.

Therefore, an attempt has been made to review researches conducted previously. No research has ever been made on the topic at hand. Hence, this research attempts to fill the gap by applying deconstruction theory as a parameter of detecting the selected work of art.



## CHAPTER THREE

### Theoretical Frameworks

#### 3.1. *Conceptual Issues of Deconstruction*

The term, 'deconstruction' was coined by the contemporary French philosopher Jacques Derrida in the 1960s (Tyson, 1999:241). In contemporary philosophy and social science, the term 'deconstruction' denotes a process by which the texts and language of (particularly) Western philosophy appear to shift and complicate in meaning when read in light of the assumptions they suggest about and absences they reveal within themselves.

However, the term 'deconstruction' in the context of Western philosophy is highly resistant to formal and operational definition. This is because, "many students and faculty alike continue to misperceive deconstruction as a superficial analysis of word play that destroys our appreciation of literature and our ability to interpret it meaningfully (Tyson, 1996:241). Moreover, the other reason why deconstruction is frequently misunderstood is the fact that the writing by some of the famous names in the field such as Jacques Derrida, Luce Irigaray, Geoffrey Hartman, etc, as well as the explanations offered by those who attempt to summarize the work of these thinkers, frequently employ "unusual language and organizational principles that they seem to defy our understanding and acceptance" (Ibid: 241). Because of these conceptions, deconstructive reading was proved to be an opposition to the critical tradition that destroys our appreciation of literature. However, the upshot of deconstruction is not a destroyed literary or philosophical work. In her book the *Critical Difference*, Barbara Johnson (1980:5) argues that:

*Deconstruction is not synonymous with 'destruction'.... It is in fact much closer to the original meaning of the word 'analysis' itself, which etymologically means to 'undo' - a virtual synonym for 'to de-construct'. The deconstruction of a text does not proceed by random doubt or arbitrary subversion, but by the careful teasing out of warring forces of signification within the text itself. If any thing is destroyed in deconstructive reading, it is not the text, but the claim to unequivocal domination of one mode of signifying over another. A deconstructive reading is reading which analyses the specificity of a text's critical difference from itself.*

As stated above, deconstruction is not properly speaking synonym for 'destruction', rather it is a specific kind of analytical 'reading'. In addition to lack of complete grasp or understanding of the term 'deconstruction', the other reason that many literary scholars have resisted to

define the term succinctly is a fear. The fear is because by defining the term one will be restricting or narrowing down the scope of deconstruction. Nevertheless, deconstruction seems to be boundless and pluralistic in its nature. Due to this, many pages have been devoted to attempts to define deconstruction or to demonstrate why attempts at delimitation are misconceived. Because of this, there was a great deal of confusion as to what kind of thing deconstruction is. That is, whether deconstruction is a school of thought, a method of reading, or some other textual event.

When asked what deconstruction is, Derrida once stated, “I have no simple and formalizable response to this question. All my essays are attempts to have it out with this formidable question” (1985:4). Besides this, Derrida (1983a:7) gives the following on the undefinability of deconstruction:

*All sentences of the type ‘deconstruction is X’ or ‘deconstruction is not X’, a priori, miss the point... one of the principal things at stake in what is called in my texts, ‘deconstruction’, is precisely the delimiting of ontology and above all of the third person present indicative: S is P.*

Moreover, Derrida’s philosophical and literary criticism known as ‘deconstruction’ is sometimes called Post-structuralist; because “it employs concepts developed by Ferdinand de Saussure, and the Structuralist Semiotics based primarily on Saussure, in order to undermine the grounds both of Saussure’s system and of the Structuralism itself”(Abrams, 1981:38). Furthermore, deconstruction is called so, not only because “it emerged in the wake of structuralism’s popularity” but also because “it constitutes a reaction against structuralism’s orderly vision of language and human experience” (Tyson, 1999:250). Here, what Derrida derives from structuralism (Saussure’s view in particular) “is that both the spoken and written elements (*signifiers*) and the meanings (the *signifieds*) of a language owe their identity, not to their own positive or objective features, but to their differences from other speech-sounds, written marks, or conceptual significations”(Abrams,1981:39). Nevertheless, deconstruction undermines the grounds of structuralist interpretation and invites us instead to read any writing ‘creatively’ as play of systemic ‘differences’, which generate innumerable possibilities of meaning (Abrams,1981:150), rather than preconceived or rigid formulation. Moreover, Wolfreys and Baker on their part expressed that: “poststructuralist tends to work from the view that the object-text can be constructed in an almost infinite number of ways, none of

which is more faithful to the text itself than any other. In other words, where the structuralist was concerned with structure, the post structuralist is concerned with structuration, or the ways in which the text is constructed by criticism” (1996:59). This change goes hand in hand with the idea that a critical work should not maintain any pretence to objectivity, but must become more honest about its own role in projecting structure on the literary work. Therefore, we can deduce that post structuralism has no defined or single set of rules but a complex of responses to certain conditions which the component of that structure experiences.

### ***3.1.1 Defining Deconstruction***

In addition to what has been said in the above section, part of the difficulty in defining deconstruction arises from the fact that deconstruction cannot escape itself. Followers of Derrida and critics who are influenced by deconstruction such as J. Hillis Miller, Geoffrey Hartman, Barbara Johnson, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Paul de Man, etc do not view deconstruction as a concept standing out side of text, which can act upon all text without itself being affected. The act of defining in this view is an attempt to “finish” or “complete” deconstruction, yet deconstruction is never viewed as complete (Atkins, 1985:2). Nevertheless, the above theorists and practitioners define deconstruction in a variety of ways. Among the various definitions, J. Hillis Miller’s (1976:341) is the one. He asserts:

*Deconstruction as a mode of interpretation works by a careful and circumspect entering of each textual labyrinth....The deconstructive critic seeks to find, by this process of retracing, the elements in the system studied which is a logical, the thread in the text in question which will unravel it all, or the loose stone which will pull down the whole building. The deconstruction, rather, annihilates the ground on which the building stands by showing that the text has already annihilated that ground, knowingly or unknowingly. Deconstruction is not dismantling of the structure of a text but demonstration that it has already dismantled itself.*

In addition to this, J. Hillis Miller asserts against the charge that deconstruction is “nihilism or denial of meaning in literary texts “that it is” an attempt to interpret as exactly as possible the oscillations in meaning produced by the irreducibly figurative nature of language” (1979:13). Here Miller’s conclusion is that any literary text, as a ceaseless play of “irreconcilable” or “contradictory” meanings is “indeterminable” or “undecidable” hence that “all reading is misreading”(Abrams,1981:40).

The other most popular definition of deconstruction is by Paul de Man, who explained, “It’s possible, within text, to frame questions or to undo assertions made in the text, by meaning of elements which are in the text, which frequently would be precisely structures that play off the rhetorical against grammatical elements” (de Man, in Moynihan, 1986:156). Thus, viewed in this way, the term “deconstruction refers in the first instance to the way in which the ‘accidental’ features of a text can be seen as betraying, subverting, its purportedly ‘essential’ message” (Rorty, 1995: 8). The word ‘accidental’ is usually here in the sense of incidental. Moreover, Barbara Johnson characterizes deconstruction as “the careful teasing out of warring forces of signification with in the text” (1980:5). These given definitions are consonant with Jonathan Culler’s, that is “To deconstruct a discourse is to show how it undermines the philosophy it asserts, or the hierarchical oppositions on which it relies, by identifying in the text the rhetorical operations that produce the supposed ground of argument, the key concept or premise” (1982:86-87). According to Derrida, “deconstruction is not an enclosure in nothingness, but an openness to the other” (1984:124), and an attempt “to discover the non-place or non-lieu which would be that ‘other’ of philosophy” (Ibid, 112). Thus, meaning is “out there”, but Western Metaphysics cannot locate it, because text gets in the way.

According to Abrams, “Deconstruction is applied to a mode of reading texts which subverts the implicit claim of a text to possess adequate grounds, in the system of language that it deploys, to establish its own structure, unity, and determinate meanings” (1981:38). All the above definitions given by different scholars implicitly or explicitly agree that deconstruction refutes the conventional idea of the straightforward referentiality of language as it accepts the complex and finally equivocal play of signifiers that constitutes language (Atkins, 1985:2). However, many definitions portray deconstruction as a method, project, or school of thought. For example, the philosopher David B. Allison (an early translator of Derrida) stated:

*[Deconstruction] signifies a project of critical thought whose task is to locate and ‘take part’ those concepts, which serve as axioms or rules for a period of thought, those concepts which command the unfolding of an entire epoch of metaphysics. ‘Deconstruction’ is somewhat less negative than the Heideggerian or Nietzschean terms ‘destruction’ or ‘reversal’; it suggests that certain foundational concepts of metaphysics will never be entirely eliminated.... There is no simple ‘over coming’ of metaphysics or the language of metaphysics. (Introduction by Allison, in Derrida, 1972: xxx, n.1).*

Although deconstruction is misconceived by many people and is highly resistant to formal definitions in the context of Western philosophy, as the result of the above given definitions, it is becoming a useful tool for many of us who consider ourselves as lovers of literature. This is not only as readers but also as writers and in illuminating for us the interrelationships of reading and writing (Atkins, 1985:3). Besides this, deconstruction has a great contribution for helping us to understand literature very well. Concerning this Lois Tyson (1999:241) stated the following:

*...it can improve our ability to think critically and to see more readily the ways in which our experience is determined by ideologies of which we are unaware because they are “built into” our language. And because deconstruction offers these advantages, it can be a very useful tool for Marxism, feminism and other theories that attempt to make us aware of the oppressive role ideology can play in our lives.*

This shows that deconstruction helps us to understand the hidden ideology, which determines our experience. To understand how deconstruction helps us to reveal the hidden ideology of a literary work, first we had better understand deconstruction's view of language. This is mainly because, according to the pioneering of the field, Jacques Derrida, “language is not the reliable tool of communication we believe it to be, but rather fluid, ambiguous domain of complex experience in which ideologies program us without our being aware of them”(Derrida in Tyson, 1999:241-242). Therefore, the operational definition of deconstruction is a mode of textual analysis that can reveal hidden ideological assumptions, seeks to expose deep-seated contradictions in a work for meaning generation and questions hierarchical thinking in which one term is privileged over another (eg.culture over nature, man over women, etc).

### ***3.1.2. The Terminology of Deconstruction***

Deconstruction makes use of a number of terms, many of which are coined or repurposed that illustrate or follow the process of deconstruction. Among these words are *différance*, *trace*, *écriture*, *supplement*, *hymen*, *pharmakon*, *slippage*, *marge*, *entame*, *parergon*, *aporia*, *metaphysics of presence*, and *same* are some of them (Derrida, 1981:43).

***1. Différance*** –It is a French neologism coined by Jacques Derrida and homophonous with the word “difference”. *Différance* plays on the fact that the French word *différer* means both “to defer” and “to differ”. Derrida first articulated the thought of *différance* in his discussion on

Edmund Husserl in *Speech and Phenomena*. This was then elaborated in various other words, notably in his essay “Différance” and in various interviews collected in *Positions* (Allison, 1973:5).

In the essay, “*Différance*” Derrida indicates that *différance* gestures at a number of heterogeneous features, which govern the production of textual meaning. The first (relating to deferral) is the notion that words and signs can never fully summon forth what they mean but can only be defined through appeal to additional words from which they differ. Thus, meaning is forever “deferred” or postponed through an endless chain of signifiers. The second (relating to difference, sometimes referred to as *espacement* or “spacing”) concerns the force that differentiates elements from another and, in so doing, engenders binary oppositions and hierarchies, which underpin meaning itself.

According to Derrida, Différance itself is “neither a word, nor a concept,” nor a thing (Bass, 1982:7). Words and concepts /theories are themselves *different* from other words or concepts and this difference gives their meaning. Despite the transcendental overtones of this statement as indicating, a condition of possibility of meaning, but to Derrida *différance* is not transcendental. It is, as Derrida has remarked in *Glas*, a “quasi- transcendental” concept, as insofar as the difference between words both endanger meaning and forever defer meaning, *différance* serves as both the condition of possibility or impossibility of meaning. (Gasche, 1986:317). (Taken from <http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/deconstruction.html>).

**2. Trace-** The idea of *différance* also correlates with the idea of *trace*. A trace is what a sign differs or defers from. It is the absent part of the sign’s presence. In other words through the act of *différance*, a sign leaves behind a *trace*, which is what ever is left over after everything *present* has been accounted for. According to Derrida, “the trace itself does not exist” (1976:167), because it is self-effacing. That is “in presenting it self, it becomes effaced” (Ibid, 125). Because all signifiers viewed as *present* in Western thought will necessarily contain traces of other (absent) signifiers, the signifiers can be neither wholly present or wholly absent.

**3. Écriture** - In deconstruction, the word *écriture* (usually translated as *writing* in English) is appropriated to refer not just to systems of graphic communication, but also to all systems inhabited by *différance*. A related term, called *archi-écriture*, refers to the positive side of

writing, or writing as an ultimate principle, rather than as a derivative of *logos* (speech). In other words, whereas the Western *logos* encompasses writing, it is equally valid to view *archi-écriture* as encompassing the *logos*, and therefore speech can be thought of as a form of writing: writing on air waves, or on the memory of the listener or recording device, but there is no fundamental dominance at work. This, as described above, is an element of Derrida's criticism against phallogocentrism in general. Generally, Derrida's terminology *écriture* refers that, there is no reality without writing.

#### **4. Supplement, Originary Lack and Invagination**

The word *supplement* is taken from the philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau, who defined it as "an inessential extra added to something complete in itself". According to Derrida, Western thinking is characterized by "logic of supplementation" which is actually two apparently contradictory ideas. From one perspective, a supplement to enhance the presence of something which is already complete and self-sufficient. Thus, writing is the supplement of speech, Eve was the supplement of Adam, and masturbation is the supplement of "natural sex". Nevertheless, simultaneously, according to Derrida, the Western idea of the supplement has within it the idea that a thing that has a *supplement* cannot be truly "complete in itself". If it were complete without the supplement, it should not need, or long-for, the supplement. The fact that a thing can be added-to to make it even more "present" or "whole" means that there is a hole (which Derrida called an *originary lack*) and the supplement can fit that hole. The metaphorical opening of this "hole" Derrida called *invagination*. From this perspective, the supplement does not enhance something's presence, but rather underscores its absence. (From Wikipedia- definition of Supplement).

Thus, what really happens during supplementation is that something appears from one perspective to be whole, complete, and self-sufficient, with the supplement acting as an *external* appendage. However, from another perspective, the supplement also fills a hole within the *interior* of the original "something". Therefore, the supplement represents indeterminacy between externality and interiority.

**5. Hymen-** The word *hymen* refers to the interplay between inside and outside. The hymen is the membrane of intersection where it becomes impossible to distinguish whether the membrane is on the inside or the outside. In addition, in the absence of the hymen (as in, once

the hymen is penetrated), the distinction between inside and outside disappears. Thus, in a way, the hymen is neither inside nor outside, and both inside and outside. (From wikipedia-the free Encyclopedia).

**6. *Pharmakon***- The word *pharmakon* refers to the play between cure and poison. It derives from the ancient Greek word used by Plato in *Phaedrus* and *Phaedo*, which had an undecidable meaning that could be understood as anything ranging from a drug, recipe, spell, medicine or poison.

**7. *Aporia***- A term used by deconstructionists to describe the point of impasse or undecidability to which reading a text necessarily gives rise. Because all texts undo or dismantle the philosophical system to which they adhere by revealing its rhetorical nature, all texts are riven by indeterminacies, and the clash between the referential or literal and the rhetorical or figural levels of discourse inevitably produces aporia. The reader is thereby left in the double bind of trying to master a self-subverting text. (<http://www.library.utoronto.ca/utel/glossary/Aporia.html>)

**8. *Grammatology***- Is the science of writing. Derrida proposes to move beyond traditional models of writing that describe its history and evaluation to develop a theory of writing, to apply that theory and to move in the direction of a new writing. The difficulty in doing so is the result of the relationship between writing and metaphysics.

**9. *The Metaphysics of Presence***- The assumption is that the physical presence of a speaker authenticates his speech. Speaking would then precede writing (the sign of a sign), since the writer is not present at the reading of his text to authenticate it. Spoken language is assumed to be directly related to thought, writing a supplement to spoken language, standing in for it. This is the result of phonocentrism the valorization of speech over writing.

**10. *Logocentrism***- It is the belief that knowledge is rooted in a primeval language (now lost) given by God to humans. God (or some other transcendental signifier: the Idea, the Great Spirit, the Self, etc ;) acts a foundation for all our thought, language and action. He is the truth whose manifestation is the world. He is the foundation for the binaries by which we think: God/Man, spiritual/physical, man/woman, and good/evil. The first term of the binary is valorized, and a chain of binaries constitutes a hierarchy.



**11. Binary Oppositions-** The hierarchical relation of elements that results from logocentrism. Derrida is interested more in the margins, the supplements, than in the centre. (Taken from <http://130.179.92.25/Amason DE/Backmaterials.html>).

### **3.1.3. Deconstruction and Language**

In our daily communication, most of us are quite sure that language is a reliable and stable means of communicating our feelings, thoughts and wishes. This implies that we can communicate what we want to communicate by using an everyday pattern through language without having any difficulty. If we have faced difficulties of understanding what is said or written, we assume that the fault is in ourselves not in the language. In contrast, deconstruction's view of language is that, it is an unstable, unreliable and ambiguous tool of communication and much more slippery than we realize (Tyson, 1999:242). Furthermore, while discussing deconstructionists view of language Robert Diyanni (1998:1920) states the following:

*Deconstructionist critics operate on the premise that language is irretrievably self-contradictory and self-destroying. They argue that since language is unstable, it cannot be controlled by writers. As a result, literary works mean more than their authors are aware of, and their meanings are as unstable as the language of which they are constructed.*

To illustrate this view of language, let us employ examples taken from Tyson (1999:242-243). The famous example is the sentence "*Time flies like an arrow*", which is an old saying, meaning time passes quickly.

*Time*    *flies*    *like an arrow* = Time passes quickly  
(Noun) (Verb) (Adv. Clause)

However, what would happen if we thought of the first word of the sentence as a verb in the imperative mode telling us to do something and the second word as if it represents a kind of insect? Then, the sentence giving us an order:

*Time*    *flies*    *like an arrow* = get out your stopwatch and time the speed of flies as  
(Verb) (Obj.) (adv.clause)    you would time an arrow's flight.

And what would happen if we thought of the first two words of the sentence as if they represent a kind of insect- *timeflies* ( think of fruitflies)- and the third word as if it were a form of the verb to like? Then, the sentence would tell us something about the emotional life of a certain kind of insect:

*Timeflies*    *like*    *an arrow* = Time flies are fond of arrow (or a least of one particular  
(Noun)    (Verb)    (Obj.)        arrow).

These examples show us how a single sentence could be ambiguous in its meaning without changing a word. In addition to this, “changes in tone of voice and emphasis can reveal the slippery quality of language” (Tyson, 1999:243). To make the idea clear, let us take an example and see how the meaning of the given sentence changes as we shift the tone of voice and emphasis from one word to another. The sentence is “I didn’t say he stole the money.” Now let us see the difference in meaning by emphasizing different words in the sentence. In the following sentences, the word that typed in bold is given more emphasis than other words in each sentence.

1. **I** did not say he stole the money. (Implying that “I am not the person who said so.”)
2. I did not say **he** stole the money. (Implying that “I didn’t say he is the person who stole the money.”)
3. I did not **say** he stole the money. (Implying that “I didn’t communicate this message through speaking.”)
4. I did not say he **stole** the money. (Implying that “I didn’t say he stole the money, what I said is he borrowed it.”)

From the above sentences, the differences in meaning that exists without changing a single word of a particular sentence, one can deduce that language is unstable and ambiguous means of communication. This leads us to Robert Diyanni’s view of discussing deconstructive critics’ argument concerning language while analyzing a text. He states this, “Through a careful analysis of a text’s language, deconstructive critics unravel the text by pointing to places where it is ambivalent, contradictory, or otherwise ambiguous” (1998:1919). This idea again leads us to a more complicated view of language from deconstructionists’ perspective. That is the deconstructive discourse of form. Although, it is not the main concern of this study to deal on deconstructing form, let us see the basic critical views concerning the issue under discussion. Therefore, we can start the discussion by taking examples from Lois Tyson (1999:243-244). According to Tyson, Structuralists and Semioticians use the word *sign* to denote a basic element of communication, and they define *sign* as follows:

$$\begin{array}{l} \textit{Sign} = \textit{Signifier} \quad + \quad \textit{Signified} \\ \text{(Sound, image,} \quad \quad \quad \text{(concept to which the signifier refers)} \\ \text{gesture, etc)} \end{array}$$

Accordingly, if the *sign* is the word *rose*, then the signifier is the group of letters written or pronounced as a unit (“*rose*”), and the signified is the *rose* you picture in your mind. However, as stated by Tyson (1999:244), the kind of picture that is imagined may vary from person to person. Some people may picture “*red rose*” in reaction to the signifier “*rose*”. For these people the signifiers “*rose*” and “*red rose*” may produce the same signified because these people might always picture “*roses*” as “*red roses*”. From this, we can conclude that utterances are not as simple as the structuralist and semiotic formula *signifier* + *signified* seems to imply. As we have seen above, any given signifier can refer to any number of signifieds at any given moment (Ibid, 244). If we stopped at this point, we could rewrite the above formula as “*Sign*= *signifier* + *signified* ... + *signified*”, and then, it is just like taking communication as “sliding accumulation of signifieds” (Tyson, 1999:244). While giving further explanation on the above point, Tyson stated it by asking the question, “What does the term signified mean?”(Ibid, 244). If the signifier is “*tree*”, then the signified must be the tree in our imagination that we can picture. Here, “what we understand is that the imagined tree consists of all the chains of signifiers we have come to associate with it over the course of our lives” (Ibid, 244-245). Therefore, according to the given example, what comes to our mind because of the signifier “*tree*” might be shade, climbing, and the damage that we face by felling down from a tree, picnics and so on. Moreover, this idea leads us to the point that “what Structuralism and Semiotics call the signified is really always a chain of signifiers” (Tyson, 1999:245). Because of this, deconstructionists conclude that language only consists of a chain of signifiers but not a union of signifiers and signified.

On the other hand, Derrida coins the French term ‘*différance*’ based on a pun that the French language makes possible. The pun is possible because in French the word ‘*différer*’ can mean either to ‘differ’ or to ‘defer’ depending on context (Derrida in Webster, 1990:103). This is to mean that complete meaning is unachievable and meaning is always differed and postponed. This is because, “meaning seems reside in words (or in things) only when we distinguish their *difference* from other words (or things)” (Tyson, 1999:245). Besides this, “words are defined by other words so that we can never come to a point that is fully realized, non regressive meaning” (Webster, 1990:103).

