

Firing Neural Circuits as a Means of Setting Standards of Morality in Armash (a lyric by Tewodros Kassahun): a Cognitive Poetics Approach

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Abstract

This study is conducted for two main objectives with the method of text analysis in the framework of cognitive poetics. The first one is uncovering the central theme (message) of the lyric Armash. The second goal of this study on the other hand is identifying the reasons that make Armash a great piece of work. Then, the findings of the study showed that the central message of the lyric is that peace, love and unity of citizens are morally vitreous practices as they ensure the well-being of citizens. On the contrary, ethnic conflicts, divisive political programs and discrimination based on ethnic and religious identities are immoral social behaviors, because they do not secure the well-being of citizens. The findings of this study also showed that the vocalist's capability to structure the narrative in a way that can develop sympathy on his audience, his success in firing the frames of suffering from nostalgia and the frame of hope that signals the dawning of a bright tomorrow and his recurrent usage of mainly the "nation is mother" cognitive metaphor.

Key words: Narrative, frame, metaphor, morality, well-being, Ethiopia

1. Background

Tewodros Kassahun (also known as Teddy Afro) is the most popular musician in Ethiopia. He is a composer and a vocalist; he composes both sophisticated poems and sweet melodies, which helped him to gain immense popularity at home and abroad. Because he is the greatest pop-star that, he crisscrossed the world to arrive at the major destinations of Ethiopian Diasporas (from South Africa to North America, the Middle East and Australia) with the purpose of getting across his messages of peace, love and unity(Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, 2012).

The talent that Tewodross Kassahun is endowed with has been great enough not only to get the appreciations of Ethiopians at home and in the diaspora, but also the global fans of music as evidenced by a number of success indicators. The billboard album chart for example, "placed Tedy Afro's latest album, Ethiopia on top of the list and the album sold more than 600,000 copies (Habtamu, 2017). Getting the chance to be on the billboard album chart in actual fact, is a clear evidence for the greatness of the talent that the artist (Tewodross Kassahun) is endowed with, given the fact that appearing on the billboard album chart is the dream of every vocalist and achievable only for the talented few.

The other indicator of the greatness of TewodrossKassahun's talent is shown in 'Armash'1 (አርማሽ in Amharic); the single he released recently, (which is the subject of investigation for this paper) was among Barack Obama's favorite list of music for the year 2021(Tadias Magazine, 2021). This again, is an obvious demonstrator of the greatness of the artist's talent, for the reason that his work is capable of winning the heart and mind of Obama, one of the brilliant leaders of America. In fact, Yasteseryal (the album he released in 2005) "sold more than a million copies within a few months after its release" (Encarta Encyclopedia, 2022)

Tewodross Kassahun is not just a gifted artist, however. He rather has been a resistant to the repressive and divisive regime of EPRDF (Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front), the former authoritarian front which had been in power nearly for three decades. As a result, Tewodross Kassahun

has become a controversial artist throughout the regime of the TPLF (Tigray People's Liberation Front) led government of EPRDF (Bini, 2012). He had been in conflict with EPRDF for so long, for the reason that the recurrent message communicated in his works is that Ethiopians must come together and get unified for a brighter future which goes against the divisive ideology of the party.

The disagreement between Tewodros Kassahun and that government led to the outlawing and banning of some of his works (like *Yasteseryal* and *Dahilak Lay*) not to be on the air by the government's media in 2005. In actual fact, the clash between Tewodros and the EPRDF government due to his unwavering stand to the unity of Ethiopia throughout his works seemed to grow higher when he was convicted of manslaughter in 2006, which he denied and many believe that his charge was politically motivated.

Tewodros Kassahun, therefore, is not just a talented artist, but also a patriotic Ethiopian nationalist and a political unifier as evidenced by the themes of his great works and the relation he had with EPRDF. This is because EPRDF is always against everyone who advocates the unity of Ethiopia and its people. Successive persecution of Tewodros Kassahun by the EPRDF, therefore, leads to a safe conclusion that his works are great enough to shape and unify the society which goes against the ideology of the then ruling party, EPRDF.

The rationales that motivated the investigation of *Armash* are the greatness of the vocalist (Tewodros Kassahun) in producing great pieces of works and the greatness of the lyric itself as evidenced by its success to reach out, nearly eight million people only within four months. So, this study is conducted with two main purposes. These are: uncovering the major theme (the central message) communicated via the lyric *Armash* and identifying the factors that made lyric great and gain matchless popularity compared to the works of other vocalists in Ethiopia as evidenced by the above mentioned indicators, like the number of viewers, likes and comments.

2. Methodology

This study mainly adopts a qualitative approach, for the reason that the data that are selected from *Armash* (the lyric under investigation) mainly require qualitative analyses rather than numerical quantifications. The primary method of analysis, therefore, is text analysis in the framework of cognitive linguistics.

2.1 Method of Data Collection

The sole data needed for this study are words and phrases that are taken from the script of the lyric (*Armash*). So, the words and phrases are taken mainly from three segments of the poem (script) of the lyric. These are: the major metaphoric expression used in the script of the lyric, the dominant frames that can be fired when someone is tuned to the music and the whole story narrated by the lyric with its prominent elements. These segments of the lyric are selected as the focus areas of analysis for this study, due to the fact that we think in terms of these neural structures that are there physically in our brains (Lakoff, 2015).