To sum up, Derrida argues that language has two important characteristics from the deconstructionists' perspective. These are:

1. Its play of signifiers continually defers or postpones meaning.
2. The meaning it seems to imply is the result of the differences by which we distinguish one signifier from another (Derrida in Tyson, 1999:245). In addition, deconstructionists believe that, "How we see and understand ourselves and the world is thus governed by the language with which we are taught to see them; that is, language mediates our experience of ourselves and the world" (Tyson, 1999:246). This idea leads us to deconstructionists' argument that "language is wholly ideological". They argue so because, they believe that "language consists entirely of the numerous conflicting, dynamic ideologies or systems of beliefs and values-operating at any given point in time in any given culture" (Ibid, 246). To substantiate this idea, let us employ a local example. The example is a jocular anecdote from the Ethiopian context, which the researcher gathered previously. Though the researcher has no tangible evidence, it is highly probable as far as the beliefs and values of Ethiopians are concerned. The example is as follows:

Once when an attempt was made to introduce Condom as a birth control mechanism, a health officer goes to a certain rural area in Ethiopia. As soon as the health officer arrives at the locality, he calls a meeting and starts teaching the use of Condom in relation to controlling the spread of HIV/AIDS and unwanted pregnancy. While he is demonstrating how to use Condom to the people, he tells them Condom is something that you put on the male reproductive organ when having sexual intercourse. When he shows them in practice, he improvises it by putting the Condom on his thumb. After he teaches them in such a way, he leaves the locality by giving an appointment for about six months and by distributing Condoms to them. When the health officer comes back after six months based on his appointment, he finds that the pregnancy rate of women in the area had not changed. When he asks them why that is so. They tell him that the husbands put on the Condom on their thumbs just as he demonstrated to them while having sex.

This example clearly shows that, even though the peasants and the health officer speak the same language, they cannot understand each other. This is because, according to deconstructionists, language is completely ideological. That is, on the health officer's perspective sign language (putting the Condom on his thumb) can clearly transmit the message

by avoiding some taboo. Nevertheless, the peasants mistakenly assumed that putting the Condom on their thumb at the time of sexual intercourse has some kind of magic that can prevent pregnancy.

Therefore, from deconstructionists' perspective, one can conclude that, "language is constantly overflowing with implications, associations, and contradictions that reflect the implications, associations, and a contradiction of the ideologies of which it is formed" (Tyson, 1999:248).

### ***3.1.4 Deconstruction and Literature***

When we discuss the deconstructionists' view of language, we have said that language is dynamic, ambiguous and unstable tool of communication. Since literature is composed by language, it is a dynamic, ambiguous and unstable as language is in deconstructionists' viewpoint (Tyson, 1999:252). Therefore, it is difficult to give a specific meaning to literary works since "meaning is never in fact single or fixed, but constantly proliferating or shifting" (Webster, 1990:102). Tyson holds a similar view on this point. She says, "Meaning is not a stable element residing in the text for us to uncover or passively consume; rather it is something that is created by the reader while reading a text" (1999:252). Here, the meaning that is created by the reader in the act of reading would not be the exact meaning, because for deconstruction, "no interpretation has the final word". This is because, literary texts are composed by language and "consist of a multiplicity of overlapping, conflicting meanings in dynamic, fluid relation to one another and for us" (Ibid: 252).

Readers bring their assumptions and experiences when they create the meaning of a text as writers bring their ideology, culture and experience when they construct their texts. In relation to this, Robert DiYanni states that critics who used deconstruction as a critical method "would say that the text deconstructs itself, and that critics do not deconstruct the text... the text contradicts itself and thereby dismantle itself"(1998:1919). Moreover, Tyson (1999:252) suggests two main purposes in deconstructing a literary text. These are:

1. To reveal the text's "undecidability". This is to show that the "meaning" of the text is really an indefinite, undecidable, plural, conflicting array of possible meanings; therefore, the text has no meaning.

2. To reveal the complex nature of ideologies of which the text is constructed. Therefore, if these are the main purposes in deconstructing a literary text, the next step will be answering the question “How we are going to deconstruct a literary text?” To answer this question, Robert Didi-Hubert (1998:1921) gives a checklist of deconstructive critical questions that can be helpful in deconstructing a literary work. These critical questions are:
1. What oppositions exist in the work? Which of the two opposing terms of each pair is the privileged or more powerful term? How is this shown in the work?
  2. What textual elements (descriptive details, images, incidents, and passages) suggest a contradiction or alternative to the privileged or more powerful term?
  3. What is the prevailing ideology or set of cultural assumptions in the work? Where are these assumptions most evident?
  4. What passages of the work most reveal gaps, inconsistencies or contradictions?
  5. How stable is the text? How decidable is its meaning?

Therefore, during the analysis the researcher will try to deconstruct the wide-acclaimed text *Fikir Eske Mekabir* based on the above-mentioned paradigms of deconstruction and literature by answering some of the deconstructive critical questions.

### ***3.1.5. Logocentrism and the Critique of Binary Oppositions***

In chapter one, we have said that, deconstruction’s central concern is not only a radical critique of the Enlightenment project and the Metaphysics, including in particular the founding texts by such philosophers as Plato, Rousseau and Husserl but also other sorts of texts, including literature. Deconstruction identifies in the Western philosophical tradition a “logocentrism” or “metaphysics of presence” (sometimes known as *phallogocentrism*). In critical theory and deconstruction, *logocentrism* is a term coined by the German philosopher Ludwig Klages in the 1920s to refer to the perceived tendency of Western thought to locate the center of any text or discourse within the *logos* (a Greek word meaning word, reason, or spirit).

Jacques Derrida used the term to describe the bias of Western philosophy toward metaphysics of presence, an order of being, meaning, truth, reference, reason or logic conceived as independent of language. This is because, logocentrism is manifested in the works of Plato, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Ferdinand de Saussure, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and many other

philosophers of the Western tradition all of whom regard speech as superior to writing (believing writing only represents or archives speech), but who more generally wish to establish a foundational presence of logos or reason that is obtained an origin of all knowledge (e.g., God or the universe). As a result, this logocentrism is the primary target of deconstruction.

Furthermore, one typical form of deconstructive reading is the critique of binary oppositions or the criticism of dichotomous thought. The idea of the binary oppositions is an inherently structurally based concept based on the Western tendency to group into hierarchy. Based on this, Derrida borrowed and transformed structuralism's idea of polar opposites called *binary oppositions* to explore the specific ways in which our language determines our experience (Tyson, 1999:247). For example, according to structuralism, we understand the word 'good' by contrasting it with the word 'evil', 'reason' as the opposite of 'emotion', 'masculine' as the opposite of 'feminine', and so on.

However, Derrida noted that these binary oppositions are also little hierarchies (Derrida in Tyson, 1999:247). He also shows how one of the oppositional terms is always privileged, controlling and dominating the other. Based on this, Derrida further traces these hierarchically ordered binary oppositions and he radically questions the dominance of the privileged term by reversing the hierarchy. Here, the opposition remains intact, but the attention shifts from the dominant term to the dominated term from the center to the margin.

Moreover, a classic example of a binary opposition is the presence-absence dichotomy. As stated above, in much of Western thought including structuralism, distinguishing between presence and absence, viewed as polar opposites, is a fundamental element of thought in many cultures.

In addition, according to post-structuralist criticisms, presence occupies a position of dominance in Western thought over absence, because absence is traditionally seen as what you get when you take away presence. Here, had absence been dominant, presence might have most naturally been seen as what you get when you take away an absence. Because of this, a central deconstructive argument holds that, in all the classic dualities of Western thought, one term is privileged or "central" over the other. Several examples of this phenomenon are observed through the privileging of:

Speech over Writing	Lightness over Darkness
Presence over Absence	Life over Death
Fullness over Emptiness	Culture over Nature
Identity over Difference	Man over Woman
Meaning over Meaninglessness	Consciousness over Unconsciousness
Mastery over Submissiveness	

(From <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Logocentrism.html>)

Furthermore, a more concrete example that is drawn from one of Derrida's most famous works may help to clarify the typical manner in which deconstruction works. That is, in his book of *Of Grammatology* translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and published in English in 1976, Derrida offers one example of deconstruction applied to a theory of Lévi-Strauss. Following many other Western thinkers, Lévi-Strauss distinguished between "savage" societies lacking writing and "civilized" societies that have writing. This distinction implies that human beings developed verbal communication (speech) before some human cultures developed writing, and that speech is thus conceptually as well as chronologically prior to writing (thus speech would be more authentic, closer to truth and meaning, and more immediate than writing). Because of this, the structuralist anthropology of Claude Lévi-Strauss argued that such oppositions are found in all cultures, not only in Western culture, and thus in that the device of binary opposition was fundamental to meaning. This is because, structuralist analysis generally relies on the search for underlying binary oppositions as an explanatory device. Therefore, deconstruction challenges the explanatory value of these oppositions but does not seek to abolish them. Based on this, there are three moments to deconstruction, which may be mixed and simultaneous:

1. The revelation of an asymmetry in the binary opposition, suggesting an implied hierarchy.
2. The failure of the hierarchy: the two terms are found to fail in a certain case.
3. The third moment is the displacement of terms of the opposition, often in the emergence of a neologism or new meaning.

In addition, Derrida argued in his Book *Of Grammatology* (1967) that, in logocentrism the first term is classically conceived as original, authentic and superior, while the second term is thought of a secondary, derivative, "given" or even "parasitic". To overcome this logocentric



thinking, Derrida believed that we should think of ourselves as “rapport to the other”. That is, the “now” manifested as meaning through ourselves is always interconnected with various meanings throughout time. Therefore, Derrida argues, these binary oppositions, or “violent hierarchies”, and others of their form must be deconstructed. Due to this, Derrida privileged writing over speech (Norris, 1982:37-41).

### ***3.1.6. Structuralism and Deconstruction/Post-Structuralism***

Structuralism is a movement of thought in the human science, widespread in Europe, which affects a number of fields of knowledge and inquiry such as Philosophy, Anthropology, Linguistics, History, Sociology and Literary Criticism (Cudden, 1991:922). As an intellectual movement, structuralism is most readily associated with the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss. Structuralism examined cultural phenomena according to the underlying formal systems out of which those phenomena naturally spring. That is, both language and culture acquire meaning only insofar as they participate in a complex pool of structural relations. As a result of this, structuralism is appealing to some critics because it adds a scientific objectivity to the realm of literary studies. This scientific objectivity is achieved by subordinating “*parole*” (representing utterance, a particular use of individual units of *langue*) to “*langue*” (representing a language as a whole), actual usage is abandoned in favor of studying the structure of a system in the abstract (Ibid, 923).

Thus, structuralist readings ignore the specificity of actual texts. Besides, the individuality of the text disappears in favor of looking at patterns, systems and structures. Due to this, structuralism argues that any piece of writing, or any signifying system, has no origin, and that authors merely inhabit pre-existing structures(*langue*) that enable them to make any particular sentence(or story) any *parole*.

Generally, the structuralist model argues:

1. The structure of language itself produces “reality” that we can think only through language, and therefore our perceptions of reality are all framed by and determined by the structure of language.
2. The source of meaning is not an individual’s experience or being, but the sets of oppositions and operations, the signs and grammars that govern language. Meaning does not come from individuals, but from the system, that governs what any individual can do with it.

Hence, “language speaks us”, rather than we speak the language. We do not originate language; rather we inhabit a structure that enables us to speak. Therefore, every text, and every sentence we speak or write is made up of the “already written”.

3. Structuralism places the structure at the center, rather than seeing the individual as the center of meaning. It is the structure that originates or produces meaning, not the individual self. Language in particular is the center of self and meaning.

Owing to this, when structuralism was reaching its apex as an influential theory of language in the late 1960s, post-structuralism/deconstruction emerged in France as a movement critiquing structuralism. The prefix “post” refers to the fact that many contributors such as Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault and Julia Kristiva rejected structuralism and became critical of it. In direct contrast to structuralism’s claims of an independent signifier, superior to the signified, post-structuralism views the signifier and the signified as inseparable but not united. According to Eagleton, post-structuralism is “a shift from seeing the poem or novel as a closed entity, equipped with definite meanings which it is the critic’s task to decipher, to seeing literature as irreducibly plural, an endless play of signifiers which can never be finally nailed down to a single center, essence or meaning”(1983:120).

The two key figures in the early post-structuralist movement were Jacques Derrida and Roland Barthes. Especially, Derrida’s paper entitled “*Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences*”, presented to the International Colloquium at John Hopkins University in 1966, proved particularly influential in the creation of post-structuralism. Derrida argued against, in the essence, the notion of a knowable center (the Western ideal of logocentrism), a structure that could organize the differential play of language or thought but somehow remain immune to the same “play” it depicts (Abrams, 1981:258-259). As stated in section 3.1.5, Derrida borrowed and transformed structuralisms binary oppositions to show the specific ways in which language determines our experience. However, he argued that language is inherently unstable and fraught with ambiguity and “slippage”, with the result that meaning is indeterminate.

Nevertheless, the most pertinent difference between structuralism and post-structuralism is in the attitude to the binary oppositions as the basis of meaning or a structural principle for narrative. On this point, Wolfreys and Baker (1996:59) state the following:

*Structuralist linguists perhaps overstated the importance of the binary opposition as a meaning generating unit, while narratologists were sometimes obsessive about the structural role of opposites in narrative. The post-structuralist critic often shares this obsession but tends to view the opposition as an unstable basis for meaning and as a place where value and hidden ideologies are inscribed... the post- structuralist narratologist sees the binary opposition above all as a hierarchy, or as a kind of violence, rather than an innocent dyad, often as the source of aporia or doubt, rather than a stable basis of intelligibility.*

While discussing the same issue, Robert Diyanni (1998:1919) states as follows:

*Deconstruction differs from structuralism, however, in describing at once both a pair of equally valid conflicting oppositions, and in identifying a prevailing ideology that needs to be subverted, undermined, challenged, or otherwise called into question- an ideological view, for example, that suggests that one race or gender is superior to an other, or a conviction that the poor are happy with their lot.*

Therefore, structuralism and post- structuralism/deconstruction are different in taking account the meaning generating units (binary oppositions in particular) in a literary text. Perhaps, the aim of deconstructive analysis is “to demonstrate the instability of language in texts, thereby revealing how a text’s conflicting forces inevitably destroy its apparently logical or meaningful structure and how its apparently clear meaning splits into contradictory, incompatible, and ultimately undecidable possibilities”(Diyanni,1998:1920).

### ***3.2. Approaches to Deconstruction***

As stated in section 3.1, there is a great deal of confusion as to what kind of thing deconstruction is. The confusion is mainly to know whether it is a school of thought, or a method of reading. However, it is more inclined as a method of reading and forming a sustainable meaning. According to Barbara Johnson (1980:5), deconstruction is a specific kind of analytical “reading”. In a sense, deconstruction is simply a way to read text; any deconstruction has a text as its object and subject. This accounts for deconstruction’s broad cross-disciplinary scope. Hence, deconstruction has been applied to literature, art, architecture, science, mathematics, philosophy, psychology, law and any other disciplines that can be thought of as involving the act of marking. This broad cross-disciplinary nature of deconstruction lends itself to many approaches that help to generate meaning from binary oppositions as a method of applying deconstruction. Among these, the most common

approaches that contribute to generate meaning through differences in a literary work are feminism, religion, psychoanalysis, archetypal criticism, Marxism, and so on.

### ***3.2.1. Feminist Deconstruction***

Feminist literary critics approach a work of art emphatically by focusing on the cultural, social, political and economic influence of women. Thus, the main concern of feminists is the marginalization of women, the male monopoly in positions of economic, political and social power as well as the under-representation of the contribution of women. Based on this common ground of feminism, Tyson broadly defines feminist criticism as a criticism that “examines the ways in which literature (and other cultural production) reinforce or undermine the economic, political, social, and psychological oppression of women” (1999:81).

Because of this, feminist critics argue that women are marginalized and oppressed in every lifestyle that involves them. Moreover, this marginalization and oppression of women are associated with patriarchy. According to feminist critics, patriarchy is a system that enables men to dominate women in all social affairs. In short, patriarchy can be defined as “any culture that privileges male by promoting traditional gender roles” (Tyson, 1999:83). These traditional gender roles “cast men as rational, strong, protective, and decisive; they cast women as emotional (irrational), weak, nurturing and submissive” (Ibid, 83). Because of this, feminist critics find patriarchy hard to swallow for it undermines the place of women in the society. They believe that it is centered on men as if the world is created for men only. To illustrate this Lois Tyson stated that “Patriarchy continually exerts forces that undermine women’s self-confidence and assertiveness, then points to the absence of these qualities as proof that women are naturally, and therefore correctly, self effacing and submissive” (1999:85). Therefore, patriarchy is a systematic marginalization of women so that they would abide by the prescribed rules of male and male-dominated society. Thus, the patriarchal representations of women as submissive, powerless, selfless, irrational, etc creature by traditional Western philosophy and the reliance on phallogocentric thinking by educational, political, legal and business institutions reveals that feminism consists of “phallogocentrism” or “patriarchal sympathies” in response to particular textual features (Elam, 1994:16). Pushing this point further, Derrida argues for some feminists by saying “Well, there you have it - it is patriarchal and phallogocentric” (Derrida in Elam, 1994:17). Based on this, Derrida concedes,

“There is a strong link between ...deconstruction and feminine studies, women’s studies” (1987:196). Besides this, Elam states that “there is a sense in which feminism already “is” deconstruction and deconstruction “is” already feminism; and yet, with this regard, they also do not collapse into one another and eliminate their differences”(1994:19). Moreover, the main thing here is, how can the relationship between deconstruction and feminism best be characterized? Besides, what is the most effective way to understand their interaction, their disciplinary crossing? For these, different answers could have been implicitly supplied in a variety of discussions of feminism and deconstruction. Thus, it is worthwhile to go over the general ways in which they line up (Elam, 1994:19). Mary Poovey makes this position clear when she claims that deconstruction “has provided and continues to offer an essential tool for feminist analysis” (Poovey, 1988:61). She believes that the tool of deconstruction can perform three tasks to feminism:

1. Deconstructive strategies could enable “feminists to write a history of the various contradictions within institutional definitions of woman that would show how these contradictions have opened the possibility for change”.
2. Deconstruction can “challenge hierarchical and binary oppositional logic”.
3. Deconstruction offers the idea of the “in-between which constitutes one tool for dismantling binary thinking”. (Poovey, 1988:58-59). As far as Poovey is concerned, feminism simply uses deconstruction to dismantle binary opposition and therefore perform a “project of demystification” (Ibid, 58).

Therefore, the central argument of feminist deconstruction goes beyond the boundaries of literary criticism at subverting the established traditional gender roles in a patriarchal society. This is because, as stated above, a patriarchal society relay on phallogocentric thinking by promoting traditional gender roles which “cast men as rational, strong, protective, and decisive; they cast women as irrational, weak, nurturing, and submissive”(Tyson,1999:83).In addition, the French feminist H el ene Cixous has contributed the following binary oppositions in her book *La Jenue N ee*. (Cixous in Jefferson & Robey, 1982 :210-211).These are:

- Activity/Passivity
- Culture/Nature
- Day/Night
- Father/Mother

- Head/Emotions
- Intelligible/Sensible
- Logos/Pathos

Furthermore, Cixous said that, “these binary oppositions are heavily imbricated in the patriarchal value system: each opposition can be analyzed as a hierarchy where the ‘feminine’ side is always seen as the negative, powerless instance” (Ibid, 211). Because of this, Cixous passionately denounces such equation of femininity with passivity and death as leaving no positive space for women. That is, either woman is passive or she does not exist (Cixous, 1975:118). Hence, Cixous’s whole theoretical project can be summed up as the effort to undo the logocentric of Western thought, which is broadly inspired by Jacques Derrida. She tried to proclaim “women as the source of life, power and energy and to hail the advent of a new feminine language which ceaselessly subverts these patriarchal binary schemes where logocentrism colludes with pallocentrism in an effort to oppress and silence women” (Jefferson & Robey, 1982:211).

### ***3.2.2. Religious Deconstruction***

Religious deconstruction is a concept that enables the deconstruction of religion as a spiritual subsystem of society and its integrating social function. Moreover, the deconstruction of religion means “destruction of complete system representation as such giving to religion irrational, fragmentary, inconsistent character” (Nikiforova, 2005:270). Nevertheless, it does not mean “a complete refusal of religion as such” (Ibid, 270). In addition, the deconstruction of religion does not mean, “it is atheism, which itself is a phenomenon of belief and also requires a deconstruction” (Ibid, 270). Furthermore, those that take a deconstructive approach to religion identify closely with the work of Jacques Derrida. Derrida saw the God of negative theology as a crude precursor to deconstruction’s central concept of *différance*. However, the God of negative theology is qualitatively different from the idea of *différance* because the God of negative theology functions as an ultimate higher reality where *différance* does not.

Prior to *différance*, all Western conceptual schemes relied on one form or another of a ‘*transcendental signifier*’. A ‘*transcendental signifier*’ is any metaphysical, hierarchical, principle that presumes to determine which constructions of signifiers are “natural” or “proper”. Examples of transcendental signifiers include Truth, Allah, Reason, Being, and various political ideologies. *Différance* is an alternative to and escape from the logic of the

transcendental signifier. Moreover, John D. Caputo has indicated, “différance is not God” and that “God of negative theology is a transcendental ulteriority while “différance” is a quasi-transcendental anteriority” (1997:2-3). However, negative theology and différance are kindred spirits insofar as they both desire what is absent, impossible and incalculable. Besides this, John D. Caputo has a distinctive approach to religious deconstruction that he calls ‘weak theology’. According to Caputo, the distinctive reinterpetive act of weak theology has resulted in the notion of the weakness of God. The paradigm of God as an overwhelming physical or metaphysical force is regarded as mistaken. The old God-of-power is displaced with the idea of God as an unconditional claim without force. As a claim without force, the God of weak theology does not physically or metaphysically intervene in nature.

In addition to this, the other religious deconstructionist was the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. Among all of Nietzsche’s works, ‘God is dead’ is a widely quoted and sometimes misconstrued statement as far as religious deconstruction is concerned. The idea is stated in “*The Madman*” as follows:

*God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood of us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it? (Nietzsche, *the Gay Science*, Section 125, Trans. Walter Kaufmann).*

Nietzsche puts the statement “God is dead” in to the mouth of a “madman” in *The Gay Science* as stated above. “God is dead” is not meant literally, as in “God is now physically dead”, rather, it is Nietzsche’s way of saying that the idea of God is no longer capable of acting as a source of any moral code or theology. The death of God is a way of saying that humans are no longer able to believe in any such cosmic order since they themselves no longer recognize it. Nietzsche says the death of God will lead not only to the rejection of a belief of cosmic or physical order but also to a rejection of absolute values themselves- (to the rejection of belief in an objective and universal normal, binding upon all individuals). In this manner, the loss of an absolute basis for morality leads to nihilism. This nihilism is what Nietzsche worked to find a solution for by re-evaluating the foundations of human values. This meant, to Nietzsche, looking for foundations that went deeper than Christian values. He would find a

basis in the “Will to Power” that he described as the “essence of reality”. Nietzsche believed that the majority of people did not recognize (or refused to acknowledge) this death out of the deepest-seated fear. Therefore, people will despair and nihilism would become rampant. This is partly why Nietzsche saw Christianity as nihilistic.

Moreover, Nietzsche believed that there could be positive possibilities for humans without God. Relinquishing the belief in God opens the way for human creative abilities to fully develop. The Christian God, he wrote, would no longer stand in the way, so human beings might stop turning their eyes toward a supernatural realm and begin to acknowledge the value of this world. Besides, the most important aspect of Nietzsche’s picture of human psychology arises in the “Will to Power”, which Nietzsche at points claims as the motivation that underlies all human behavior. Due to this, Nietzsche argues that the “Will to Power” provides a more useful and general explanation of human behavior. In Nietzsche’s “Will to Power” the central concept relies on the binaries between God and nature(man) in general and on good over bad, moral over immoral, religion over nature, man over woman in particular.

### ***3.2.3. Psychoanalytic Deconstruction***

Psychoanalysis was developed in Vienna Austria in the 1890s by Sigmund Freud as a therapeutic method for treating mental disorders by investigating the interaction of conscious and unconscious elements in the patient’s mind and bringing repressed fears and conflicts into the conscious mind by using techniques (Jefferson & Robey, 1982:145). According to Freud, much of our behavior is determined by unconscious thoughts, wishes, and memories and so on. Moreover, most of our thoughts and ideas are totally inaccessible at that moment (pre-conscious) or are totally inaccessible (unconscious). These unconscious thoughts and ideas can become conscious using special techniques such as free association, dream interpretation and transference.

Moreover, to apply psychoanalytic theory in literary criticism, certain well-known presuppositions have become the hallmark of the psychoanalytic reading of the work of art. According to Jefferson and Robey (1982:146), these are:

1. The work of literature was seen as “analogous to fantasy and treated as a system of a particular writer”.
2. The literary character was “treated as if he were a living being within the fantasy, with a complex of his own”.



3. Interpretation of symbols based on Freud “is applied to language wholesale, as if it were a given and rigid code”.

However, the reason why it is appropriate for “psychoanalysis to speak about literature is that it has something to say about language” (Ibid, 145). That is, it is out of the dialogue between patient and analyst that the therapy proceeds, the diagnostic material being largely linguistic. That is why, Freud’s “original insight centered upon the determining force of the unconscious aspect of utterance which revealed that mechanisms working in dreams, puns and slips of the tongue can be shown to be analogous to certain mental and linguistic processes” (Jefferson & Robey, 1982: 145). Based on this, psychoanalysis is the deconstruction of consciousness. Hence, psychoanalysis implicitly seeks to invert the hierarchies of Western philosophy and metaphysics. It does so by inverting the very hierarchies of consciousness from which that philosophy and that metaphysics sprang forth. Therefore, the theoretical immanence/emanance psychoanalysis not only made deconstruction possible, but made it necessary. In addition, the framework of literary criticism showed psychoanalysis a means to access the unconscious by way of the text; the necessary finitude and incompleteness of psychoanalysis showed literary criticism the woeful inadequacy of its confrontation with the text. Deconstruction inhabits both halves of this chiasmic reversal and shows that there is no way to the unconscious but the text, and no path through the text that does not lead to the unconscious (Wright, 1988:146).

Furthermore, Jacques Derrida incorporated certain aspects of psychoanalytic theory into his practice of deconstruction in order to question what he called ‘metaphysics of presence’ or ‘self-presence’. For Derrida, this was the defining trait of traditional metaphysics namely its assumption that the meaning of utterances can be pinned down and made fully evident to consciousness. Here, Freud influences Derrida. For instance, Freud’s insistence, in the first chapter of *The Ego and the Id* and those philosophers will recoil from his theory of unconscious is clearly forbear to Derrida’s understanding of metaphysical ‘self-presence’. However, Derrida goes on to turn certain of these practices against Freud himself. That is, according to Derrida’s typical manner to reveal tensions and contradictions in Freud’s work which are nonetheless the very conditions upon which it can operate. That is, its simultaneous conditions of possibility and impossibility. For instance, although Freud will define religion and metaphysics as a displacement of the identification with the father in the resolution of the Oedipal complex (e.g. in the *Ego and the Id*), Derrida will insist (e.g. in *The Postcard*) that the

prominence of the father in Freud's own analysis is at the same time indebted to and an example of the prominence given to the father in Western metaphysics and theology since Plato. Thus, Derrida understands Freud as remaining partly within the theologico-metaphysical tradition ('phallogocentrism') which Freud nonetheless criticizes.

However, the purpose of Derrida's analysis is not to refute Freud, but rather to reveal an aporia (undecidability) at the very heart of Freud's project. Such a 'deconstruction' or (indeed psychoanalysis) of Freud does tend to cast doubt upon the possibility of delimiting psychoanalysis as a rigorous science. Hence, proponents of deconstruction have denounced psychoanalysis as a phallogocentric. Thus, the practice of analysis is not an independent process; rather, there must be a need to emanate meaning against the principles of domination, with in language, with in discourse by displacing the binary oppositions. The dominant binary oppositions in psychoanalytic deconstruction are consciousness over unconsciousness, cultural patterns over natural patterns, selfness over otherness, etc. In addition to these binary oppositions, the psychoanalytic principles established by Sigmund Freud can be useful for generating meaning during analysis. Some of these principles are defense mechanisms such as repression, denial, selective perception, avoidance, and displacement, fear of intimacy; and dream and dream symbols (Tyson, 1999:17-19).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Deconstructive Discourse of Content as Reflected in Haddis Alemayehu's

#### *Fikir Eske Mekabir*

##### 4.1. Synopsis of *Fikir Eske Mekabir*

*Fikir Eske Mekabir* (Love unto Crypt), which was published in 1966 (1958 E.C), is one of the most popular works in the history of Amharic Literature. It is a great novel as far as the narratological concepts and the stylistic devices used are concerned. This is because, Haddis has selected and used different narratological concepts and stylistic devices artistically that give effectiveness to his work. He also managed to use the basic techniques of novel writing in his first novel *Fikir Eske Mekabir*. It is the only Ethiopian novel, which is published eleven times and distributed in a number of copies. It is also narrated to the public by the Ethiopian Radio in ten years interval beginning 1984(1976 E.C).

On the surface, the plot of *Fikir Eske Mekabir* is the love affair between Bezabih and Seble Wengiel whose love is obstructed by the suppressive and humiliating nature of feudalism in which they are living. However, Haddis wants to reveal and depict the “panoramic picture of traditional Ethiopian society” (Taye, 1983:142) during feudalism. Based on this, *Fikir Eske Mekabir* is the criticism of feudalism in social, economic and political aspects by exposing the suppressive, exploitative, ignorant, evil actions and deeds of feudal lords. It is not only criticizing the characteristics of the whole of feudal order but also gives “a prophetic vision of change” (Ibid, 142) which was seen after eight years of its publication. That is, as Abeje Belew took captive of the arrogant and contemptuous feudal lord, Fitawurari Meshesha without bloodshed; the Derg Officials did the same thing on his Majesty Haile Sillassie I. By that, feudalism ends in Ethiopia as a system.

The story of *Fikir Eske Mekabir* begins with the family background of the parents of the protagonist, Bezabih. His father, Bogale Mebratu has lost his parents in his childhood and grew up in poverty. Due to this, Bogale is leading his life by being a shepherd and hiring himself as a tenant farmer. As the result of this, he lives lonely for a long period. Later, Bogale marries Wudinesh Betamu from his locality Mankusa with the help of Reverend

Tamiru who is father confessor of Wudinesh. Moreover, at the end of the second year of their marriage, a son (later is Bezabih) was born to them. However, this newly born son was not healthy as his parents expect to be. He suffers from different diseases beginning from the age of three months. Because of this, his parents become desperate and worry about his life. Hoping to save the life of her only son, Wudinesh pledges him to the service of the churches and consecrates him to various Tabots (Arks). However, his father, Bogale opposes this consecration of the son to various Arks (Tabots). Because the service to the church requires a vow of chastity and Bogale needs to be supported by his son at his old age.

When Bezabih grows older, he becomes aware of his being a “child of the vow” (Fikre, 1983:183). After ascertaining his being a “child of the vow” from his mother, he decides to leave Mankusa. Then, he goes to Washera first, then Zuramba, next to Debre Work in search of education. Simultaneously, when Bezabih runs away from home he brings the death of his parents in grief. Bezabih gets the announcement of his parents’ death from Debtera Beyene when he was at Debre Work. After Bezabih had bad news about his parents, he decides to go to Addis Ababa to be a Kinie teacher. To fulfill his desire of being a Kinie teacher, Bezabih goes to Dima where there is a famous school of Kinie. At Dima Bezabih studies Kinie under the well-known Kinie scholar Aleka Kinfu. It is at this luncheon that Fitawurari Meshesha encounters Bezabih on the holiday of Tekle Alpheia. Fitawurari Meshesha is impressed by the voice and skill of making poems of Bezabih while he is chanting on the occasion. Hence, Fitawurari Meshesha invites him to come to his house frequently and finally hires him to tutor his daughter. Thus, their teacher-student relationship gradually grows in to love. The love of Bezabih and Seble Wengiel becomes the subject of the village gossip and people begin talking about Seble Wengiel’s being pregnant. When Gudu Kassa, Seble’s cousin is aware of the situation of the young couple, he arranges their elopement before Fitawurari Meshesha’s returns to home. Due to the surprise arrival of Fitawurari Meshesha by being aware of the rumor about his daughter’s pregnancy, Gudu Kassa advises Bezabih to flee to Addis Ababa for safety. When Seble Wengiel defiantly announces her strong love to Bezabih, Fitawurari Meshesha assumes that Seble Wengiel has been put under the magic charm of Bezabih. Hence, he hires a monk to break the spell that is supposedly cast by Bezabih on Seble Wengiel. This is because, Meshesha has already promised to give Seble’s hand to a nobleman who has a considerable aristocratic descent and class background.

At the eve of her wedding day, Seble Wengiel runs away to Addis Ababa disguised as a monk in search of Bezabih not to be sold to the person whom she does not love. When her parents hear this, they go out in to different directions to find her. During the search of his daughter, Fitawurari Meshesha falls from his horse back and dies. His wife, too, falls down at the stairs of the church and dies a few hours later. Here, as Bezabih's parents Seble's parents die of grief when their daughter runs away from home.

Disguised as a young monk, Seble continues her journey to Addis Ababa. On her way to Addis Ababa, she learns the death of her parents from the person who is returning from their funeral ceremony in Dima. With the help of merchants, Seble reaches Addis Ababa yearning to meet Bezabih. Unfortunately, Bezabih has departed to no one knows where. This is because; he had received a report of Seble's wedding from merchants. Due to the absence of Bezabih at his teaching post St. Raphael church in Addis Ababa, Seble Wengiel goes back to Gojjam. On her way to Gojjam around Abay, she seeks shelter and goes to the nearby house. In the house, there is a woman who treats a young man who has been badly beaten by robbers and bandits while he was trying to cross the gorge of Abay. Later, the sick man proves to be Bezabih and he recognizes Seble Wengiel. Meanwhile, Seble marries Bezabih by breaking the social bridge posed in the feudal system; but Bezabih dies a few days later. Because of this, Seble decides to live near Bezabih's grave by being a nun.

The story concludes with the accidental arrival of Gudu Kassa at the place where Seble lives for twelve years after the death of Bezabih. Seble dies two weeks later as if she has been waiting Gudu Kass's arrival. Then, Kassa buries Seble Wengiel at the side of Bezabih as she has already shown him the place. Gudu Kassa himself passes away three years later and joins them in the same grave. Owing to this, the novel holds its title *Fikir Eske Mekabir* (Love unto Crypt).

## **4.2. Deconstructive Discourse of Content Reflected in *Fikir Eske Mekabir***

### ***4.2.1. Mythical Deconstruction***

In Ethiopia, various social folks, customs, cultural norms, traditions and rituals are associated with different polarities in the overall welfare of the society. The prevalence of these cultural traditions for centuries dominates the society in different aspects of life until recently.

In *Fikir Eske Mekabir*, Haddis presents artistically his panoramic observation of the society of feudal Ethiopia. Haddis also depicts the society by exposing the lives of the characters in the different strata of the social hierarchy in which they are living. In doing so, he used characters that represent the different social classes in the society that range from the higher stratum of the unnamed king to the feudal lords and the lower stratum of tenants to slaves. The existence of these varieties of social classes makes *Fikir Eske Mekabir* full of differences and oppositions to reveal the different facts of feudal Ethiopia. Therefore, the researcher comes across the deconstructive discourse of *Fikir Eske Mekabir* by employing elements of ‘binary oppositions’ portrayed to show the system in question such as culture over nature, culture over marriage, culture over religion, mastery over submissiveness and other related ones.

#### 4.2.1.1. Deconstructive Discourse of Culture over Nature

In *Fikir Eske Mekabir*, Haddis creates vivid pictures of the superstructure of the feudal system of Ethiopia by his command of Amharic and artistic talent. In doing so, Haddis does not deny the facts that the culture of traditional Ethiopia is composed of abusive and suppressive social orders, which are prevalent at the expense of the lower social class. Moreover, this is not a God-ordained system. Hence, there is a dare need for social reform. As a result, Haddis reveals the structure of feudal Ethiopia through his mouthpiece, Gudu Kassa as follows:

“የማህበራችን፡አቁዋም፡የተሰራበት፡ስራት፡ልማዳ፡ወገ፡እንደህይወታዊ፡ስራተ፡ማህበር፡ሳይሆን፡ህይወት፡እንደሌለው፡የደንጋይ፡ካብ፡አንዱ፡ባንዱ፡ላይ፡ተደራርቦ፡የላይኛው፡የታችኛውን፡ተጭኖ፡የታችኛው፡የላይኛውን፡ተሸክሞ፡እንዲኖር፡ሆኖ፡የተሰራበመሆኑ፡ከጊዜ፡በዛት፡የታችኛው፡ማፈንገጠ፡ስለማይቀርና፡ይህ፡ሲሆን፡ህንጻው፡በሙሉ፡እንዳይፈርስ፡እንደገና፡ተሻሻለ፡ሰውን፡ከደንጋይ፡በተሻለ፡መልክ፡የሚያሳይ፡የህያዋን፡አቁዋመ፡ማህበር፡እንዲሰራ፡ያስፈልጋል፡፤ የዛሬው ፤ ስራተ፡ማህበራችን፡ሲሰራ፡በዚያን፡ጊዜ፡ለነበረው፡ማህበር፡እንዲህ፡ሆኖ፡መሰራቱ፡ጠቃሚ፡ኖሮ፡ይሆናል፡፤ ነገር፡ግን፡ለዛሬው፡ማህበር፡ጠቃሚ፡አለመሆኑ፡የታወቀ፡ነው፡።” ( ሀዲስ ፤ ፩፻፹፯፤ ፩፻፳፪)

*“The structure of our society, its order, norms, customs, traditions and laws were not made like a living social system. They were rather made like a lifeless stonewall whose pieces lie upon each other, the ones on the top weighing heavily on the ones underneath. And if this continues for a long time, the ones underneath will surely slip out and the whole structure will crumble unless and until a living and humane social order is formed. The social order which is now outdated could have been useful in days gone by when it was made. But it is of no use today.” (Haddis, 1966:122 as translated by Fikre, 1983:191).*

Here, Haddis clearly points out his view using oppositional expressions to create pictures of things that he wishes to share his idea to his readers. He shows that the existence of the upper social class in feudal Ethiopia is at the expense of the lower social class. Here comes the deconstructive approach of the author at the binary oppositions of culture over nature in general and upper class over lower class in particular. As quoted above, there are the parts of the social system that strive hard to be cherished like the word of God and wish to prolong the life of system on the one hand; and there are others on the other hand who preach the system's culture, traditions, norms, laws, etc are valueless and harmful. Hence, these valueless and harmful customs, traditions, laws, etc of the social system should be reformed. Therefore, the system looks contradicting the dynamic nature of the society in different ways. This clearly describes the deconstructive nature of the novel. Moreover, Haddis predicts and accepts the inevitability of social change. As a result, he looks for the establishment of a new social system based on the old by advocating some kind of reform. Haddis presents this view in the characterization of Gudu Kassa who advocates social change in the society he is living in. To substantiate this, let us the following:

**"...የሚኖርበት፡ማህበር፡የተመሰረተበት፡ስራት፡ልማዱ፡ደንቡ፡ወገ፡ህገ፡የማይረባ፡  
 ከመሆኑም፡በላይ፡የሚጎዳ፡መሆኑን፡ይሰብክና፡ይህ፡አሮጌ፡ስራት፡ሳይሻሻል፡እንደ፡እግ  
 ዚአብሄር፡ቃል፤ ተከብሮ፡እንዲኖር፡የሚጣጣሩትን፡የልማድ፡ባሮች፡ከብቶች፡ደንጋዮች  
 ፡እያለ፡ልዩ፡ልዩ፡ስም፡እየሰጠ፡ይዘልፍ፡ነበር፡።" (ሀዲስ፤ ፩፻፶፯፤ ፩፻፳፩-፩፻፳፪)**

*"...He used to preach that the whole social system, its structure, custom, rule, law, on which the society he is living in is based are valueless and harmful. He also used to rebuke those who strive hard for the social system to be respected as God-ordained system without change by calling them differently as slaves of custom, animals, stones (Haddis,1966:121-122).*

This characterization of Gudu Kassa shows that the society in which he is living is a structure of customs, traditions, rules, etc, which are harmful and unworthy. This idea is expressed in contradictions of those who advocate change over those who strive hard to conserve this harmful and valueless structure of the society. Here, there are binary oppositions of past/present and innocence/ignorance. Gudu Kassa gets the courage to blame that the structure of the society in which he lives is from his life experience. He is from a family with a considerable aristocratic lineage. However, he was brought up with his mother separated from the palace because of the death of his father during childhood. This provocation of his relatives makes him feel strong and see things critically. Besides his life experience, his

knowledge of traditional education in general and about the New Testament in particular helps him to create his own philosophy of life. Nevertheless, Gudu Kassa's faith and philosophy contradicts with the conventional structures of the society. Hence, he describes the social system of the society once again as a system which is jumble and messy. The narrator tells us this as follows:

"...የሚኖርበት፡ማህበር፡አይን፡እያለው፡ፍሬውን፡ከገለባ፡ለይቶ፡ማየት፡የማይችል፤ አ  
እምሮ፡እያለው፡የሚጠቅመውን፡ከሚጎዳው፡ለይቶ፡ማስተዋል፡የማይችል፡እንደ፡በግ፡  
መንጋ፡በፊቱ፡የሚሄደውን፡ተከትሎ፡የሚንጋጋ፡እንደ፡ጭነት፡ከበት፡የጫኑትን፡ተሸክ  
ሞ፡የሚጎትት፡የጉድ፡ማህበር፡ይለው፡ነበር፡ነገር፡ግን፡ምንም፡ቢሆን፡"በዙሃን፡ይመ  
ውኡ፡"ነውና፡ማህበሩ፡አሸንፎ፡"ጉድ"፡የካሳ፡ዳምጤ፡ስም፡ሆነ፡(ሀዲስ፤ ፩፻፹፯፤ ፩፻፳)

*...the social system of the society in which he is living in has eyes that cannot differentiate the straw from the seed and is not able to see them differently; it has also mind but unconscious to remember and distinguish the invaluable from the valueless. Moreover, he called it a strange (queer) and surprising social system, which follows the one in front like a flock of sheep that rushed out and like pack animals that carry what they were loaded. However, it is obvious that "the mass always win" Kassa is won by the society's social system and he himself is called "strange" ('queer') by the society. (Ibid, 123)*

As one can see, this description of the social system of feudalism by Gudu Kassa is a bundle of contradictions. These contradictions clearly depict how the system is abused by conservative cultural elements, which resist change in respect to time. Because, as quoted above, Kassa Damtie describes the whole of the feudal system by giving critical comments on the system and its advocates. Nevertheless, the fact that his being freethinker and radical critic makes him strange in the eye of the society. This is because, Kassa's actions, deeds and verbal comments are against the long established systems of feudalism. That is why everybody calls him "Gudu" ('queer') Kassa except for his disciples Seble Wengiel, Bezabih and Habitish. Though everybody calls him "Gudu" ('queer') Kassa, he calls conversely the feudal social orders too 'queer', old and outdated. Because of this, Gudu Kassa decides to live in his own world advocating his life philosophy when and where necessary. He has always been out spoken against the outdated practices of feudalism in social, political and religious aspects. Although he has radical ideas while commenting on the system, no one takes his views seriously. However, Seble seems to be persuaded by his noble ideas and acknowledges the importance of his ideas to differentiate and distinguish the abusive and suppressive nature of



feudalism. To substantiate this idea, let us see the following conversation of Seble's parents on the choice of a tutor for her.

[1]"አይ፤ ጽህፈት፡እንኩዋምን፡ያደርግላታል!ውዳሴ፡ማርያምና፡ቅዳሴ፡ማርያም፡ትርጉም፡ብትማር፡ጥሩ፡ነው፤ መቼም፡የትምህርት፡ክፉ፡የለውም፤ ለማስተማሩ፡ግን፡ከበዛብሀ፡ይልቅ፡ካሳ፡ዳምጤን፡አስተምራት፡ብንለው፡ደስታውን፡አይችለውም፤ ...!"አሉ፡ምሽታቸው፡ወይዘሮ፡ጥሩአይነት፡፡

[2]"ጉዳካሳ?"አሉ፡ቀኛዝማች፡አካሉ፡እንደመሳቅ፡ብለው፡፡

[3]"አይ፡እሱ፡እንኩዋም፡አይሆንም፡፡"አሉ፡ልጅ፡ተፈራ፡የወይዘሮ፡ጥሩአይነት፡ወንድም፤ የጉዳ፡ ካሳ፡ አጎት፡፡

[4]"እንዲያው፡እሱዋ፡ካሳ፡ዳምጤ፡ካሳ፡ዳምጤ፡ትላለች፡ሰው፡አገኘሁ፡ብላ!"አሉ፡ፊታውራሪ፡ፊታቸውን፡ከምሽታቸው፡አዙረው፡፡

[5]"አሳቡ፡ከሰው፡አሳብ፡አለመግጠሙ፡ካለሆነ፡በትምህርት፡መቸም፡እሱን፡የሚያክል፡የለም፡ሲሉ፡እስማላሁ፡ምን፡ላድርግ?"አሉ፡ወይዘሮ፡ጥሩአይነት፡፡

[6]"...አሳቡ፡ከሰው፡አሳብ፡አለመግጠሙ፡ነው፡ከገር፡ነገር!"አሉ፡ፊታውራሪ፡... "አይሸ?" .... "ሰው፡ለማስተማር፡ሚዛኑ፡ያልተቃወሰ፡የተካከለና፡ጤናማ፡የሆነ፡አእምሮ፡ያለው፡ሰው፤ ያስፈልጋል፡ካሳ፡ዳምጤ፡..." ብለው፡ሊናገሩ፡ያሰቡትን፡ሳይቀጥሉ፤

[7]"አእምሮው፡የተቃወሰ፡አእምሮው፡ትክክል፡ያልሆነ፡ሰው፡ነው፡አይ፡ካሳን፡አእምሮው፡ያልተስተካከለ፡የሚለው!"አለች፡ሰብለ፡ወንጌል፡... "አዎ፡የሱ፡አእምሮ፡በሚደርስበት፡ሊደርስ፡የማይችል፡ጎደሎ፡አእምሮ፡ያለው፡ብቻ፡ነው፡አይ፡ካሳን፡ጎደሎ፡የሚል!እዚህ፡ያላችሁት፡ሁሉ፡አእምሮ፡አንድ፡ላይ፡ተሰብስቦ፡ቢጨመቅ፡የሱን፡አእምሮ፡ሩብ፡አይመዝንም፡ሁላችሁም፡ጎደሎዎች፡ና-አ-አ-አ-አ-ችሁ!"አለችና፡ሰብለ፡...(ሀዲስ፤ ፩፻፶፯፤ ፩፻፳፯-፩፻፳፰)

[1] "Oh! Writing does not help her that much! It is better for her to learn about the interpretation of Eulogy and Liturgy of St.Marry. After all, education has no any bad side; it is very good for Kassa Damtie if we let him tutor Seble than Bezabih!" said his wife Madam Tiruaynet.

[2] "Kassa Damtie?" said Kengazmach Akalu with a smile of mockery.

[3] "Oh! He should not be...", said Lij Tefera, Madam Tiruaynet's brother and Gudu Kassa's uncle.

[4] "She said Kassa Damtie, Kassa Damtie simply as if she has got a humane person!" said Fitawurari ignoring his wife's idea.

[5] "What shall I do? I heard the saying that 'there is no one who cope with him as far as education is concerned' except his idea is being odd to the Mass." said Madam Tiruaynet.

[6] "The main problem is that his ideas cannot coincide with others"! This is essential!" said Fitawurari... "You see!" .... "To teach people there need to be a man, who is not out of his mind, has good and healthy mentality. Kassa Damtie..." when he is unable to continue what he has started.

[7] *“The pot calls the kettle black!” says Seble Wengiel by interrupting her father... “Yes, the one he says Aya\* Kassa is insane is he himself out of his mind, mentally deranged and that he is unable to cope with his consciousness. If the mentality (consciousness) of those who are here is summed up and come together, it will not be a quarter of his consciousness. All of you are defective!” says Seble Wengiel... (Ibid, 127-128).*

In this long dialogue, we can clearly understand what kind of personality Gudu Kassa has by focusing on the gaps of the ideas of the characters. This is definitely the result of the characterization style of Haddis Alemayehu. What makes Haddis special in characterization is that he allows his characters to speak about themselves that enables the reader to understand them very well or he lets other characters speak about others. Hence, Haddis presents the different ideologies of the characters for characterization. Gudu Kassa is characterized by the binary oppositions of being unconscious over conscious, uneducated over educated, defective over effective by the proponents of feudalism on the one hand and opposes of feudalism on the other hand.

Generally, Haddis gives us a symbolic rendering of feudal Ethiopia as it really is and his hatred of the existing system by employing these contradicting ideas. In addition, this portrayal of the social system of feudal Ethiopia through binary oppositions makes the author a deconstructive writer. This is because, he uses oppositions that enable the reader to generate meanings differently. Hence, we can say that Fitawurari Meshesha and his retinue are representatives of the old generation who are ignorant and cling to the past by fighting the new generations' view. Moreover, Gudu Kassa and Seble are representatives of the new generation who make a destructive impact on the hypocrisy and backward norms of the old generation and strive hard for the establishment of a new social system. Therefore, we can observe the binary oppositions of old generation over new generation in which the first term is privileged in the system it is being described. Furthermore, Gudu Kassa's critical observations and insight help for those who advocate change, especially Seble Wengiel. She acknowledges Gudu Kassa as the one who opens her eyes, makes her to observe and identify the evil practices of feudal Ethiopia. Seble admits this fact as follows:

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*Aya\*:* a title of respect for an elderly person (male)

"አዎ፡አድሜ፡ላያ፡ካሳ፡የኑሮዎችን፡ስራት፡እጅግ፡ክፋና፡ግፍ፡የሞላበት፡መሆኑን፡እያየን፡ለመበሳጨትና፡ለማልቀስ፡ያህል፡አይናችንን፡ከፍቶልናል፡ብቻ፡ከሱ፡መውጣት፡ላንችል፡አይናችን፡ተከፍቶ፡ባላየነው፡ባላወቅነው፡ደስ፡ብሎን፡እንኖርበት፡ነበር!" አለች፡ ሰብሊ... (ሀዲስ፣ ፩፻፶፯፣ ፫፻፲፫)

*"Yes, long live Aya Kassa! He has opened our eyes to see how cruel and unjust our social order is! He also made us conscious enough to see these evil practices, to get angry and to weep helplessly without change. Since we cannot get out ourselves from this situation, we would have lived happily had our eyes not been opened and had we not been able to see". Says Seble... (Ibid, 1966:313).*

From Seble's utterance, we can see that the cruelties of the social orders are well known by Gudu Kassa's disciples. Hence, they rebel against these cruel and unjust social orders of the society. Nevertheless, due to its long held practices and resistance, the social system in which they are living could not as they wish it to be for them. As a result, they are involved in a harsh conflict with these norms of the society and advocate change. This leads them to sacrifice themselves for the sake of the new generation as role models of change in the society. As we can understand easily, Seble's idea is presented by contradictions. That is, being conscious about the cruel and unjust social orders on the one hand and being dormant about these social orders is better on the other hand. The binary oppositions portrayed here are invaluable over valueless, consciousness over unconsciousness and just over unjust. In addition to Seble's acknowledgement of Gudu Kassa as their apostle, Fitawurari Meshesha also grudgingly admits Kassa's sanity as follows:

"እብድ፡እንዳይባል፡የሚናገረው፡መርዝነው፡፡ደህና፡እንዳይባል...እንዲያውኮ፡ የዲማውን፡የሱ፡ነገር፡በጣም፡ያስቸግራል!" ...አሉ፡ወደ፡ጉዳ፡ካሳ፡እየተመለከቱ፡፡ (ሀዲስ፣ ፩፻፶፯፣ ፪፻፳፩)

*"The words he utters are very strong and critical lest we should brand him insane! To call him moral as such... the situation he is in is very difficult!" says Fitawurari facing towards Gudu Kassa. (Haddis, 1966:221).*

Generally, Haddis reveals the contradictions, the gaps and oppositions that exist in the feudal social system by his artistic manipulation of characterization. The characterization of Gudu Kassa as it has been seen above shows the author's skill. The exposition of the feudal social orders is not limited to the overall structure of the system of the society. However, it portrays the life of the people through contradictions in general by focusing on the social, economic and religious aspects of feudal Ethiopia.

#### 4.2.1.2. Deconstructive Discourse on Marriage over Culture

Marriage is one of the social issues that Haddis wants to show to his readers. Marriage was highly class bound in feudal Ethiopia. Hence, sons and daughters who are mature enough could not decide on their fate by themselves. They should keep the social boundary posed in the system. These social boundaries of marriage are best seen in the conversation between Fitawurari Meshesha and his wife as follows:

[1] "ወዩው፡ጉድ!ጆሮ፡አልሰማም፡አይልምኮ፡እናንተ?ይላሉ፡ፊታውራሪ፡መሸሻ፡  
ከውጭ፡ሲገቡ።"

"ዛሬ፡ደግሞ፡ምን፡ሰሙ፡ጌታየ? ይላሉ፡ባለቤታቸው፡ወይዘሮ፡ጥሩአይነት።"

"ቀኛዝማች፡እገሌ፡ሰብለወንጌልን፡ለልጁ፡ለመነኝ።"

"ቀኛዝማች፡እገሌ፡የማን፡ልጅ፡ነው?"

"አባቱን፡እንኩዋን፡እኔ፡እሱም፡አያውቀው።"

"ትልቅ፡ድፍረት!ይላሉ፡ወይዘሮ፡ጥሩአይነት።"

[2] "ግራዝማች፡እገሌ፡ልጅህን፡ስጠኝ፡አለኝኮ፡ጥሩ።"

"የማን፡ልጅ፡ነው፡ጌታየ?"

"አባቱ፡ሰው፡አይደለም፡ገበሬ፡ነው።"

"ይህን፡ሳልሰማ፡በሞትሁ!"

[3] "ፊታውራሪ፡እገሌ፡ልጅን፡ለልጁ፡ለመነኝ።"

"የማን፡ልጅ፡ነው?"

"አባቱ፡መጫኛ፡ነካሽ፡ነጋዴ፡ነበር።"

"ምነው፡እንዲህ፡ከምታሰድበን፡ባልተወለደች።" (ሀዲስ፣ ፩፻፶፯፣ ፹፭)

[1] "Amazing! The ears don't refuse to listen. You know!" the Fitawurari would say as he came in.

"What have you heard this time, my lord?" his wife Weyzero Tiruaynet would say.

"Kengazmach so-and- so has asked me for the hand of Seble Wengel for his son."

"Whose son is Kengazmach so-and-so?"

"Let alone me, even he himself doesn't know his father."

"It is a great insolence!" Weyzero Tiruaynet would reply.

[2] "Teru, Grazmach so-and-so has asked me to let his son marry my daughter."

*“Whose son is he, my lord?”*

*“His father is not a human being but a farmer!”*

*“I wish I were dead soon rather than hear this!”*

[3] *“Fitawurari so-and-so wants my daughter’s hand to his son.”*

*“Whose son is he?”*

*“His father was a strap-biting merchant.”*

*“I wish she were not born rather bring such disgrace upon us.”*

*(Haddis, 1966:85 as translated by Taye, 1986:153-154).*

From this dialogue of the old couple, one can easily deduce that the quality which they seek from the marriage proposers is not personal virtue or wealth but having a considerable aristocratic descent. Although, the couple do not consider it, the titles of men who make the marriage proposal are discernible. They are Kengazmach, Grazmach and Fitawurari respectively. Here, Haddis shifts in dramatizing the dialogue. That is, rather than using proper names of the respective suitors with their titles, he uses the phrase ‘so-and-so’. This shows that the titles are not fitting with their aristocratic class background. That is why Fitawurari Meshesha calls them ‘Kengazmach so-and-so’, ‘Grazmach so-and so’..., though his wife has no any background information about proposers. Fitawurari Meshesha uses the term ‘so-and-so’ in order to degrade the status and title of the suitors. This is clearly outshined in the conversation by Fitawurari Meshesha’s contempt to other noblemen while responding to his wife’s questions concerning the suitors’ aristocratic lineage. For instance, the utterance “His father is not a human being but a farmer” shows Fitawurari Meshesha’s contempt upon other noblemen. This is because, Fitawurari Meshesha is always making a claim of having a direct descent from monarchs such as Eleni, Gelawdiwos and Susniyos who had lived centuries ago. Besides this, in the social system of feudal Ethiopia peasants and other members of the lower class are not considered as human beings and are looked down upon contempt. Fitawurari Meshesha’s excessive pride in his aristocratic descent is clearly seen in the following utterance:

**“...አከጥንትና፡ከደም፡ያልተወረሰ፡በጥጥና፡በቆዳ፡የተገዛ፡ፊታው፡ራራነትና፡ቀኛዝማች  
ነት፡፡ሆሆ!ኦረ፡ምን፡ዘመን፡መጣብን?ይሄውልሽ፡የነዚህ፡ልጆች፡ናቸው፡የኛን፡ልጅ፡ለ  
ማግባት፡የሚጠይቁ!እንዲህ፡ያሉት፡ልጆች፡እድሜ፡ለቆዳ፡እድሜ፡ለጥጥ፡አባቶቻቸው፡  
ግራዝማች፡ቀኛዝማች፡አንዳንዶችም፡እንደኛ፡ፊታው፡ራራ፡ተብለውላቸዋል፤አያት፡  
ግን፡የላቸውም፡፡ታዲያ፡ለነዚህ፡ልጆን፡ልስጥ?የእሴኒን፡የገላውዲዎስን፡የሱሰንዮስን፡**

ልጅ፡ለገበሬ፡ለነጋዴ፡ልስጥ?እነሱ፡ባያዩ፡ባይሰሙ፡አጥንታቸው፡አይከሰኝም?አይወቅ ሰኝም?" ይላሉ፡ፊታውራሪ፡...(ዝኒ ከማሁ፣ ፹፮)

*“It is a kind of being a Fitawurari, a Kegnazmach that is not inherited with blood and bone rather bought with cotton and hides. Ho! Ho...! What kind of era has come upon us! You see! The sons of these people that asked for the hand of our daughter. The sons of such people have to thank cotton and hides, their fathers have been dubbed ‘Grazmach’, ‘Kegnazmach’ and even some are as ‘Fitawurari’ just like us; but they do not have grandfathers. Well then! How can I give my daughter to such people? How can I give the daughter of Eleni, Gelawdiwos and Susniyos to the sons of farmers and merchants? Although they could not see and hear, wouldn’t their bones sue/reproach me?” says Fitawurari Meshesha.... (Ibid, 86)*

As the result of Fitawurari Meshesha’s snobbery and vainglorious personality, his daughter remained without a husband. This is because, the suitors are unable fit his lofty aristocratic class background. However, Seble Wengiel becomes a victim of the system because she does not have the right to marry anyone she loves. Besides this, getting married at the prime time of a girl is supposed to be a sign of being lucky and important in the society in which she lives. However, she is unable to fulfill this due to the above reasons. Hence, Seble becomes the issue of the talk and the gossip of the women in the neighborhoods. This is best seen in the following dialogue:

[1]"እባክሽ፡እባክሽ፡እይልኝ፡የጌቶችን፡ልጅ፡እናት-ዋንኮ፡አከለች፡፡" አለች፡ደብራቱ፡  
የምትባለው፡ከመንደሩ፡አሽሙ-ዋጣጮች፡አንድዋ፡፡

[2]"ምን፡እናት-ዋን፡አከለች፡ትያለሽ?ከናት-ዋ፡በለጠች፡በይ፡እንጂ!ዳሌዋንና፡ደረት-ዋን፡  
አታይም፡አስር፡የወለደች፡መስላ፡፡" አለች፡ጉዋደኛዋ፡ስንዱ፡፡

[3]"እኒህ፡አባት-ዋ፡ምን፡ሊያደርጉ-ዋት፡ነው፡አስረው፡የሚያወፍሩ-ዋት፡አርደው፡ይበሉ  
ዋት፡ይመስል?ወዲያ፡ላንዱ፡አይሰጡ-ዋትም፡እንዴ?"

[4]"አሁንማ፡ለማን፡ይስጡ-ዋት፡ጠያቂ፡ሲጠፋ?የጠየቁዋቸውን፡ሁሉ፡አታክሉንም፤  
አትመስሉንም፤ እያሉ፡ሲያባርሩ፡ኖረው፡አሁን፡ጠያቂ፡አጡ፡፡"(ዝኒ ከማሁ፣ ፹፮)

- [1] “Please! Please...! Please, look our lords’ daughter! She has become as big as her mother,” says Debitu one of the critics in the Village.
- [2] “Why do you say, ‘she has become as big as her mother’? You should say she is bigger than her mother is! Don’t you see her waist and chest that makes her look like the one who gave birth to ten children.,” says her friend Sindu.

[3] “What does her father want to do with her? Why is he tying up and fattening her as if he slaughters and eats her? Why doesn’t he give her hand to someone?”

[4] “To whom can he give her hand where there is no suitor? He has been declining every offer saying that they are not his equals, and now he failed to get a suitor.”(Ibid, 87).

In this conversation of the villagers, Haddis shows us that marriage is a class bound social issue of feudal Ethiopia. To expose this idea clearly, Haddis presents the dialogue through oppositions. As it has been seen in the conversation, the critics were proposing their views in contradiction. That is, Debitu seems to worry about the physical change of Seble Wengiel and her being late to marry. On the contrary, Sindu seems to be aware and knows about Seble’s situation other than her physical change. Therefore, these differences and contradictions are helpful to generate meaning on the issue under discussion.

Besides this, Seble Wengiel is portrayed as an old maid because of the megalomania that her parents suffer with regard to her suitors. The village backbiters do not only express Seble’s portrayal of being coming of age but also her being ‘a slave of honour’. Besides this, her parents themselves also perceive it. For instance, when Fitawurari Asegie refused to marry Seble Wengiel as a virgin, her being an old maid is taken as the main issue of her parents. The following utterance of Fitawurari Meshesha reveals this fact.

"...አኔማ፡አንዳንድ፡ጊዜ፡ሳስብ፡ከቶ፡ይች፡ልጅ፡አንድ፡አይነት፡አይነ፡ጥላ፡አንድ፡አይነት፡ገርጋሪ፡ቁራኛ፡ይኖርባት፡ይሆንን? አላለሁኩ፡ደህና፡ደህና፡የባላባት፡ልጆች፡ይቀርቡና፡ተመልሰው፡ይሸሻሉ፡፡...አንዲያው፡ድንገት፡ገርጋሪ፡ቁራኛ፡ይኖርባት፡አንደሆነ፡አንጂ፡አንዴት፡በደህና፡የገበሬዎች፡ልጆች፡ያላጡትን፡የኔ፡ልጅ፡የብዙ፡መሳፍንትና፡የብዙ፡ነገስታት፡ልጅ፡ባል፡ትጣ?(ዝኒ፡ከማሁ ፤ ፩፻፲፬-፩፻፲፭)

“...I sometimes think if she has absolutely some kind of phobia and wilful evil spirit that bolts down her suitors. A number of suitors who are sons of aristocrats ask for her hand in different times but all of them ran away... Well, unless she might have been possessed by some kind of obstinate evil spirit, how can my daughter, the daughter of many kings and aristocrats fail to get a husband where as the daughters of peasants could get?(Ibid, 114-115).

As it has been seen in the utterance, Seble Wengiel’s being an old maid is even felt by her father. However, he sees Seble’s being an old maid in his own ideology. That is, it is the result of her being unfortunate and the wilful evil spirit that bolts her suitors’ is the reason for her being coming of age in his perspective. Nevertheless, the author wants to show that the

prevailing ideology of the system accounts for the problem. However, Seble's being an old maid is the result of undermining her apparent authority and privileged status of getting married by her parents excessive pride and aristocratic lineage which the suitors unable to fit. This idea of the extract reveals the gap about Seble's being an old maid. The cultural assumptions here are giving value for early marriage; and taking as a misfortune, as being unlucky and unimportant when the prime time of marriage passes. Therefore, the issue of Seble Wengiel is expressed by oppositions of being virgin actually and taken as an old maid. Moreover, Gudu Kassa sees Seble's being an old maid according to the cultural assumptions of the feudal social orders as follows:

**"ሰብለ፡ወንጌል፡ባል፡እንዳታገባ፡ያባት፡ና፡የናት፡ምቀኛ፡ሆናችሁ፡ከንስሀ፡አባታችሁ፡  
ጋር፡የጋኔን፡ቁራኛ፡ገርጋሪና፡አይነ፡ጥላ፡ሆናችሁ፡አቁማችሁ፡ያስቀራችሁ፡ዋት፡  
እናንተ፡ናችሁ፡" (ዝኒ ከማሀ ፤ ፩፻፲፰)**

*"You, her parents are envious of Seble Wengiel to get married. You and your father- confessor are wilful demons and phobias that make Seble Wengiel an old maid." (Ibid, 118).*

In this utterance, Gudu Kassa subverts the cultural assumptions of the system. That means, as stated above on the side of the aristocrats Seble's being an old maid is the result of the obstinate evil spirit that bolts down the suitors for her hand. Nevertheless, Gudu Kassa describes Seble's being an old maid is the result of her parents' suppressive and abusive nature and the cultural set of assumptions that are prevailing in the system. That is why; he speaks out overtly by subverting the well-established cultural assumptions of the system by unleashing his ideas against the system's social orders. These contradictions about Seble Wengiel's being an old maid clearly reveal the gaps in the system. This makes Haddis a deconstructive writer. Haddis's mouthpiece Gudu Kassa outshined the erroneous beliefs of feudal Ethiopia by unmasking the prevailing set of cultural assumptions. The binary oppositions concerning Seble Wengiel's suitors are human/inhuman, aristocrat/peasant, etc. Kassa continued to unmask the cultural assumptions of the system regarding Seble's marriage as follows:

**"...ያባት፡ና፡የናት፡ምቀኞች፡ሆናችሁ፡ሰብለን፡አቁማቸሁ፡ያስቀራችሁ፡ዋት፡እናንተ፡  
ወላጆቹ፡ናችሁ፡፡ከመከ፡ዋንንት፡ልጅ፡ሰብለ፡ወንጌልን፡ደጅ፡ያልጠና፡ተንበርክኩ፡ያል  
ሄደ፡ማነው? ...ነገር፡ግን፡እናንተ፡እንደ፡ውሻ፡አጥንትና፡ደም፡ስታሽቱ፡ይሄው፡አቁማች  
ሁ፡አስቀራችሁ፡ዋት፡...የናንተ፡አጥንትና፡ደም፡ከሌሎቹ፡ልዩ፡የሆነበት፡በምንነው? የና**



ንተ፡ደም፡ስት፡ሞቱ፡አይቆምም? አያልቅም? አይቀርም? የናንተ፡ስጋ፡አይፈርስም? አይበሰብስም? አይተላም? አይገማም? የናንተ፡አጥንት፡አይነቅዝም? አይሰበርም? በናንተ፡ዘንድ፡ድህነትን፡ታግሎ፣ ውሎ፡በላቡ፣ በድካሙ፣ ጌትነትን፡የሚማርክ፣ ጌትነትን፡ፈጥሮ፡ለራሱ፡የሚያደርግ፡በርቱ፣ ጎበዝ፣ ጀግና፣ ዋጋ፡የለውም፣ ካፈር፡እንደፈላ፡አባት፡የለሽ፡ይባላል፡፡”(ዝኒ ከማሁ፡፡፩፻፲፰-፩፻፲፱)

*“...You yourselves her parents are becoming spiteful for Seble’s marriage and let her be an old maid. Is there anyone among the sons of aristocrats who do not wait patiently and kneel down for Seble Wengiel’s hand? However, you her parents make her spinster looking for suitors who have high aristocratic class background (smelling blood and bone like dogs). By the way, what makes your blood and bone is different from others? Does not your blood stop circulating when you die? Does not it be terminated? Does not it be stopped there to circulate? Does not your flesh decompose? Does not it be rotten? Does not it be full of maggots? Does not it be putrid? Does not your bone be infested with worms? Does not it be shattered? Does not it be decomposed and turned to soil? In your perspective, the one who struggle against poverty and become wealthy by his sweat, endeavour, blood, and the brave one who foils and works hard to become rich and successful is worthless. As if he is coming out of the soil, he is called fatherless.”(Ibid, 119).*

What is brought to the fore with these analogical expressions and rhetorical questions of Gudu Kassa is the author’s observation and evaluation of feudal Ethiopia as far as marriage is concerned. Although the purity of blood and bone has a meaning for those, who assumed themselves as special, chosen, blessed and important than others, Gudu Kassa asserts that the privileging of feudal bone and blood does not make any sense for others. After death, every body goes through the same process of decomposition to the soil irrespective of hierarchies. Hence, Gudu Kassa denounces the thoughts of those who believe in the purity of blood and bone, and in the quality of high aristocratic descent. Here, Kassa unmask the oppressive roles of the ideology of the feudal Ethiopia that dominates the life of the people. Therefore, the above extract is deconstructed by its ambivalence towards the binary oppositions such as innocence over decadence, past over present, strong over weak, rich over poor, successful over unsuccessful, blessed over cursed and purity over impurity.

In addition to Gudu Kassa’s subversion and condemnation of the values of the ideological projects of feudalism concerning marriage, Seble Wengiel herself is becoming aware of the agenda at hand by her parents. That is her being an old maid because of the traditional gender roles that accepts and approves the importance of early marriage. Although Seble herself

recognizes her being coming of age, she hears it clearly from the women at the church while they were gossiping and backbiting about her being an old maid and slave of honour. This leads her to see herself with the eyes of others. As a result, she is symbolizing her life of being coming of age with the flowers at her father's compound during spring. She says the following about herself in solitude:

"ወይ፡አንተ፡ግቢ፡ምነው፡እንዲህ፡እንዳበብህ፡እንደተዋብህ፡የምትኖር፡በሆንህ?ምነው፡  
ይህ፡ውበትህ፡የበጋ፡ጸሀይ፡የማያደርቀው፡የክረምት፡ጭቃ፡የማያጨማልቀው፡በሆነ!  
ብቻ፡ይህ፡ውበትህ፡አሁን፡ያልፋል!ይህ፡አበባህ፡አሁን፡ይረግፋል!ከጥቂት፡ጊዜ፡በሁዋላ  
፡እኒህ፡መአዛህና፡ለዛህ፡ጠርቶዋቸው፡የሚጨፍሩት፡ብራብሮዎችና፡የሚዘምሩት፡ንቦ  
ች፡እዚህ፡አይኖሩም!ሌላ፡ያበበና፡የተዋበ፡ቦታ፡ፍለጋ፡ይሄዳሉ፡"(ዝኒ ከማሁ፡፤፳፩-፳፪)

*"Oh! What a compound you are! What if, you livelong blossoming and beautified like this! What if, the summer sun does not dry out your beauty! What if your beauty is not smudged by mud in the rainy season! However, your beauty will vanish in the near future! These, your flowers' are dropped by now! After sometimes, these butterflies, which are attracted by your fragrance and beauty, will not dance and sing here anymore. These bees are no more buzzing here! They both will go to another compound in search of blossoming and beautified flowers."* (Ibid, 91-92)

Seble Wengiel's symbolization of her life with her father's compound reveals the author's skill of narration. As we can see above, Seble represents vividly her life with flowers in her father's compound. That is, when the flowers are blooming and flowering, they attract bees and butterflies by their fragrance and beauty. Like wise, when she was a teenager or at her puberty stage, she attracted a number of suitors. However, when the flowers of the compound dried out, the bees and butterflies, which are buzzing in and around, will not be seen on the flowers. Like wise, although there were a number of suitors who wished to get her hand during her puberty, there is no one when she grew up. Besides this, Seble asserts that beauty vanishes through time. She is also obsessed with her fate in the future. This is because she has lost her prime time of getting married due to her parents' ignorance and vanity. Therefore, the binary oppositions such as mortal over immortal, perpetual over temporal, blossoming over gloomy, and beauty over ugliness deconstruct Seble Wengiel's soliloquy.

Generally, the above excerpts highlight how marriage is treated during feudal Ethiopia in general and Seble Wengiel's predicament in particular. It clearly shows us that marriage is a class bound social affair during feudal Ethiopia.

As stated above, Gudu Kassa is not only unmasking the prevailing feudal ideology regarding marriage as it needs reform but also defies the superficial norms of the nobility by marrying his own slave. This is best seen as follows:

"እንቆጳጳጉዱ፡ካሳ፡ትምህርቱን፡ጨርሶ፡እንደ፡ተመለሰ፡እስዋም፡ገና፡ልጅ፡እያለች፡እግር፡አጣቢ፡እንድትሆነው፡እና፡ቱ፡የሽለሙት፡አገልጋይ፡ናት፡፡የጥንት፡ስምዋ፡አፈረ፡ጠላቱ፡ነበር፡፡...ወዲያው፡የጉዳ፡ካሳ፡እናትና፡ዘመዶቹ፡ምሽት፡ሊያጋቡት፡ከባላባት፡ባላባት፡ሲያማርጡ፡እሱ፡አፈረ፡ጠላቱን፡"እንቆጳጳዝዮን"፡ብሎ፡ሰይሞ፡አገባና፡እናቱንም፡ዘመዶቹንም፡አሳፈራቸው፡፡"(ዝኒ ከማሁ፡፤፫፻፴)

*"Enkopa is a slave given to Gudu Kassa as a present from his mother when he came back finishing his education. Enkopa has been given to Gudu Kassa to serve him since her childhood. Her former name was Aferetelatu.... Later, when Gudu Kassa's mother and relatives are looking forward to get his wife among the daughters' of different noblemen, Gudu Kassa gives the name "Enkopazion" to Aferetelatu and marries her. As a result, his mother and relatives are highly embarrassed by his deeds." (Ibid, 330).*

As it has been quoted, Gudu Kassa subverts practically the question of the purity of blood and bone in the prevailing social system by marrying his slave.

**4.2.1.3. Deconstructive Discourse of Master over Servitor (Landlord/Tenant)**

One of the social significances of *Fikir Eskemakabir* is the portrayal of landlord and tenant relationship. The author understood the social system of his society and the conflicts within the society very well. One of the prominent conflicts in the society's system was between landlords and tenants. In the story, Haddis represents the feudal lords of Ethiopia by Fitawurari Meshesha and the tenants of the period through the peasants living in the three fiefs of Fitawurari Meshesha. Therefore, as a typical symbol of feudal lords, Fitawurari Meshesha is characterized as follows:

"ትንሽ፡ያዘኑ፡ወይም፡የሚያሳዝን፡ነገር፡ያዩ፡እንደሆነ፡አይኖቻቸው፡ቶሎ፡እምባ፡ስለሚሞሉ፡ገርና፡በጣም፡ደግ፡ሰው፡ይመስላሉ፡ነገር፡ግን፡የተጣሉትን፡ሰው፡ለማስቃየት፡ወይም፡ሲስቃይ፡ለማየት፡ልባቸው፡ካለት፡ደንጋይ፡እንደ፡ተሰራ፡ሁሉ፡ትንሽ፡እንኩዋ፡ነቅነቅ፡አይልም፡፡እቤታቸው፡ለሚሄደው፡ሰው፡ሁሉ፡ዘመድ፡ይሁን፡ባእድ፡ሲያበሉና፡ሲያጠጡ፡ለለመናቸውም፡ሁሉ፡ባይኖራቸው፡እንኩዋ፡ተበድረው፡ገንዘብ፡ሲሰጡ፡ከመጠን፡ያለፈ፡ለጋስ፡ይመስላሉ፡ነገር፡ግን፡ከሹምና፡ከባላገር፡ጋር፡በቁና፡ባቁላ፡በቶፋ፡ቅቤ፡ምርር፡ያለ፡ጥል፡ሲጣሉ፡ይታያሉ፡፡ለድሀ፡ገንዘብ፡መስጠት፡መልካም፡ነው፡እያሉ፡ይሰብካሉ፡ነገር፡ግን፡ድሀ፡ገንዘብ፡ሲኖረው፡አይወዱም፡፡ሰው፡ለክብሩ፡ህይወቱን፡እንኩዋ፡ማሳለፍ፡ይገባዋል፡ይላሉ፡ነገር፡ግን፡ለክብሩ፡የቆመ፡ሰው፡ደመኛቸው፡ነው፡፡..."(ዝኒ ከማሁ፡፤፪፻፶፭-፪፻፶፮)

*“Whenever he is a bit sad or whenever he saw things that evoke sadness, his eyes are immediately filled with tears making him look like a very kind and good-natured person. However, when he tortures his rivals or when he sees the agony of his rivals, he is stouthearted and he is not well disposed as if his heart is made from a hard rock. When he feeds everybody that goes to his house, whether it be his relative or not; and when he gives money to those who need his help even by borrowing money from others when he does not have at hand, he seems a very generous person. However, he is seen quarreling bitterly with officials and peasants over a **Kuna\*** of Faba Beans and/or a **Toffa\*** of butter. He preaches how it is very good to give money to the poor. Nevertheless, he is not pleased when the poor have money. He often says that man should die for the sake of his honour. However, the one who stands for his honour is his enemy”... (Ibid, 255-256).*

This characterization of Fitawurari Meshesha having a capricious temperament leads not to make good relationship with his tenants. This is because, he is portrayed as having contradictory ideas and domineering person who is intolerant of anybody. Moreover, this portrayal of Fitawurari Meshesha is full of contradictions. Some of the contradictions are: seems kind but acts unkindly, seems generous but acts meanly, seems honest but acts dishonestly, seems innocent but acts arrogantly, seems democrat but acts undemocratically. Then, the characterization of Fitawurari Meshesha is deconstructed in these contradictions. Because, these contradictions are used for the understanding of the overall feature of feudal lords symbolized by Fitawurari Meshesha. Therefore, contradictions here are used for generating meaning differently other than that of the characterization of Fitawurari Meshesha. In addition to this portrayal of Fitawurari Meshesha having a capricious personality; he is also depicted as a feudal lord who looked down on peasants with contempt. Hence, he epitomizes feudal lords and amplifies the basic exponents of the moribund social systems of feudal Ethiopia.

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**Kuna\***: an instrument used to measure grains

**Toffa\***: an instrument made of clay used as a cooking pot and storage

This is because, his inflated self-esteem and his stature of nobility urge him to treat peasants as creatures created to serve the landlords. This is clearly seen as follows:

**"ፊታውራሪ፡መሸሻ፡በመሰረቱ፡ባላገርን፡የሚንቁ፡ባላገር፡ለመኩዋንንት፡የተፈጠረ፡እንጂ፡እንደ፡መኩዋንንት፡የተፈጠረ፡የማይመሰላቸው፡ሰው፡ነበሩ።"**(ዝኒ ከማሁ፡፤፪፻፶፯)

*“Basically, Fitawurari Meshesha strongly looked down peasants with contempt. He does not think that peasants are created like landlords. However, he is a person who thinks that peasants are created for the landlords to serve them.” (Ibid, 257).*

This depiction of Fitawurari Meshesha projects his vanity and prejudices. Moreover, this prejudice and smug sense of honour is the driving force for the inevitable creation of conflicts between landlords and peasants. Hence, the relationship between landlords and tenants in their everyday lifestyles clearly depicts the social system of feudal Ethiopia. The livelihood and existence of feudal lords depends on the labour of their tenants, though they do not want to consider peasants as human beings. Based on the social system prevailing in the society, peasants are responsible to fulfill the needs of their lords. On the contrary, feudal lords have an absolute right to collect tributes from their fiefs. When this hierarchical relation is violated, there will be a conflict between them. This is most evidently seen in *Fikir Eske Mekabir* when Fitawurari Meshesha’s tenants come to congratulate him on the peaceful settlement and because of his being “victorious” over Fitawurari Asegie. Fitawurari Meshesha says the following concerning tenants visit:

[1] "ወይፈንና፡ባላገር፡ከባድ፡ዛገላ፡ካልተጫነበት፡ልክ፡አይገባም፡፡" አሉ፡ፊታውራሪ፡

[2] "እንዴት?" አሉ፡ባላምባራስ፡ምትኩ፡፡

[3] "ከጎንቻ፡ጉልቴ፡የመጡትን፡ባላገርኾች፡አታይም! አንድ፡የበግ፡ግልገልንኩ፡ላይዙ፡ ባዶ፡እጃቸውን፡እንኩዋን፡ደስ፡ያለህ፡ሊሉኝ፡መጡ፡፡ምክንያቱ፡ሽክማቸውን፡ስላቀለል ሁላቸው፡ነው፡፡እኔ፡ገዢ፡እነሱ፡ተገዢ፡መሆናቸውን፡እንዲያውቁ፡ባደርጋቸው፡ሽክማ ቸውን፡ትንሽ፡ከበድ፡ባደርግባቸው፡እንዲህ፡ባልተጫወቱብኝ፡ነበር፡፡" (ዝኒከማሁ፡፤ ፩፻፸፮)

[1] “A bull and a peasant do not be submissive unless they carry a heavy load,” says Fitawurari.

[2] “How?” says Balambaras Mitiku.

[3] “Don’t you see the peasants who came from my fief Goncha? They came to congratulate me without even bringing me a lamb. Since I have eased their burden, they have treated me disrespectfully. But had I made them realise that I am the ruler and they are the ruled by making their burden a little bit heavier than before, they would not have ridiculed me like this...(Ibid, 176).

From this extract, we can understand that Fitawurari Meshesha’s feudal pride and honour is hurt beyond limit. This is because, his tenants failed to bring presents while they were visiting

him. Fitawurari Meshesha considers this as a disobedience that resulted from the decreasing of burden of peasants. Fitawurari Meshesha has an ideology that the more a peasant is oppressed the more submissive he would be. This is revealed by his utterance above. Here, the thought of Fitawurari Meshesha is full of oppositions that are used to show the deconstructive nature of the novel. The basic binary oppositions in the above excerpt are ruler over ruled, oppressive over submissive and respect over disrespect. Besides this, it shows the contemptuous and stubborn nature of feudal lords. Nevertheless, the spokesperson of the oppressed class, Gudu Kassa subverts the presumed rendition of feudal lords towards peasants. He has the following to say as a reply to Fitawurari Meshesha's anger about peasants who fail to bring presents:

"...እኒህ፡ባላገሮች፡በርስዎ፡ጉልት፡ስለሰፈሩ፡ገመታ፡ይከፍሉዎታል ፤ ከዚህ፡በላይ፡ስራ  
ቸውን፡ፈተው፡ያንድ፡ቀን፡መንገድ፡ተገዘው፡እርስዎን፡እንኩዋን፡ደስ፡ያለዎ፡ለማለት፡  
እዚህ፡ድረስ፡መጡ ፤ አሁን፡ይህ፡ሁሉ፡አልበቃ፡ብሎ፡ነው፡እርስዎን፡ደስ፡ስላለዎ፡ሰንጋ፡  
የሚከፍሉ? እግዚአብሔር፡ይህን፡ግፍ፡ሲያይ፡መክት፡አያወርድም?" አለ፡ጉዳ፡ካሳ፡፡  
(ዝኒ. ከማሁ ፤ ፩፻፸፯-፩፻፸፯)

*"...Due to the settlement of these peasants in your fief, they pay you the estimated value of their annual products. Besides this, they have come here just to congratulate you by making a full day's journey and leaving their jobs aside. It is because all this fails to be adequate that they are now charged to pay steers for the simple reason that you are pleased. Wouldn't God send his wrath when he beholds this atrocity? (Ibid, 176-177).*

When Gudu Kassa comments Fitawurari Meshesha and argues against to know the reason why peasants should bring a present of steer because of his being pleased, Meshesha and his retinue are strongly rebuking Kassa's advocacy of democracy. The above passage has contradictions based on the idea of bringing presents. That is, it is deconstructed with the binaries such as fair over unfair, rational over irrational and generous over greedy. The above serious anger of Meshesha does not live long; it vanishes when he hears the songs and poems, which are composed by the peasants of Goncha that extolled Meshesha's valour and "victory" over Fitawurari Asegie. This scene clearly shows the personality of Meshesha.

Although the above conflict of Meshesha and peasants is settled peacefully by flattering him with songs and poems, it is no longer to linger over years. The conflict erupts again when peasants who lived in the fiefs of Enemay fail to bring presents to Fitawurari Meshesha during Easter. As a result, Meshesha strongly requests the delegates of peasants to know the reason

why he is not allowed to break the fast. Hence, the peasants justify the reasons of their failure to bring presents during Easter as follows:

"ደሀ፡ምንጊዜም፡ሞልቶት፡አያውቅም፡፡ምን፡ጊዜም፡ቢሆን፡ከደሀ፡ጉድለት፡ከጌታ፡ምህረት፡ተለይቶ፡አያውቅም፡፡ስለዚህ፡አልሞላልን፡ብሎ፡አጥፍተናልና፡ጌታችን፡ምህረት፡እንዲያደርጉልን፡ነው፡የምንለምነው!" በማለት....አጎንብሰው፡ምህረት፡ይለምኑ፡ጀመር፡፡(ዝኒ ከማሁ፡፤፪፻፲፩)

*"The poor has never been plentiful. Never has the poor been away from flaws as mercy has never been part from the Lord. Since we have unintentionally wronged you, we demand our lord to bestow your forgiveness upon us"... so saying they bowed and asked him to forgive them. (Ibid, 211)*

The peasants request for Meshesha's forgiveness shows the hierarchical relationship of feudal Ethiopia. The idea is expressed by the binary opposition of mastery over submissiveness, richness over poorness and effective over defective. However, this imploring of the peasants is completely refused by Fitawurari Meshesha. Because, he considers this situation as a defiance of his honour and valour. Because of this, Fitawurari Meshesha responds to the above utterance of the delegates of the peasants and what he has heard from his official Bilata Mengistu as follows:

"የልባችሁን፡ሰርታችሁ፡አሁን፡ካንገት፡በላይ፡ምህረት፡ልመና፡...ለመስቀልና፡ለገና፡ፍሪዳ፡የሰጠ፡ባላገር፡ለፋሲካ፡አይሰጥም፡ብሎ፡አዋጅ፡ያወጀ፡ማነው? እናንተ፡ያወጃችሁት፡አዋጅ፡ይሆናል! መቼም፡ባላገር፡ሲጠግብ፡ወሰኑን፡አያውቅ፡ባላገር፡እንዲህ፡ያለ፡አዋጅ፡አውጁ፡እንደሆነ፡ንገረኝ! ከዚያ፡በኋላ፡እናንተ፡ገዢዎች፡እኛ፡ተገዢዎች፡እንሆናለን!" (ዝኒ ከማሁ፡፤፪፻፲፩)

*"After you have already fulfilled your interest, you are now asking mockery of mercy. Who declares the proclamation that states the peasant who brings bullocks during Meskel and Christmas shall not bring during Easter? It may be a proclamation that is declared by you ! After all, when a peasant is conceited, he does not know his limit; tell me if peasants declare such proclamation ! After that, you will be the ruler and we will be the ruled !"(Ibid, 211).*

Fitawurari Meshesha refutes the peasants' plea and apology. Besides, he explains that the fiefs in which peasants are living are the rewards for his ancestors' blood sacrifice. Hence, this situation enrages him very much and he looks down the delegates of peasants with great wrath. To disclaim this view of Fitawurari Meshesha, one of the delegates of the peasants tells him the basic factors of their failures. These facts are the death of their cattle by diseases and the destruction of their crops by pests and snow. To denote this idea the delegate says the following:

"በነበረንጊዜ፡እንዲያለፍንግር፡ሳይደርስብን፡ሹምን፡ከማሳዘን፡ጠም፡አድሮ፡ሹምን፡ደስ፡ማሰኘትና፡ሰላምን፡ማግኘት፡ይሻላል፡እያልን፡የኛ፡ቀርቶብን፡የተቀባችሁትን፡ሰዎች፡ጌቶቻችንን፡ደስ፡ስናሰኝ፡እንኖር፡ነበር፡ሳይኖረን፡ግን፡ስንቸገር፡ባይሆን፡ጥንት፡የተሰራብንን፡እዳ፡እንከፍላለን፡እንጂ፡ያለእዳችን፡አንከፍልም፡እንላለን፡ችግራችን፡ከዚያ፡ያለፈ፡እንደሆነ፡ደግሞ፡ጥንት፡የተሰራብንን፡እዳ፡እንከፍ፡መክፈል፡ወደማንችልበት፡ሁኔታ፡እንደርሳለን፡" (ዝኒ ከማሁ፣፡፪፻፲፫)

*"When we were plentiful and were not facing such a disaster, we believe that it is better to go without supper so as to make our officials to be pleased and got peace rather than arousing their compassion. Thus, we were living in satisfying our officials' interest by leaving aside ours. When we are in trouble and become poor, we shall pay at least the debt, which was made upon us formerly. However, we do not need to pay the debt that does not concern us. When the problem we faced increases in such a way, we will be in a great trouble that we cannot afford to pay the debt which has already made upon us formerly." (Ibid, 213)*

The peasants are stating out their problems to be considered by their lord. That is, due to the prevalence of crop pests and animal diseases, they are getting poorer than before and living below subsistence. Because of this, they are unable to bring presents to their lord during holidays. Nevertheless, this idea of the peasant is completely disregarded by Fitawurari Meshesha. Then, he says the following as a response to the above utterance of the delegate of the peasants.

"ጥንት፡የተሰራብን፡እዳ፡መክፈል፡የሚገባን፡መክፈል፡የማይገባን፡የምትለው፡ምንድነው፡እባክህ? ባላገር፡ለከፍለው፡የሚገባውን፡ገዢ፡ይወስናል፡እንጂ፡ከመቼ፡ወዲህ፡ነው፡ባላገር፡መወሰን፡የጀመረ?" አሉ፡ፊታውራሪ... (ዝኒ ከማሁ፣፡፪፻፲፫)

*"What you are talking about? 'The debt that was made upon us formerly, that we should pay and we should not!' What do you mean by that? It is the lord's duty to decide the payment of the peasants! Since when the peasants start to make decisions by themselves?" says Fitawurari... (Ibid, 231)*

This response of Fitawurari Meshesha shows his enragement and astonishment by the peasants' attitude towards bringing presents. Meshesha associates the issue with his honour of nobility. Where as the peasants are relating it with their survival. This is the result of the ideological difference in the social system in which these polarities exist.

As a reply to Fitawurari Meshesha's questions, one of the delegates of the peasants gives a clear explanation based on his experience of being a tenant for a long period. He clearly remarks what is expected from peasants to pay and not to pay. The other two delegates ascertain this view of the delegate by proposing the same argument. When Meshesha hears



this from the three delegates of the peasants, he lets them be put in chain. Nevertheless, with the mediation of Kegnazmach Akalu, they stay a short while to put in chain. When Kegnazmach Akalu tries to mediate the conflict, Meshesha condemns his idea taking the defiance of peasants as the result of his administration problem. Hence, Meshesha blames Kegnazmach Akalu's mediation as follows:

"እየው፡አንተ፡የምትሰራው፡ስራ፡የሚያስከትለውን!"... "ባላገርና፡ወይፈን፡ከባድ፡ዛዝላ፡ካልጫኑብት፡ልክ፡አይገባም፡ብልህ፡የለም፡ባላገርን፡መግዛት፡ባላገር፡መስሎ፡ነው፡እያልህ፡ዝቅ፡አድርገህ፡በባላገር፡ተራ፡አቁመህ፡አላይተኸን፡የነሱ፡ጉዋደኞች፡አድርገኸን፡አሁን፡ናቁንና፡ግብር፡አንከፍልም፡አሉን፡" (ዝኒ ከማሁ፣፤፪፻፲፯)

*"Have you seen the consequences of what you have done?"... "When I told you the fact that a peasant and a bull would be more submissive when he is obliged to carry a heavy load, you claimed it is better to rule a peasant by resembling a peasant. By that, you let us down and equated with peasants. In addition, you made us their colleagues. Therefore, they looked down on us and refused to pay tributes." (Ibid, 217).*

As stated above, Fitawurari Meshesha's conflict is not only with the peasants but also with his officials. He attributes the situation because of his officials' failure to fulfill their duties and responsibilities. Due to his excessive pride in his aristocratic lineage, he takes his idea as right and just. As a result, he blames and condemns others' ideas. To disclaim Fitawurari Meshesha's idea, Kegnazmach Akalu says the following:

"የለም፡ጌታየ፡እኔ፡የሰራሁት፡አይደለም፡ዛሬ፡የደረሰውን፡ያደረሰ፡ዛሬ፡የደረሰው፡የደረሰ፡እኔ፡የምለው፡ባለ፡መሆኑ፡ነው፡ከሁሉ፡አስቀድሞ፡ርስተ፡ጉልትዎን፡እኔ፡እንዳስተዳድርልዎ፡አደራውን፡በኔ፡ከጣሉ፡በሁዋላ፡በጎን፡አሽከር፡መላክና፡ከባላገር፡ጋር፡መጣላት፡ባላስፈለገ፡ነበር፡...አሁን፡አይነተኛው፡ነገር፡እነዚህ፡ባላገርች፡የታሰሩ፡እንደሆነ፡ሁለተኛ፡ወደነዚህ፡ሦስት፡ጉልቶች፡ሰው፡መላክም፡ከነሱ፡ግብር፡ማግኘትም፡አይችሉም፡ማለት፡ነው፡" (ዝኒ ከማሁ፣፤፪፻፲፯)

*"No, my lord, I am not to blame for what is happening now. What is happening right now is the result of the violation of my idea. After all, you do not need to send stewards and quarrel with peasants, since once you gave me the responsibility to administer your fiefs. The main thing now is it is difficult to collect tributes and send people to these three fiefs from now onwards if you arrest these peasants." (Ibid, 217).*

Although Kegnazmach Akalu remarks the inevitability of the rebellion of peasants and suggests how to resolve the conflict, Meshesha tends to forget that peasants have an invincible might. Rather than finding a solution for the resolution of the conflict, Meshesha makes the following remarks contemptuously:

"ባላገር፡አድሞ፡ማነን፡አሸንፎ፡ያውቃል? ባላገር፡ደካማ፡አይወድም፡ባላገር፡ብርቱ፡ይወዳል፡። በባላገር፡ላይ፡እጅህን፡ማጠንከር፡ብቻ፡ነው፡ያለብህ፡። እጅህ፡ከጠነከረ፡ባላገር፡ታልቦ፡አያፈጅም፡ጋንህ፡እስኪሞላ፡ልታልበው፡ትችላለህ፡ባላገር፡ያለቅሳል፡ያማርራል፡ፊሪ፡ካገኘም፡ያስፈራል፡። ነገር፡ግን፡ቆራጥና፡ደፋር፡ካጋጠመው፡በመጨረሻ፡ይሸነፋል፡። በመጨረሻ፡የተጠየቀውን፡ይከፍላል፡። ባላገር፡ቆራጥም፡ደሀም፡ሆኖ፡አያውቅም፡። ባላገር፡ምንም፡ቢበዛ፡ብዙ፡የሚወደውና፡የሚያስበው፡ነገር፡ስላለው፡ደፍሮ፡አይዋጋም፡። ባላገር፡የሚበላው፡ቢያጣ፡ይከፍለው፡አጥቶ፡አያውቅም፡ይባላል፡እስከ፡ተረቱ፡።" (ዝኪ ከማሁ፡፤ ፪፻፲፯-፪፻፲፰)

*"Against whom peasants did rebel and get victory? Peasants dislike the weak but like the mighty. All you have to do is toughen your arm against peasants. If you harden your arm against peasants, you can milk them continuously; you can also milk them until your pitcher is getting full! It is the nature of peasants to lament, embitter and even threaten when they get the cowardly. However, when peasants are faced with the resolute and the courageous, they will surrender completely and pay what they are asked. Peasants have never become resolute and poor ever since. Although peasants are too many they do have many things to care for and to worry about. Hence, they do not have the courage to fight back. As the tales say peasants might not have anything to eat but they have never lacked something to pay!" (Ibid, 217-218)*

What is brought to the fore here is the more peasants are oppressed the more submissive they would be. Besides this, Meshesha completely tends to forget that peasants have the faculty to hate, their own thoughts, feelings and courage to humiliate him. However, some members of the feudal class such as Kegnazmach Akalu and Balambaras Mitiku feel this. That is, one day these despised and oppressed peasants will revolt and power may shift unless this conflict is solved peacefully. This is clearly portrayed by Kegnazmach Akalu as:

"ባላገር፡አድሞ፡ማነን፡አሸንፎ፡ያውቃል፡ላሉት፡ሩቅ፡ሳንሄድ፡በስዎና፡በኔ፡እድሜ፡እነደጃች፡ሸበሽን፡እነደጃች፡ካሳን፡እነፊታውራሪ፡ይልማ፡ተክሉን፡ድል፡እያደረገ፡አስር፡ያገር፡ሁሉ፡መሳለቂያ፡አድርጎዋቸው፡እንደቀረ፡ራስዎ፡ያውቃሉ፡። ከዚህ፡ሌላ፡ባላገር፡እስዎ፡እንደሚሉት፡አይደለም፡። ባላገር፡ልክ፡እንደመሬት፡ታጋሽ፡ነው፡። ልክ፡እንደመሬት፡እስኪሰለቸው፡ይታረሳል፡ይቆፈራል፡ይረገጣል፡። መሬት፡ሲሰለቸው፡ሲበቃው፡ቢያርሱትም፡ቢቆፍሩትም፡አላበቅልም፤ አላፈራም፤ እንደሚል፡ባላገርም፡ሲሰለቸው፡ሲበቃው፡እንቢ፡አልከፍልም፡ይላል! ከዚያ፡በሁዋላ፡ባላገርን፡ሊያሰገድድ፡የሚችል፡ሀይል፡ከሰማይ፡እንደሆን፡እንጂ፡ከምድር፡አይገኝም፡።" ... አሉ ቀኛዝማች፡። (ዝኪ ከማሁ፡፤ ፪፻፲፰)

*"With reference to what you have said, 'against whom peasants did rebel and get victory?'" There is evidence in our time without going farther. You know very well the fact that peasants have defeated and became victorious over noblemen such as Dejach Shibeshi, Dejach Kassa and Fitawurari Yilma Teklu and have made them a laughing stock to everybody by putting them in chains (detaining). On top of that, peasants are not as you characterized them. Peasants are as patient as Earth. As earth, they could be ploughed, farmed and*

*trampled until they are bored. When earth is over ploughed and cultivated, it is unable to raise crops and to give yields. Likewise, when peasants are getting bored and oppressed adequately, they become disobedient and refuse to pay! After that, there won't exist any power that is capable of forcing and compelling the peasants other than the supernatural power," says Kegnazmach. (Ibid, 218)*

In the above extract, we can see the logocentric ideas of the feudal system portrayed by Haddis. The first idea is that though peasants resist and become patient enough about the suppression of landlords for sometime, they will not remain passive forever. When peasants are being bored and fed up, they will be disobedient to their lords and refuse to pay the tributes. The other polarity is if peasants are oppressed much and faced with a courageous lord, they would be more submissive and able to pay tributes. Thus, the presence of these two contradictory ideas shows the deconstructive nature of *Fikir Eske Mekabir*.

To strengthen Kegnazmach Akalu's idea, Balambaras Mitiku disclosed what he saw while he was visiting his fief at Berberma. He sees that peasants are rebelling against Fitawurari Meshesha's wrong deeds. Besides this, Kegnazmach Akalu emphasized his idea by arguing against Meshesha's argument. He clearly points out bringing present during holidays is not a rule proclaimed over peasants in the system. He also underlines that campaigning against peasants due to this reason is a humiliation to nobility. Gudu Kassa on his part rebukes Meshesha as the one who lives behind the times and advises him to release the peasants. After Meshesha's relatives proposed their views about the dispute, Kegnazmach Akalu mediates and gives one more chance to the delegates of the peasants to express their views. On this occasion, the delegates kindly ask their lord to see and read the letter, which is written by Abeje Belew who is the representative of the peasants. This letter expresses the ultimatum of the peasants to Fitawurari Meshesha. The part of the letter reads as follows:

"ጌታችን፡ጀግንነትዎ፡የታወቀ፡ስለሆነ፡እኛን፡ድሆች፡ባላገሮችዎን፡ወግተው፡በሀይል፡ለማስገበር፡ያስቡ፡ይሆናል። ነገር፡ግን፡ፊታውራሪ፡አይባሉ፡እንጂ፡በኛ፡በድሆች፡ባላገሮችዎ፡መሀከልም፡ብዙ፡ጀግኞች፡አሉ፡እነሱን፡ፊታውራሪ፡አድረገን፡እንቀበልዎታለን። የሚያስከብርዎና፡የሚያስፈራዎ፡ስልጣንዎ፡ነው፡እንጂ፡ስልጣንዎ፡ከሌለ፡ከመሀከላችን፡እንዳንዳ፡ደሀ፡ሽማግሌ፡መሆንዎን፡አናስታውስዎታለን።... ጌታችን፡ግብር፡አስገብራለሁ፡ብለው፡ሰው፡ቢልኩ፡ወይም፡ራስዎ፡ቢመጡ፡ለዘረፋ፡አንደመጣችሁ፡ብን፡ሽፍቶች፡ወይም፡ቀማኞች፡ቆጥረን፡ለንዲህ፡ያሉ፡ሽፍቶችና፡ቀማኞች፡የሚገባውን፡ቅጣት፡ል

ንፈጽምባችሁ፡የታጠቅን፡መሆናችንን፡እንዲያውቁልን፡በትህትና፡እንለምናለን፡።(ዘኪ ከማሁ፡፤፪፻፳፭-፪፻፳፮)

*“Our lord, since your valour is already known, you may think to collect tributes by campaigning and getting triumph upon your poor tenants. However, there are courageous poor peasants among us, though they are not called Fitawurari. We will receive you appointing them Fitawurari. You are honoured and scared by your power. However, when you loose your power, we recall you that you are the same as the old tenant among us... Our lord, we kindly inform you that we are already armed to carryout possible chastises that could be sentenced upon robbers and rebels. If you yourself come to collect tributes or if you send officials to collect tributes, we will consider you as a robber or a rebel who comes to plunder us and then we will wage a campaign against you.” (Ibid, 225-226).*

Peasants expressed their amputation and the invincibility of their might by Abeje Belew who wrote the above letter. However, when Meshesha heard this idea of peasants, his feudal pride and honour is hurt beyond the limit. As a result of this, he makes contemptuous remarks upon peasants rather than giving resolution to the dispute. Here are some of his remarks:

"ግብር፡አስገብራለሁ፡ብለህ፡የመጣህ፡እንደሆነ፡አንወጋሃለን፡ብሎ፡ስድብ፡ልኩብኝ፡ባላገር፡ሄጄ፡ሲወጋኝ፡አያለሁብሎ፡ምንይደረጋል? ባላገር፡ስለአስፈራራኝ፡መልካም፡አባት፡ያቆዩኝን፡ጉልቴን፡አለቃለሁ? ባላገር፡አዋርዶኝ፡ጉሮሮዬ፡አህል፡ይውጥልኛል? እንቅልፍ፡ይወስደኛል?" አሉ፡። ፊታውራሪ፡ብብርቱ፡ቁጣ፡።(ዘኪ ከማሁ፡፤፪፻፳፮-፪፻፳፯)

*“The peasants are sending an insult to combat me when I go to my fiefs to collect tributes. However, I will go there and see when peasants combat me! What else could I do then? Should I let go my fiefs, which was kept by my genuine father because of the threatening words of peasants? When peasants humiliate me, would my throat allow me to swallow food? Would sleep ever come to me?” says Fitawurari with great anger.” (Ibid, 226-227).*

When Meshesha utters this as a response to the peasants’ letter, the progressive and outstanding headed man of the feudal class, Kegnazmach Akalu advocates for peaceful resolution of this conflict. In response to the above utterance of Meshesha, Akalu says:

"ወደጥል፡ከሚመራ፡ነገር፡አስቀድሞ፡መሸሽ፡ዘዴ፡አዋቂ፡ያሰኛል፡እንጂ፡አያዋርድም! የሚያዋርደው፡ጥል፡ከተነሳ፡በሁዋላ፡መሸሽ፡ወይም፡በተነሳው፡ጥል፡ድል፡መሆን፡ነው! " አሉ፡። ቀኛዝማች፡።(ዘኪ ከማሁ፡፤፪፻፳፯)

*“Retreating from a matter that leads to a clash is considered as being wise and it does not humiliate! What humiliates is retreating from a duel when a clash is occurred or defeated in the duel,” says Kegnazmach. (Ibid, 227)*

Furthermore, Meshesha does not take into account the advocacy and mediation of Kegnazmach Akalu. Because, solving the conflict peacefully without confrontation is taken as a humiliation of his feudal pride. As a result, Meshesha says the following:

**"እኔ፡መሸሻ፡ጥል፡ከተነሳ፡ለባላገር፡ነው፡የምሸሸው? ወይስ፡ባላገር፡ነው፡ድል፡የሚያደረገኝ? ባላገር፡ይገድለኝ፡ይሆናል፤ ነፍሴና፡ስጋዬ፡አብረው፡እያሉ፡ግን፡ለባላገር፡መሸሸና፡ድል፡መሆን፡አይታሰብም! ባታውቀኝ፡ነው?" (ዝኒ ከማሁ፡፤፪፻፳፯)**

*"Is it me, Meshesha, who retreats from peasants when a clash breaks out? On the other hand, is it peasants that defeat me? Peasants may be able to kill me. Nevertheless, while I am alive, retreating from peasants and defeat by them is unthinkable! You do not know me very well!" (Ibid, 227)*

Fitawurari Meshesha is boasting and expressing his contempt towards peasants in this way. However, due to the continuous persuasion of Kegnazmach Akalu, Meshesha reaches an agreement to release the delegates of the peasants and give responsibility to him to alleviate the dispute. The delegates of peasants are released on the condition that they promised to ask their people to offer Meshesha six bullocks as an apology for their failure of bringing present during Easter. When the peasants heard what Meshesha has done upon the delegates, they completely refused to pay this fine and any tribute. As a result, the temporal appointment of Abeje Belew as leader of warriors becomes permanent and the peasants decide not to see Meshesha again as their lord. Meshesha heard the curse, the insult and the mockery of the peasants during their session from his servants that were arrested by Abeje Belew. Thus, he decides to wage a punitive campaign against peasants. Meshesha is informed that peasants are getting ready for war when he comes to them to collect tributes by force. However, Meshesha shows negligence to peasants' readiness and rebellion. Meshesha refuses it by quoting the saying "the readiness and rebellion of rats is until cats' arrival". He equated the rebellion of peasants by the rebellion of rats. He symbolizes himself as a cat and peasants as rats. The symbolic opposition of cats over rats clearly expresses his contempt to peasants. In addition to this, since Meshesha is inflated with self-esteem and excessive pride, he neglects and even does not consider his campaign against peasants as war.

Meshesha starts his punitive campaign from his fief Enamora. When he arrives there, he encounters no resistance since all the able-bodied men have disappeared from their dwelling houses. Meshesha tortures and harasses the impaired people, children and women who are found in the villages of Enomora. Besides this, Meshesha plunders all invaluable materials of

the peasants. After a few days, he does the same on Gullit, one of his fiefs. Lastly, he marches on Gorgor and plunders, whips and harasses the local people. Since he again encounters no resistance in his last campaign too, he is satisfied and delighted with the sources of his expedition. However, by night he plans to return home via his first fief Enamora, the house he is residing is suddenly put on fire. When he wakes up and comes out from the house to escape from the fire, he becomes a pray of Abeje Belew's hand which is "as hard as iron". By this, the author shows the inevitability of change and subverts the hierarchy.

Generally, the quoted passages show the binary oppositions of master over servitor. Moreover, as the utterances express different views of the different social class, they clearly reveal the gaps between the social systems of feudal Ethiopia. These gaps are useful references to highlight the hidden ideology of the system. Therefore, Haddis uses these differences stylistically for thematic building. In addition to this landlord over tenant binary oppositions, the madam over slave relationship of Weyzero Tiruaynet and Habtish is also a good example of master over servitor.

#### **4.2.2. Feminist Deconstruction**

Deconstruction in feminism asserts and justifies the equilibrium power relationship between male and female. This is because, women are marginalized and oppressed in every lifestyle that involves them. Moreover, this marginalization and oppression of women is associated with patriarchy. Therefore, feminist deconstruction is the process of juxtaposing the two sexes without any forms of patriarchy. Besides this, feminist deconstruction dismantles binary oppositions in a patriarchal society and subverts the established traditional gender roles of this patriarchal society. Here, feminist deconstruction is not only dismantling and subverting the established traditional gender roles in a patriarchal society but also demystifying these traditional gender roles, which cast women as submissive, powerless, selfless, irrational, weak, etc creature.

Based on this, Haddis Alemayehu reveals the complexities and tragic incidents in the life of women in the patriarchal feudal society of Ethiopia. Haddis pinpoints that the society of feudal Ethiopia is androcentric and self oriented. To show this male dominated patriarchal society, Haddis uses female characters and clearly depicts their role in a given family in particular (Meshesha's family) and in the society in general. In presenting how traditional gender roles

dominate the social life of women, Haddis portrays the character Wudinesh Betamu. That is, since she had been widowed three times, different suitors have shunned her. Due to this, she has been called as “an epidemic for husbands”. Not only the traditional gender roles cast her as such but also she herself accepts and abandons any hope of marrying again. The following utterance of Wudinesh shows this fact.

**"የሞተ፡እንደሆንን?እኔስ፡መቼም፡ሳፍር፡ስሰቃይ፡ኖራ፡እንዳልፍ፡ፈርዶብኛል፡  
በሱ፡ላይ፡ለምን፡የሞት፡ፍርድ፡ላስፈርድበት?"(ዝኒ ከማሁ ፤ 10)**

*"What if he dies? After all, I am once punished by God to die in humiliation and in agony! Why I pronounce death sentence upon him?"(Ibid, 14)*

This shows that women were traditionally subject to patriarchal cultures and domination in feudal Ethiopia. Wudinesh becomes submissive due to the prevailing ideology of the society. She is marginalized in the social affair that involves her because of the death of her husbands. In addition to this, since Wudinesh gave up hope of marrying again and accepted her alienation by the society she is living in. She shows unwillingness to accept Bogale’s proposal. She says the following concerning this:

**"አያ፡ቦጋለ፡የደረሰብኝንና፡...ሰው፡...የሚለውን፡ሁሉ፡እያወቀ፡ላግባ፡በሎ፡መጠየቁ፡  
ማዘኔን፡ስለተረዳ፡ደስ፡ላሰኛት፡ልጽደቅባት፡በሎ፡ነው?ወይስ..ምንድነው?"(ዝኒ  
ከማሁ ፤ 11)**

*"Why did Aya Bogale decide to marry me knowing what happened upon me and what the people said? Is that his being conscious about my sorrowfulness lets him make me happy and do righteous deeds upon me? Or else ... what is it?"(Ibid, 15).*

Haddis reveals the culture of the society by portraying women as weak and irrational. They are also easily persuaded by the patriarchal culture and become submissive. Furthermore, Haddis reflects how the social system of feudal Ethiopia is privileging male and promoting male dominated hierarchy. Although it is a common practice of most women in most parts of rural Ethiopia until now, Haddis describes the life of women as follows:

**"አቶ፡ቦጋለ፡ሲገቡ፡እመት፡ውድነሽ፡እላይ፡ምድጃ፡ድስት፡እታች፡ምድጃ፡ምጣድ፡ጥደው፡  
ልጃቸውን፡በግራ፡ጎናቸው፡ይዘው፡ራት፡ቶሎ፡ለማድረስ፡ከላይ፡ታች፡ይጣደፉ፡ነበር፡፡  
(ዝኒ ከማሁ ፤ 12)**

*"When Ato Bogale entered, madam Wudinesh put a saucepan on the fire at the upper oven and a griddle at the lower oven. She was wandering here and there hastily carrying her son on her back to cook dinner as fast as possible."(Ibid, 27)*

Here, Haddis shows the suffering and agony of women in this particular patriarchal society. That is, women are responsible to fulfill the needs of their husbands. If they are unable to do so, their husbands may beat them as Bogale tried to act. Besides this, what is portrayed above is the subordination of women to the masculine order of the phallogocentric feudal society of Ethiopia. Thus, Haddis reveals the ideological make up of women, their submissiveness, and agony in the conversation of Bezabih and Taitu.

"...ጠላ፡ሰጥታቸው፡እየጠጡ፡እሳት፡አዩሞቁ፡ሲጫወቱ፡እስከ፡እላይ፡ምድጃ፡ድስት፡እታች፡ምድጃ፡ምጣድ፡ጥዳ፡ትጣደ፡ጀመር፡።  
 [1]"ለመሆኑ፡እኛ፡ባንመጣ፡ጠም፡ልታድራ፡ኖርዋል?" አለ በዛብህ።  
 [2]" ጠምማ፡እንዴት፡አድራሰሁ? ያኑ፡የሴት፡እራት፡እበላ፡ነበር፡እንጂ፡።"  
 [3]"ምንድንነው፡የሴት፡እራት? ከወንድ፡እራት፡የተለዩ፡ነው?"  
 [4]"አኦ... ሴት፡ጥሬውን፡ምናምኑን፡በልታ፡ታድራለች፤ የሴት፡ልብዋ፡ነው፡እንጂ፡ሆድ  
 ዋ፡አይመርጥም፡ይባላል።" አለች፡ጣይቱ... ከጢስ፡ጋር፡አዩታገለች.. (ዘኒ  
 ከማሁ፡፤ ፫፻፶፩)

*After she gave them Tella (local bear), they were playing drinking the bear by the fire light while she was in a hurry by putting a saucepan on the fire of the upper oven and griddle on the fire of the lower oven.*

- [1] *“By the way, will you stay overnight without dinner if we did not come back?” says Bezabih...*
- [2] *“How can I stay overnight without dinner? I will have that of women’s dinner?”*
- [3] *“What is woman’s dinner? Is that different from males’?”*
- [4] *“Oh... a woman can stay overnight eating grains and something related. As the saying goes what makes choice is a woman’s heart not her belly,” says Taitu while she was wrestling with smoke... (Ibid, 351).*

This dialogue portrays the suffering, agony and submissiveness of women as well as their place in the society. That is, while males were playing drinking bear, she was cooking dinner. Besides this, when they did not come back from the place they were before, she might stay overnight without having had dinner. This shows how the society is androcentric and patriarchal. This is because, as pointed out by Taitu in the absence of their husbands at home women may not feed themselves properly.

Furthermore, the other thing as far as feminist deconstruction is concerned in *Fikir Eske Mekabir* is that of the submissiveness of Weyzero Tiruayent. As one can easily understand the marriage of Weyzero Tiruayent and Fitawurari Meshesha is the role model of marriage in feudal Ethiopia. Because it is based on their aristocratic descent. Although their marriage is



based on the equality of their aristocratic lineage, Meshesha does not treat Tiruayent as an equal. He always rebukes and refutes her idea. She also calls him saying ‘my lord’ instead of treating him as her husband. This shows how women are peripheralized so that they would abide by the prescribed rules of male and male dominated society. For instance, when Weyzero Tiruaynet wants to welcome and intends to kiss her husband’s knee on the way back from Debre Markos, Meshesha looks his wife down with hatred and says, “Your kissing is a kissing of Judea” (p.408). When this happens Tiruaynet does not say any thing rather than looking for her husband’s forgiveness. This is because, she is highly dominated by the traditional gender roles that privileges males’ supremacy. Besides, when we see the following utterance, it clearly shows the dominance of male over female.

**"ቀድመሽ፡ያንችን፡እድሜ፡እወቁ፡የሰው፡እድሜ፡አውቃለሁ፡ብሎ፡የማያውቁትን፡ነገር ለማዋለድ፡ከመቸኮል፡የራስን፡እድሜ፡ማወቅ፡ነው።" (ዝኒ ከማሁ፡፤፩፻፲)**

*“First, you should know your age before being hasty to multiply the case you do not know! Before pretending to know the age of others, you had better know your own age!”(Ibid, 110).*

Fitawurari Meshesha utters this, when the age difference of Seble Wengiel and Fitawurari Asegie becomes the issue of the family. Tiruaynet is arguing to the issue of having a successful married life with her husband in spite of their age differences. However, this argument of Tiruaynet enrages Meshesha and rebukes her for exaggerating the age difference between them. As we can understand from the conversation, the age difference between a husband and a wife is not an issue during feudal Ethiopia. This shows that the society is highly patriarchal and privileges males. As we can see in *Fikir Eske Mekabir*, even if a man is very old, he is able to marry a woman of his choice. However, when the prime time of getting married of a woman passes, she is considered as an old maid. To substantiate this, let us see the following dialogue:

- [1]"አሁንም፡ለማን፡ይስጡዋት፡ጠያቂ፡ሲጠፋ?..."
- [2]"...ፊታውራሪ፡እስኪ፡ጠይቀዋል፡አሉ? አለች፡ደብራቱ፡ የሽሙጥ፡ሳቅ፡እያሳች።"
- [3]"የትኛው፡አሰጌ?"
- [4]"እኒህ፡የቢቸናው፡ፊታውራሪ፡አሰጌ።"
- [5]"ምን፡ልጅ፡አላቸው?"
- [6]"ለራሳቸው፡ነው፡እንጂ፡ምን፡ልጅ፡አላቸው።"
- [7]"ለራሳቸው? አረ፡የዲማው፡አባቴ፡የልጅ፡ልጃቸው፡አትሆንም!"
- [8]"እንዲያውም፡ይግረምሽ፡በልጃገረድ፡ስም፡አላገባም፡ብለው፡ሳይፋረሱ፡አይቀርም፡ ይባላል!"

[9]"አረብተፋረሱምን፡በወጣት፡እንዲት፡ፍሬ፡ልጅ፡ሞት፡የረሳቸውን፡አሮጌ፡ሰብሳቢ፡ መሆንዋ ፤ አባትዋ፡ቤት፡ብትቀመጥ፡ምን፡ይጎድልባታል!"(ዝኒ ከማሁ ፤ ፹፯-፹፰)

- [1] *But now, for whom shall they give her hand in the absence of a suitor!....*
- [2] *"Oh! It is said that Fitawurari Asegie asked for the hand of her.," says Debitu with veiled smile*
- [3] *"Which Asegie is he?"*
- [4] *"He is Fitawurari Asegie of Bichena?"*
- [5] *"Does he have a son?"*
- [6] *"It is for him, he does not have any son?"*
- [7] *"For himself? Oh, my Lord of Dima! Could she not be his granddaughter?"*
- [8] *"For your surprise it is said that they might disagree because he refused to marry her as a virgin."*
- [9] *"Oh that is good! She would not dare do such a thing this young woman! Why does she take care of this doddering old man who is forgotten by death? She may not feel helpless when she lives in her father's house."(Ibid, 87-88)*

This conversation of the villagers concerning the marriage of Seble Wengiel and Fitawurari Asegie reveals how the patriarchal society privileges male. It clearly shows how males are dominant over females in the social system. That is, at the doddering age of being grandfather, males are privileged to marry a woman who is not coming of age and yet not married before. However, on the side of females, when their prime time of marriage passes, though they did not marry before, they are considered as widows and treated as old maids. Therefore, Haddis clearly points out this in the above conversation of the villagers. This shows the patriarchal culture of feudal Ethiopia. This patriarchal culture privileges the supremacy of males in the society. For instance, it allows males to have a number of concubines and this is considered as the sign of nobility. To substantiate this, let us see the following:

"....ቤትን፡በየቦታው፡መስራት፡የጌትነት፡ወግ፡መሆኑ፡ቀርቶ፡ከነውር፡ተቆጠረ ፤ ቁባት፡ በዩቤቱ፡ማስቀመጥ፡የመከዋንንት፡ወግ፡መሆኑ፡ቀርቶ፡ከነውር፡ተቆጠረና፡ያስወቅብ፡ ጀመረ ፤ እንግዲህ፡ነውር፡ያልሆነው፡ከቶ፡ምንይሆን?"አሉ፡ፈታውራሪ...(ዝኒ ከማሁ ፤ ፩፻፲፫)

*"...Building houses in different sites is considered as indecent rather than is taken as the sign of wealthiness! Having concubine in different houses is considered as an indecency action so that it is taken as recrimination rather than being a dignity of nobleman. And then, what is absolutory not indecent?" says Fitawurari... (Ibid, 113)*

In this utterance, the author reflects the society's perception and attitude towards women. That is, women are subject to the patriarchal cultural roles and become submissive to the needs of males. This is because, patriarchy continually exerts forces that undermine women's self-

confidence and assertiveness. Being a concubine depends on the will of the noblemen but not by the will of the women. This again leads women to be exploited sexually as males are the source of the economy. In addition to this, Haddis characterizes Seble in a binary opposition of freedom over slavery (slave of honour). This is clearly seen in *Fikir Eske Mekabir* through different scenes that show the life of Seble. To illustrate this, let us see the following dialogue:

- [1]"የምትኖርበት፡አያስመኝም፡ስቃይ፡ነው፡አሉ!..."
- [2]"ኧረ፡እባክሽ፡የጌታ፡ልጅ፡ናት፡ምን፡ስቃይ፡ይኖርባታል?"
- [3]"ስቃዩስ፡ይህ፡ነው፡አይባልም፡አሉ፤ ያች፡ያመቴ፡ልጅ፡የኔ፡ልጅ፡የትሁኔ፡ጉዋደኛ፡ና ት፤ እቤታቸው፡በመጣች፡ቁጥር፡ስትነግረን፡ይገርመናል!እኔማ፡የስዋን፡ታሪክ፡ስሰማ ደሀ፡አድርጎ፡የፈጠረኝ፡አምላክ፡አመስገናለሁ!"
- [4]"ለነሱ፡ክብር፡እስዋ፡ዋጋ፡ከፋይ፡ሆነች፡ማለት ነው!"
- [5]"ታዲያስ!"
- [6]"ግሩም፡ነው!ለካ፡ከጌታ፡መወለድ፡ካንድ፡ወገን፡ሲመለከቱት፡የክብር፡ባርነት፡ነው!".  
.. (ዘኒ ከማሁ፤ ቸጅ-ቸ፱)

- [1] *“It is said that, the way she lives is not interesting as we would expect; rather she lives in restrictions no less degrading than slavery, it is an agony!...”*
- [2] *“Oh! Please she is the daughter of a nobleman, what kind of predicament she may face.*
- [3] *“The agony is not easily determined; we are really amazed by her way of life when Ametie’s daughter who is a friend of my daughter Tihunie comes frequently to our house and told us! When I heard her situation, I thank my Lord who creates me in poverty!”...*
- [4] *“Is she becoming a victim of their honour?”*
- [5] *“That is it!*
- [6] *“It is astonishing! When it is viewed from the other side, being noble birth is indeed a slavery of honour!”(Ibid, 88-89)*

As we can see from the conversation, although Seble is a daughter of a prominent nobleman, she is put under restrictions and lives in predicament like slaves. Seble has no any freedom of movement. She is not allowed to play and to be seen alone and with her peers outside her private chamber. Besides this, she is not allowed to express her attitude and feeling even in front of her parents and with the presence of other people.

Generally, Seble has no any friend other than her slave Habtish. She is always besieging by guards like a prisoner. The basic reason for the predicament of Seble Wengiel is because of the traditional gender roles and the patriarchal ideology that consider females are good, virginal and angelic if they are grown up and kept in restrictions. To substantiate this, let us see the following:

"እስቲ፡ፍረዱ፡ክብርዋን፡ጠብቃ፡ተጠንቅቃ፡ከእልፍኝ፡ሳትወጣ፡ያደገች፡ልጃገረድ፡እንደ፡ጋለሞታ፡በፈትነት፡ላግባሽ፡ተብላ፡ስትሰደብ፤ ስትዋረድ፤ ...ዝም፡ብሎ፡የሚመለከት፡አባት፡ሊደፈር፤ ሊሰደብ፤ አይገባውም?" (ዝኒ ከማሁ፤ ፩፻፳፱)

*"Please, pronounce sentence! She is a girl who has grown up preserving her honour, keeping her virginity and taking care not to go out of her private chamber. However, like a widow she is insulted and humiliated by asking her to get married as a divorced. And, a father who acts passively being aware of this has to be insulted cursed and dishonored." (Ibid, 129).*

Here, Haddis shows that keeping virginity and taking care of the good will of once woman is stereotyped as being good girl. Due to this, women are dominated by males and become submissive so as not to be considered as bad girl. Haddis reveals this fact in the patriarchal society of feudal Ethiopia. Besides this, the following excerpt shows how the social system of feudal Ethiopia is stereotyped with this patriarchy.

"...ክብርዋን፡ጠብቃ፡ከሚያሳፍርና፡ከሚያስነውር፡ነገር፡ሁሉ፡ርቃ፡ያደገችውን፡ልጅን.. ተጠንቅቄ፡ተጨንቄ፡ያሳደግሁዋትን፡ልጅን፡እንጨት፡ሲለቅሙ፡ወሀ፡ሲቀዱና፡ከብት፡ሲያግዱ፡ክብራቸውን፡በዬዱሩና፡በየመንገዱ፡ጥለው፡እንደሚገቡ፡የባላገር፡ልጆች፤ ወይም፡ወንድ፡ለመገብየት፡ብቻ፡ገበያ፡እንደሚወጡ፡ጋለሞቶች፡እጅዋን፡ጎትቼ፡ካልወሰድሁ፡ወሉን፡አፍርሻለሁ፡...(ዝኒ ከማሁ፤ ፩፻፴፩)

*"My daughter who has grown up preserving her honour and keeping away from everything shameful and embarrassing deeds and actions! ...My daughter whom I have raised carefully, taking care of her and showing a great concern to her. However, like those peasant girls who are deflowered, submitted their honour and humiliated in the forest and in every pathway while they were gathering fuel wood, fetching water and tending livestock. And also like widows who go out to the market to be seen by males and to dicker with men, you intended to get my daughter's hand easily and abrogate the agreement if this does not fulfilled" ... (Ibid, 131).*

According to the patriarchal ideology and assumption, growing up of girls with restrictions makes them modest, important, reserved, decent and well mannered and is taken as a sign of having a noble breeding. That is why Meshesha aptly advocates this patriarchal ideology. Furthermore, Haddis uses Habtish to depict the predicament of Seble Wengiel. This is because, unlike Seble, she has no any restrictions. She is able to see, meet and make friendship with anybody she likes. She can make love with and marry anyone of her choice. To provide a clear illustration of Seble Wengiel's predicament and to highlight her feeling about her being a 'slave of honour', Haddis creates artistically a situational scene. That is, he allows Seble to see Gebrie and Habtish (slaves) fondling, chasing one another and then disappearing in the grassy field of Meshesha's compound, perhaps to make love. When Seble sees this, she feels with

dejection. This is because, the freedom that slaves have reminded her being ‘a slave of honour’. Thus, she gets herself as being a ‘slave of honor’ in contrast to the freedom that slaves have. Because of this, Seble says to herself “as like butterflies and bees you have not any who should accuse you of dishonouring them and rebukes or punish you for this!”(p.98). In this soliloquy, Seble describes her bondage impressionistically in contrast to the freedom slaves have. As a result, she starts rebuking her being a daughter of a nobleman by recognizing the effects of this patriarchal society. That is, her being a ‘slave of honor’ is the result of the traditional gender roles to which her parents are advocating to live long. Moreover, she realized that her parents are promoting this patriarchal ideology for the sake of their nobility not for her honour. Due to this, Seble is becoming impatient and start grumbling about her being a daughter of a nobleman. To illustrate this, let us see the following:

**"...ሀእ፡የጌታ፡ልጅ፡የጌታ፡ልጅ፡መሆን፡እንዲሁ፡እንደኔ፡ታስሮ፡መኖር፤ የሚወዱትን፡ገር፡ሁሉ፡መመኘት፡እንጂ፡ማድረግ፡አለመቻል፡ከሆነ፡ከቅጣት፡ሁሉ፡የከፋ፡ቅጣት፡ከባርነት፡ሁሉ፡የከፋ፡ባርነት፡ነው!" አለች... (ዘኪ ከማሁ፡፤፪፻፵፬)**

*“... Ah! Being a daughter of a nobleman! If being a daughter of a nobleman is being imprisoned like me and unable to do what one wants to do, then being a daughter of a nobleman is a worst punishment of all punishments, and a worst slavery of all forms of slavery”(Ibid, 244).*

The reason why Seble bitterly utters is that she is prohibited to express her feelings by singing and dancing with her playmates at different occasions and weddings. She is also prevented by the superficial norms of the nobility to love and marry a person of her choice. When Seble understands the evils of these superficial norms of the nobility very well, she hates the system and her parents bitterly. Because of this, she starts to advocate the equality of people by defying her father’s deeds and ideas. To substantiate this, let us take the following excerpt.

**"..ብቻ፡አይሙቱ፡ታመውም፡አልቻቸው፡እንጂ፡ባላገር፡ቢማርካቸው፡በጣም፡ነው፡ደስ፡የሚለኝ!...ባላገር፡እንደላቸው፡ሰው፡መሆኑን፡አውቀው፡ከባላገር፡ጋር፡ተስማምተው፡በሰላም፡የሚኖሩት፡ሀይሉን፡ሲያሳዩቸው፡ነው፡፡ያንጊዜ፡ነው፡ሰው፡የሚሆኑት!"(ዘኪ ከማሁ፡፤፫፻፭)**

*“Although, I detest his death and never see him being sick, I will be pleased if peasants captivated him.... He will recognize that a peasant is a human being like him and lives in peace reaching in an agreement with peasants, when peasants show their might to him. At that time, he will be a human being!”(Ibid, 305).*

Here, Seble stands against the prevailing social system and advocates change being the disciple of Gudu Kassa. Besides this, she starts to break the superficial norms of the nobility

that fettered her from all kinds of social interactions. As a result, Seble defiantly announces her love for Bezabih by subverting the social boundary prevailing in the society she is living. Seble asserts this overtly as follows:

**"አልደፈረኝም፡ነፍሰጡርም፡አልሆንሁ፡ቢፈልጉ፡ባልቴት፡ያሳዩኝ፡ነገር፡ግን፡እኔ፡እወደ  
ዋለሁ፡፡"(ዘኪ ከማሁ ፤ ፬፻፲)**

*"He did not deflower me and I am not pregnant. If you want, you can let me be seen by elderly woman. However, I fall in love with him."(Ibid, 410)*

Seble dismantles the long established traditional gender roles in the patriarchal society that makes women submissive and passive. Seble expresses her feeling and love towards the person of her choice. Moreover, Meshesha refuses Seble's defiant announcement of her love for Bezabih by saying "my daughter would not love that lousy (full of itches) and son of a scrounging peasant. I have already promised to the proposal of a great nobleman with a prominent aristocratic descent" (P 410). Nevertheless, Seble proceeds to elaborate her defiance and argues against the claim of her father by ascertaining her true love towards Bezabih. To illustrate this, let us see the following:

**"ገበሬም፡ሰው፡ነው፡!የገበሬ፡ልጅም፡የሰው፡ልጅ፡ነው፡!የመከታዎንንት፡ዘር፡ጥሩ፡የገበሬ፡  
ዘር፡ጉድፍ፡መሆኑን፡አውቆ፡መከታዎንንት፡የሚመርጥ፡ይቸገርበት፡እኔ፡የገበሬ፡ልጅ፡  
የሚሉትን፡እወደዋለሁ፡!...(ዘኪ ከማሁ ፤ ፬፻፲)**

*"A peasant too is a human being! A son of a peasant is also a son of a human being! I do not think that the lineage of a nobleman is any purer than that of a peasant, and as such, I do not prefer a nobleman to a peasant. That is not my problem. I love the man whom you call the son of a peasant! " (Ibid, 410, as translated by Fikre, 1938:194)*

Here, Seble Wengiel unmasks the oppressive effects of patriarchy and reports her right of marrying whomsoever she loves. She is in the dichotomy of choosing the rich- aristocrat- ugly over the poor- peasant- handsome. Lastly, Seble dismantles these binary oppositions and perform a project of demystification by making a revolution on the challenges of hierarchical logic. Seble tells to her father the truth and refuses completely to marry the nobleman who is chosen by him by saying the following:

**"ከዛሬ፡ጀምረው፡ይወቁት፡ነፍስና፡ሰጋዮ፡አብረው፡እያሉ፡ለማልፈልገው፡ሰው፡  
ምንም፡ቢሆን፡አልሸጥም!" (ዘኪ ከማሁ ፤ ፬፻፲፩)**

*"You should bear this in mind as of today onwards! As long as my body and soul are in one piece, I won't let myself be sold to somebody whom I don't want!"(Ibid, 411).*

This rejection of the rich- aristocrat- ugly suitor approved by her father in favour of someone who is poor- peasant-handsome and subverting totally the prevailing social system makes Seble Wengiel a feminist. This is again equated her with the theory of post structuralism. That is synonymous with deconstruction. By this, Haddis presents his democratic idea of showing that marriage is a phenomenon in which everyone engages by the will of him/herself. Nevertheless, counting the honourable bone of ancestors and smelling their blood is abnormal and behind the times. Besides this, he showed that women have the right in deciding whom they marry. Hence, Haddis reveals this fact and habitual action by his narrative strategy of presenting binary oppositions that makes him a deconstructive writer.

#### **4.2.3. Religious Deconstruction**

Here, deconstruction of religion does not mean a complete refusal of religion. Moreover, it does not mean being an atheist rather; it is a phenomenon of belief and requires a deconstruction. Based on this, although Haddis is a religious man and church scholar, he deconstructs the religion he follows and reveals the personality of religious leaders of feudal Ethiopia. This is because, Haddis is disillusioned by what he sees in the church and what he thinks to be religious men.

In feudal Ethiopia, religion is preached as power is given to the landlords from God. It was believed that they are chosen and anointed by His divine power. For this, the priests are executives in the preaching arena and play an alleging role in this regard. Besides this, religious men are advocates of the feudal aristocracy and its oppressive social order. For this, they are preaching that peasants would be blessed if they were willing and obeying to pay tributes to their lords and the church so that they will be able to join the kingdom of God. Haddis portrays this philosophy of the church through the characterization of Reverend Mogessie, Meshesha's father confessor. Reverend Mogessie denies respect to those who deserve it by virtue of their old age. However, he claims that those whom God Himself respects and creates differently are respected beginning from pregnancy irrespective of their age (p.194). Reverend Mogessie asserts this when Fitawurari Meshesha is getting angry with Bezabih for addressing Seble Wengiel with the pronoun "she" that shows impoliteness and disgraceful manner. He discloses this idea by quoting a story from the Holy Bible to show his loyalty and being the retinue of Fitawurari Meshesha. Mogessie says the following on the issue:

"ጌቶች፡፡እውነታቸውን፡ነው፡ክብር፡በእድሜ፡አይደለም፡፡እግዚአብሔር፡ከሌላው፡አክብሮት፡የፈጠረው፡ገና፡በጽንሱ፡ይከበራል፡፡ጌታችን፡ኢየሱስ፡ክርስቶስ፡በጽንሱ፡ሳለ፡የመጥምቁ፡ዮሀንስ፡እናት፡ኤልሳቤጥ፡እስከሞት፡እንደጸነሰች፡እመቤታችንን፡ልትጎበኝ፡በሄደችበት፡ዮሀንስ፡በናቱ፡ሆድ፡እንዳለ፡ለጌታችን፡እጅ፡ነስቶአል፡፡ይህ፡እግዚአብሔር፡ያከበረው፡ገና፡በጽንሱ፡ሳለም፡ቢሆን፡ሊከበር፡እሚገባው፡መሆኑን፡የሚያስረዳነው፡፡" አሉ፡አባ፡ሞገሴ፡፡(ዝኒ ከማሁ ፤ ፩፻፺፬)

*“My master is right! Respect is irrespective of age. The one who is created being respected other than others’ by God is also respected since embryo. When our Lord Jesus Christ is conceived and when the mother of the Baptist John, Elizabeth visits St. Marry while she was conceiving John, John worshipped to our Lord while he was in the womb. This shows us, the one who is respected by God should be respected even when he is in the womb.” Says Reverend Mogessie (Ibid, 194).*

This clearly shows that religion is used as a means of making and persuading the minds of the masses to accept the prevailing social system. Because of this, the clergymen preach and advocate religion in any direction that supports the superficial norms of the nobility. That is why, Reverend Mogessie utters the following to show his pro-feudal orientation when peasants refuse to bring presents during holidays and rebelled against Fitawurari Meshesha as:

"ጌቶች፡ያሉት፡ሁሉ፡አንድ፡እንኩዋ፡ስተት፡የለውም፡ሁሉም፡እውነት፡ነው፡፡እግዚአብሔር፡ጌታችን፡ከድሀ፡ገዢን፡ከተገዢ፡ለይቶ፡ሲሰራ፡ጌታው፡ገዢው፡ፍርድ፡ቢያጎድል፡ድሀ፡ቢበድል፡ጠያቂው፡መንግስት፡ከዚያም፡በላይ፡እግዚአብሔር፡ነው፡እንጂ፡ድሀ፡አቤት፡ከማለት፡አልፎ፡የሚተዳደርበትን፡ህግ፡አግኝና፡ፈራጅ፡ሆኖ፡አያውቅም፡፡አሁን፡ባላገር፡አድም፡የሚሰራው፡ከጥጋብ፡ሌላ፡ስም፡የለውም፡፡መተያያዥ፡ያመት፡ባል፡መዋያ፡ጥንት፡ያልተሰራ፡ነው፡የምትሉትም፡እውነት፡አይደለም፡፡" ኢትቁም፡ራቅክ፡ቅድመ፡መሲህ፡እግዚአብሔር፡"ሲል፡መጽሀፍ፡እግዚአብሔር፡ቀብቶ፡በሾመው፡ፊት፡ባዶ፡እጅህን፡አትቅረብ፡ማለቱ፡ነው፡፡" ... (ዝኒ ከማሁ ፤ ፪፻፸፫-፪፻፸፬)

*“There is no anything wrong in the words which my lord said. Every word of him is true. In the order of things, when God created differentiating the wealthy from the poor, the ruler from the ruled, it was based on the tacit understanding that when the ruler faces incompetence, the poor did wrong; it is the duty of the government and above all to God. Beyond appeal, the poor has never been lawmaker, has never set rules and regulations and have never been called on for decisions. What peasants do right now by rebelling is arrogance. And, what you are saying now, bringing presents as a whole and bringing present to spend a holiday as if it was not made in the structure of the system formerly is totally wrong. When the Bible says “donot stand in front of God’s Messiah without having a holly vow”, it means that it is not necessary to approach a person who is appointed by the anointment of God being empty-handed.” (Ibid, 273-274).*



This excerpt is loaded with Haddis’s idea of the clergymen that played a major role in shaping and changing the attitudes of the people to accept the oppressive nature and the erroneous beliefs of feudal Ethiopia. As we have seen, the words of God are quoted and used by the clergymen to fulfill and serve the wishes of the feudal lords. This thought of the church makes the mass to be submissive. Because, on the side of the mass the didactic factor of the church and its representatives is taken as just and having divinity so that the mass accepts without qualm. Nevertheless, Haddis subverts this assumption of the people by allowing Gudu Kassa to speak against and exposes the evils of the clergymen. The reason why Gudu Kassa is able to criticize and demystify this thought of the clergymen is that he knows everything as being a well-versed church scholar. Hence, Haddis as a religious deconstructionist comes across with Gudu Kassa’s voice in expressing his grievances about the clergymen as:

**"እየውልሀ!ቤተ-እግዚአብሔርችን:እንደነዚህ:ላሉት:ሽፍቶች:እንደነዚህ:ላሉት:ዘራ  
 ፊዎች:ዋሻ:ሆነች!...ታዲያ:ከነዚህ:ጋር:ማህበርተኛ:ሆኖ:ባንድ:ስመ:እግዚአብሔርን  
 :መጥራት:በተቀደሰ:ስሙ:ማፌዝ:አይደለም?እየውልሀ!ይህ:ነው:ከምወዳት:ቤተ-  
 እግዚአብሔር:ያራቀኝ!...(ዝኒ ከማሁ፣፬፻፳፰)**

*“You see! Our church has become a shelter of such robbers and plunders! ....Well then, is it not a mockery on the sacred name of God to be a member of the association of such people and collaborating with them in calling His Holy Name? You know! This is departing me from the church which I love.”(Ibid, 428)*

This shows that the clergymen are endowed with traditional beliefs and superstitions rather than believing and preaching the true words of God. For this, Haddis portrays Reverend Mogessie as having repulsive traits that should be abhorred by anybody around him. He is also characterized as a person who is leading in any direction by whoever fills his belly and as being thoughtless (p.220). Besides this portrayal of Reverend Mogessie, Haddis depicts Reverend Teklehaymanot as a treacherous monk. Haddis reveals the fact that he is eunuch, Reverend Teklehaymanot turned into a monk. This is because, he can cover his defect of being eunuch and gets his subsistence easily by resembling a monk. Moreover, his deeds in helping the poor, the helpless and his domicile is being tomb makes him to be accepted by the mass without qualm as a monk who lives in celibacy. However, Reverend Teklehaymanot’s being a treacherous monk is exposed when he is hired by Fitawurari Meshesha to break out the spell that is supposed to be casted on Seble by Bezabih. To unmask the entire personality of Reverend Teklehymanot, Haddis uses the following scene.

"ሁለት ሽርጣጣ፡ ራት፡ እስክታ መጣ፡ ድረስ፡ አባ፡ ተክለ፡ ሀይማኖት፡ ሁለት፡ ብርሌ፡ ጠጅ፡ ጠጥተው፡ ሶስተኛውን፡ ይዘው፡ ነበር። ራት፡ በልተው፡ እስኪጨርሱ፡ ስድስት፡ ብርሌ፡ ጠጅና፡ በትልቅ፡ መለኪያ፡ ሶስት፡ አረቁ፡ ጠጥተው፡ ሰከሩና፡ ተነስተው፡ ደበሎዎቻቸውን፡ እንደለሱ፡ ይዘፍኑ፡ ጀመር።" (ዝኒ ከማሁ፣ ፬፻፹፫)

*“Until Habtish runs out and brings dinner, Reverend Teklehaymanot has drunk two **Birllies**\* of Mead (Tej) and was having the third in his hand. Until he finished eating dinner, he has drunk six Birllies of Mead and three **Melekias**\* of **Arekie**\* so that he got drunk very much. Hence, he stood up and started dancing as he wore his **Debelo**\*.” (Ibid, 483).*

These actions and deeds of Reverend Teklehaymanot is a good manifestation of his being a treacherous monk. Besides this, it is a good description of the clergymen as money lovers, as the ones who are led in any direction by whomever that provides them with enough food and an alcoholic. It also shows how the clergymen are acting and behaving in the church and outside the church. In one side, they are preaching about the kingdom of God, on the other hand they themselves break the laws and commandments of the religion. This is clearly observed and duly dramatized by Reverend Teklehaymanot. Moreover, Haddis does not stop exposing the repulsive traits and treacherous manifestations of the clergymen. He also characterizes clergymen like Aleka Tiumelisan and Aleka Niway who are heads of Dima and Bichena Giorgis respectively as symbols of true clergymen.

**Birllie**\*: a kind of flask used for drinking Mead **Arekie**\*: a locally distilled alcoholic drink

**Melekia**\*: a type of glass used for drinking Katikala (Arekie)

**Debelo**\*: a tanned sheepskin worn by students of traditional school of Ethiopia and shepherds

This is because, they played a major role in mediating the dispute and solving the duel of Fitawurari Meshesha and Fitawurari Asegie (p.167-168). Lastly, this mediation is successful and the duel is solved without any bloodshed. Besides this, Haddis’s mouthpiece, Gudu Kassa strongly opposes the ignorance and the superstitious of the clergymen and looks forward to get a reformed system, but he does not deny the existence of God.

This shows Haddis’s outlook as far as religion is concerned. That means he believes in the existence of God and his belief does not prevent him to reveal his freewill and the reality that he has been experienced being a church scholar.

#### 4.2.4. Psychoanalytic Deconstruction

When we look, *Fikir Eske Mekabir* through a psychoanalytical perspective, we can see that it has densely populated social world as its characters are drawn from various lifestyles. This leads the characters to have different patterns of life and behaviour. Thus, these different patterns of behaviour and life of the characters are used for generating psychoanalytic concepts for analysis. This is because, psychoanalytic concepts are parts of everyone's everyday life. Hence, characters in *Fikir Eske Mekabir* as if they were real people confront these psychoanalytic concepts in their everyday life. Because no one is completely free from psychological problems throughout life. As a result, characters in *Fikir Eske Mekabir* unveil their psychological problems or dysfunctions in life using various defense mechanisms and dreams. Therefore, defense mechanisms such as regression, denial, repression, etc; and dreams and dream symbols are useful for psychoanalytic deconstruction. To substantiate this, let us employ some of the psychoanalytic principles that are essential for psychoanalysis.

**4.2.4.1. Regression**-It is a defense mechanism that allows a temporary return to a former psychological state, which is not imagined but relived (Tyson, 1999:18). When we examine the psychological states of characters in *Fikir Eske Mekabir*, we can come across the family background of Wudinesh and Bogale. As we can clearly see in the narration, the family background of Wudinesh is very different from that of her husband's. Moreover, this difference in their life background creates clashes and rancor between them while they are leading their married life. Although these clashes of the couple did not cause long lasting grudges, they allow them to remember their former life. For instance, Bogale reveals his regression as follows when Wudinesh expresses her rancor about married life.

"ለምንምሽት፡አገባሁ?...ለምንምሽት፡አገባሁ?ለምን፡ቤት፡ሰራሁ?ለምን፡ልጅ፡ወለድሁ?ከድሮ፡ችግራ፡ምን፡ለቀቀኝ?ከድሮ፡ኑሮየ፡ምን፡ተሻለኝ?ምንም፡አልተሻለኝም?ምንም፡አልቀለለኝ!ባሰብኝ፡እንጂ፡ባሰብኝ፡..."(ዝኒ ከማሁ ፣ ፳፪)

*"Why I got married?... Why I did get married? Why I built a house? Why I born a child? Nothing new and makes me free from my former poverty! There is no news in my livelihood at all! No progress, No change! It is again aggravated and becomes worse!.... (Ibid, 22).*

Bogale utters this when Wudinesh expresses her rancor and hate about her married life in contrast to the freedom she used to have as a widow rather than giving him something to eat. She herself is regressing to her life of being a widow. This unexpected clash with his wife lets

him recall his former psychological state in particular and his lonely life in general. Therefore, this psychological state of Bogale can be taken as a good example of regression.

Besides this, when Bezabih is able to cover the expenses of his parents by being a deacon, Bogale says, “shall I say I was mistaken” (p. 40). Bogale claims in such a way because, he strongly opposes Wudinesh when she consecrates Bezabih to different tabots hoping to save his life. What makes Bogale to regress is that he contrasts the life of his son with others’ who are shepherds and are not able to get as much money as his son can get.

Furthermore, Bezabih regresses when he has heard Seble Wengiel’s wedding preparation from the merchants. Bezabih reports this by saying “If I stayed at Dima, is that could not happen? What can I do?”... (p.470). This flash back of the past psychological state of Bezabih as a defense to the current psychological disorder is taken as a regressive episode brought on his present psychological trauma: losing his beloved girl, because of his being poor and son of a peasant. Hence, these forms of temporary return to a former psychological state are essential psychic tools to enrich the interpretation of *Fikir Eske Mekabir* in psychoanalytic approach and to employ deconstruction in it. This is because, psychoanalysis implicitly seeks to invert hierarchies and it is the deconstruction of consciousness.

**4.2.4.2. Denial-** It is a defense mechanism, which occurs when someone will not admit the truth. Alternatively, believing that the problem does not exist or the unpleasant incident never happened. (Tyson, 1999:18). For this psychoanalytical principle, we can consider the portrayal of Fitawurari Meshesha. That is, he is portrayed in denying and unwilling to admit the truth. This is because, he sees everything in his own ideology irrespective of the time that he exists. As he is characterized in the main part of the story of *Fikir Eske Mekabir*, he lives in the world that was functioning before centuries. That is why, Meshesha is unwilling to admit the truth of whatever he confronts in the society by yearning to the former. For example, when Haddis shows the inevitable downfall of the old social system and the victory of the new by the subsequent failure of Meshesha’s campaign, he lets Meshesha to speak the following while he was taken captive of Abeje’s tactic.

"...እኔን፣የጣለ፡ቀን፡ላንተ፡ሆኖህ፡እስረኛህ፡ሆኛለሁ፡!ግድየለም፡ቀልድብኝ!እንኩዋን፡እኔ፡ጌታችን፡ኢየሱስ፡ክርስቶስ፡በፍጡሮቼ፡በኒያ፡በከሀዲዎች፡በአይሁድ፡እጅ፡ታስር፡

ተቀልደበታል! እኔም እንዳንተ ባለፈው ሰዓት ስንገናኝ ታስራለህ። ቀለድህን፣ ያውንቤ ታችን የደረሰው ነው። የደረሰህን!” አሉ። ፊታው ራራ በብርቱቁ ጣ። (ዝኪ ከማሁ፣ ፫፻፱)

*“...The day which disgraces me favours you and makes me your prisoner! Never mind! Go ahead of mocking at me! Let alone me, our Lord Jesus Christ was tied up and mocked by the hands of His creatures of the Jewish who are denying His Divinity. Like wise, if I am tied up by the hands of robbers and rebels like you and mocked, it is happened what was happening on our Lord!” says Fitawurari in a great anger. (Ibid, 300)*

Meshesha replies this when Abeje Belew warns him not to go anywhere he likes without his consent. However, Meshesha is not willing enough to accept this situation. Moreover, he totally forgets his being a criminal in plundering and confiscating the properties of peasants by waging a punitive campaign against them. Besides this, Meshesha’s courage of being a “bold and resolute” feudal lord will not let him to admit the truth of this humiliating defeat by “disobedient” peasants. Because, he waged the campaign on peasants to “punish the disobedient peasants” but they let him back and keeps him under arrest without fight. As a result, Meshesha is not able to admit Abeje Balew’s tactic of captivating him without fight. In addition, he also denies the brevity of Abeje Belew. To illustrate this, let us see Meshesha’s reply to Abeje as:

“እሱ፣ ነበራል! የጎበዘ፣ ስራ! ጎበዘ፣ ብትሆን፣ ተዋግተህ። መያዝ፣ ነበር! አታሉ። መያዝ፣ ከጎበዘ፣ አይቆጠርም! ተዋግተን፣ ቢሆን፣ አሳይህ፣ ነበር። እኔ መሸሻ!” (ዝኪ ከማሁ፣ ፫፻፲፱)

*“That was it! That was it the duty of the brave! If you were brave, you should arrest and make captive by fighting! If we were fighting, I should show you whom am I! I, Meshesha!” (Ibid, 301).*

Meshesha continues to refuse the idea of Abeje Belew to “defend” his honour and valour rather than admitting his being under the captive of peasants and being unsuccessful in his punitive campaign against peasants. Meshesha denies the truth intentionally by treating the situation in the way that favours him. This intentional denial is an attempted supplement of what he has lost at that moment and to dismantle the hierarchy occurred by the time by subverting the privileged term. Therefore, this denial creates a cause-effect relationship to decenter the system of the power-holding units in the society by supplementing forces within the same system. Thus, Haddis being a deconstructionist uses denial as a method to decenter the forms of the hierarchy, which were functioning by privileging itself in the prevailing system.

**4.2.4.3. Repression-** Is a defense mechanism that occurs when someone cannot remember a past traumatic experience while suppression is a conscious effort to do the same. (Tyson, 1999:15). In *Fikir Eske Mekabir*, the characters representing the lower stratum, women in particular and the peasants in general are oppressed, humiliated, and dehumanized by the suppressive superficial norms of the nobility. Due to this, some of the members of the feudal Ethiopia tried to dismantle these superficial norms and look towards a new social system. On the contrary, some are becoming submissive by the influence and domination of these superficial norms. For instance, Wudinesh is one of such people who are influenced by the traditional gender roles and superstitions of the society. By the scene Wudinesh saw herself on a small round mirror to ascertain her being attractive enough that makes Bogale to defy death and propose to marry her, she reads an insult that reads as “You! A murder that kills your husbands, an epidemic for a husband!”(p.18). As soon as she reads this insult, Wudinesh recalls the incident that she has heard this insult. Thus, Wudinesh is taken too much to heart and complained to her Lord of being such unfortunate woman. Because, she worried about the alienation, despotism and the suppressive nature of the patriarchal culture prevailing in the society. This unconscious state of Wudinesh comes in to being when she is trying to eliminate her painful experiences and emotions that she was experiencing. This is because, many suitors have shunned her and she herself had abandoned any hope of marrying again. This causes a repression that depicts her as being hopeless and motionless throughout her life. Thus, the psychological states that are repressed here and supported are mainly questioned values of culture over nature.

In chapter four of *Fikir Eske Mekabir*, we are told that Bezabih is being aware of his being a ‘child of vow’. Moreover, this situation makes him to feel loneliness, hopeless and sorrowfulness. Because, he knows that his being a ‘child of vow’ prohibits him to fulfill his freewill. Hence, Haddis induces awareness for Bezabih to express his resistance of being a ‘child of vow’ and his long lasting bondage in the church. He expresses his resistance as follows:

"ሰው፡እስከመቼ፡በዚህ፡አሁን፡ሆኖራል? እግዚአብሔር፡እንደሰው፡ከፈጠረኝ፡በሁከር  
 ላ፡እንደሰው፡እንዳልኖር፡የሚፈልግበት፡ምክንያት፡ምንድንነው? የለም፡እግዚአብሔር፡  
 ይህን፡አልፈለገም ፤ እናቴ፡ናት፡...የሆነ፡ሆኖ፡እኔ፡እንዲህ፡ያለውን፡ህይወት፡አልወደ

ውም ፤ አልመርጠውም ፤ አልፈልገውም ፤ እግዚአብሔር፡ይቅር፡ይበለጅ፡እንጂ፡ሀይወት፡  
አይደለም፡፡”(ዝኒ ከማሁ ፤ ፵፮)

*“Up to when a human being shall live in such a way! After God created me like human beings, why He does not allow me to live like human beings? No, God does not need this! It is my mother’s!... In any way, I dislike this kind of life! It is not my choice! I detest it completely. Forgive me, my Lord, it is not a kind of life!” (Ibid, 46).*

Bezabih expresses his deep sorrow when the sexual invitations and overtures of girls increase upon him. This is because, he realized that he is a ‘child of vow’ which deprives him to do what he likes and lives like other people by marrying the one he loves. As a result, he speaks out his entire feeling in contrast to the belief of his mother. Bezabih is not only expressing his feelings and intentions as stated above, but also he is practicing it by fleeing from his home. He did so by subverting his bondage in the church and his mother’s holly vow.

**4.2.4.4. Dream Displacement-** It occurs whenever we use a “safe” person, event, or object as a “stand-in” to represent a more threatening person, event, or object. (Tyson, 1999:20). It is obvious that when we get sleep the defense mechanisms do not operate in the same way as they do when we are awake. Thus, during sleep, the unconscious is free to express itself, and it does so in our dreams. The underlying meaning of these dreams expressed by our unconscious is given through the process of displacement though we do not really recognize and fix it. Based on this, Bezabih’s dream when Debtera Beyene met him at Debre Work appears to be a good example (p.62-63). Because, the rope, which ties up his legs, symbolizes the soul and spirit of his parents that pull him back in leaving them aside at their old age. Particularly, he represses about his frustration of being a ‘child of vow. Moreover, the snapping of the rope by the pigeon shows the death of his parents and his freedom from the bondage in the church so that he is free of duty of being a “child of vow”. Therefore, this dream is used to subvert the privileged cultural assumption by unmasking the psychological state of Bezabih.

**4.2.4.5. Dream Condensation-** It occurs during a dream whenever we use a single dream image or event to represent more than one unconscious wound or conflict. (Tyson, 1999:20). For this, Seble Wengiel’s dream is a good example. She dreams by being at the middle of a long and hilly precipice. Then, she strives hard to oust herself from this frustrating hilly cliff, but she is unable to do so (p.363). Haddis uses this dream to reveal the upcoming

life of Seble. That is, the sudden arrival of Meshesha in the eve of her elopement aborts her freedom that she wished to get by fleeing from home. Thus, it represents her situation of being a prisoner by her father. Besides this, it foreshadows the hardships and the agony she encountered while she was going to Addis Ababa in search of Bezabih. Particularly, the dream represents the agony she was encountered while she was crossing the Abay valley. Hence, Haddis is successful in using this dream, because it is used as a foreshadowing of the upcoming life situation of Seble Wengiel and it symbolizes more than one psychological battle. Moreover, disguising as a monk is also taken as a defense mechanism to accomplish her ambition of getting her lover. Therefore, Haddis characterizes Seble by disguising, as a monk is a compensation of dismantling the patriarchal culture to bring change against the privileging forces.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **Conclusions**

In this study, an attempted has been made to touch upon the theoretical and philosophical aspects of deconstruction in light of Jacques Derrida's skeptical and philosophical notions. Beginning from its inauguration in the late 1960s by the contemporary French philosopher



Jacques Derrida, deconstruction has become an influential theory for literary critics and philosophers. On account of this, various debates were generated on the undefinability of the term 'deconstruction' and most scholars failed to give a clear cut definition and to pin down its scope. Hence, different scholars, theorists and practitioners define it in a variety of ways. Nevertheless, the operation of deconstruction in any literary text is revealed by explicating and unmasking the logocentrism of the binary oppositions, inconsistencies, contradictions, the prevailing cultural assumptions, etc in the text and gearing it towards the reduction of an enlightenment project of not only revolutions but also reformations. For instance, in societies like feudal Ethiopia power was totalized by the well to do and centralized by the inviolable Metaphysical entity. Hence, authors like Haddis came in to being and dealt with the process of dismantling the various social orders prevailing in the society and its ill practices.

Furthermore, this implies again under the backdrop of Derrida, that is all forms or components of the system must be restructured for limitless utility for each segment of the society. On top of that, deconstruction can be seen as a fertile ground for the theoretical formulations of postmodern conditions. The modernity that began intellectually with the enlightenment, attempted to describe the world in rational, empirical and objective terms. As a result, Haddis describes the "world" he is living in employing a story established by taking feudal Ethiopia as a setting and giving privilege to feudal lords over the peasants. Hence, Haddis let his mouthpiece, Gudu Kassa to speak out against the social evils of the whole of the system in general and acts as the voices of the peasants or the unprivileged social class in all forms of institutions. This sheds light on how Haddis tries to deconstruct the prevailing multi-pleanty autocracy yoke over peasants.

In addition, the publication of *Fikir Eske Mekabir* (1966) and the emergency of post structuralism (1960s) conceded by chance. This concurrence of time in the inauguration of post structuralism and publication of his work of art can equate Haddis with deconstructionists. Besides, as a poststructuralist writer he reveals suppression in every sphere of the society's welfare by using feudal Ethiopia as a setting. By this setting, Haddis revealed the different strata of the social hierarchy. In the social hierarchy, Haddis presents the socio-cultural setting that has a firm structure with cultural, natural and political logocentrism; and religious monotheism persisted by the feudal aristocracy. For this, Haddis employed a number

of characters to represent it very well. Thus, the structural range and variety of characters he used make Haddis's perspective wide and inclusive in delineating the idea he wants to share with his readers.

Haddis is not only exposing the suppressive order, dehumanization and contemptuous nature of the feudal aristocracy who considered themselves as superior, chosen, blessed and powerful over the majority presiding over the whole of the social system but also shows the inevitable downfall of the feudal aristocracy. Hence, Haddis creates characters within the feudal system (like Kegnazmach Akalu and Seble Wengiel) to oppose and criticize the system of their own administration; and outside the feudal system (like Gudu Kassa, Abeje Belew and Reverend Teklehaymanot) to dismantle the already long established superficial aristocratic norms and the respected norm of the church respectively. Later on, Haddis allows the peasants to rebel against the lofty feudal aristocracy and let them to be victorious by subverting the hierarchy. By this, Haddis predicts the inevitability of reform by the struggle of the oppressed in the political arena of feudal Ethiopia.

This shift in the narrative strategy shows how Haddis gets an implicit resistance and consciousness in unmasking the prevailing feudal system wisely. In doing so, Haddis uses various methods and literary techniques that are used to show the warning to the regime of Haile Sellassie in particular and to the traditions of the feudo-bourgeois Ethiopia in general. For the sake of depicting this clearly, Haddis uses characters with different ideology. For example, he draws characters such Gudu Kassa, Seble Wengiel and Bezabih as reformists that turn against the norms of the backward society that they were born into and suffer the catastrophic consequences of their daring actions. Due to this, they defy the social evils of the past and sacrifice themselves for the new generation by dismantling the various prevailing logos in the society. On the contrary, characters such Fitawurari Meshesha and his retinue in general are clinging towards the past and fight staunchly against the new.

In addition to this, the people of Ethiopia are endowed with various cultural norms, customs and traditions that are deeply rooted and play a paramount role for the formation of a structured social system. Haddis shows these cultural norms, customs and traditions that have values to the formation of the society's structure in the prevailing system by using his own

style. Moreover, he lets the characters be aware of the social invalidity of these cultural norms and customs in the existing system and allow them to advocate changes. For instance, Seble Wengiel announces openly her love to Bezabih and defies marrying the one chosen by her father by subverting the social bridge prevailing in that patriarchal society. Therefore, Haddis creates characters that refuse and defy the inviolability of the cultural norms, customs and traditions in respect to the time that they are functioning. This is because, the characters are looking forward to get change and progress by inspiring people to cultural renaissance.

Generally, Haddis shows his literary technocracy in *Fikir Eske Mekabir* by employing literary techniques that have remarkable artistic merit. Besides this, he can be taken as a bright social and political critic that uses his pen to disclose vigorously the social evils. Among these social evils, the most ones are ignorance, superstitions, corruption and other traditions of feudal Ethiopia. He also discloses the defiance of the oppressed and the exploited by creating an invincible force that is able to dismantle the whole of the privileged prevailing system. Owing to this, Haddis dismantles the existing social system by the binary oppositions such as culture over nature, mastery over submissiveness, culture over religion, man over woman, rich over poor, conscious over unconsciousness and other hidden binaries in the political system of the society. Besides this, Haddis shares and employs in his work deconstructionists' idea language that is "language is wholly ideological". Haddis clearly applied this view of deconstructionists in his work of art. Therefore, with over all assessment of the preceding sections of the work and with the premises of instable references of facts, truth and logic he revealed, with no doubt, Haddis Alemayehu is a deconstructive writer. As a result, if Haddis's cultural and political deconstructions of the systems of feudal Ethiopia were taken in to account and realized by the privileged feudo-bourgeois of Ethiopia during the period, the actual dawn fall of the feudal aristocracy would not be as it was conducted.

Finally, as Robert Diyanni (1998:1919) stated "critics who employ deconstruction as a critical method actually would say that the text deconstructs itself, and the critics do not deconstruct the text...". Thus, in this deconstructive discourse of Haddis Alemayehu's novel *Fikir Eske Mekabir*, an attempt has been made to illustrate and show the areas that the author used to demystify and fulfill his ideological project. Besides this, the researcher understands the fact that if the same text is read by another person from deconstructionists' point of view different

interpretations could be found. This is because, as many scholars suggest both literary and critical texts are subject to deconstruction. Therefore, the researcher would not blame rather appreciate other researchers if they found this attempted deconstructive discourse of *Fikir Eske Mekabir* deconstructs itself.

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## **DECLARATION**

I, the undersigned, declare that the thesis entitled “*Deconstructive Discourse of Content as Reflected in Haddis Alemayehu’s Fikir Eske Mekabir*” is my original work and that all the sources used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

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