2.2 Method of Data Analysis

The first step in analyzing this work (*Armash*) is summarizing the whole narrative, seeing that it is with cultural narrative that our brain works as explained in the following section. Then, words and phrases of the script of the lyric that are capable of firing the frames related to the central message of the work are also excerpted and translated in to English. Again, parts of the lyric that are verbalized with cognitive metaphors are extracted, translated in to English and analyzed as they show the way our brain works.

3. Theoretical Framework

According to (Lakoff, 2015), we think in terms of three neural structures that have physical presence in our brains. These structures are: frames, metaphors and traditional narratives.

3.1 Frames

Frames are “organized packages of knowledge, beliefs, and patterns of practice that shape and allow humans to make sense of their experiences” (Fillmore & Baker, 2009). Frames are neural structures which are hardwired in different localities of our brain and give patterns to our experiences and they get activated when one of their elements is activated (Lakoff, 2013). We have thousands of frames in our brain as we always form a frame whenever we come across new experiences both imaginatively and physically (Lakoff 2013), because neural circuits fire both when we think about things and when we

perceive them; thinking about something is the same as perceiving it for a very simple reason that the same brain region gets activated not just when we think about it but also when we see, hear, smell, touch and taste it (Fillmore cited in Krennmayr 2011).

Identifying the major frames activated in Armash (the lyric under investigation), therefore, is necessary, because they are helpful to identify the central message that the vocalist (Tewodros Kassahun) wants to communicate to his fans. This is because, firing the necessary frames means firing packages of beliefs, patterns of practices with which people can make sense of the world. Indeed, the lyric's success to win the hearts and minds of a huge number of fans as indicated earlier seems to be the result of the vocalist's success to activate their experiences and belief systems.

3.2 Narratives

Cultural narratives are fundamental neural structures which we think in terms of (Lakoff 2011). Narratives unconsciously guide and shape the way we think and believe on how things should be in the real world. Narratives are sequences of frames with three additional structures (ibid).

One of the additional structures that we can find in cultural narratives but not in frames is the presence of a protagonist whose point of view is supported by members of the same cultural community. It seems due to this neural reason that people habitually share the feelings and sufferings of protagonists both in fictional and realistic stories. The second extra structure that Lakoff identified in narratives but not in frames is the happening of good and bad things. For example, in every narrative we find some evil things happening on an individual who is considered a hero or a victim by a certain community (Lakoff 2004). It is also a customary practice to see the hero fighting back in an attempt to restore the moral balance. The third structure of a cultural narrative discovered by Lakoff is the attachment of appropriate emotions to those incidents happened in the narrative. We feel anger when the hero is wronged and treated unjustly, fear and anxiety when he loses the fight and triumphant when he wins as Lakoff explains further.

Consequently, every narrative in every culture has two fundamental structures (Lakoff 2008). These are: the dramatic structures which constitute elements like hero, villain, victim, helper and crime and emotional structures which link the dramatic structures to positive and negative pathways so that appropriate feelings can be attached to those elements of the dramatic structures. If an emotional experience goes via the dopamine circuit in our brain we feel positive emotions, like joy, happiness, satisfaction, fulfillment, etc. On the contrary, if an emotional experience goes through norepinephrine circuit we feel all negative emotions, like fear, anxiety, anger, hatred, disgust and many others. Then, it follows that moral standards of a given society can manifest themselves in traditional narratives, given moral judgments are based on what is right/wrong and good and bad.

3.3 Metaphors

The third neural structure that we think in terms of is metaphor. Metaphors are neural circuits that are formed due to recurrent co-activation of two brain regions (Lakoff 2008). As a result of continuous co-activations of different localities in our brain the shortest possible path between the areas that are activated together will be formed which is the metaphor itself. Lakoff describes this fact as “neurons that fire together wire together” (Lakoff 2008:83).

Metaphors accordingly, are surface manifestations of underlying conceptual relations between things expressed metaphorically (Asefa, 2017). Metaphors, therefore, are physical circuits which are formed as a result of mappings of experiences from a frame which is common and known in one region of our brain to another which is new and unknown before (Lakoff 2013). Metaphors can be divided in to two based on the level of complexity of experiences that are mapped from one brain area to another (Lakoff 2015). These are simple and complex metaphors. Simple (primary) metaphors are the results of a single mapping while the complex ones are integrations of a number of primary metaphors.

We learn a number of metaphorical thoughts right from the age of our childhood as indicated earlier in this section. Metaphors are also the bases of moral judgments to a phenomenon that is new for us simply because it co-occurs with something which guarantees our wellbeing. In this regard, Lakoff writes that “if an experience of well-being regularly occurs together with another experience X, then there will be a reasonable probability that we will acquire a metaphor of the form Morality is X” (Lakoff 2008: 94). This

is because, our sense of well-being and ill-being co-occur metaphorically on a regular bases since our childhood. Consequently, Lakoff developed a formula with which morality and immorality can be calculated. The formula is “you are better off if you have X” which suggests that morality is having ‘X’ and immorality is not having ‘X’ (ibid).

The selection of metaphoric expressions in the script of Armash as indicated in the methodology section above thus is motivated by their capability to manifest the moral standards of the vocalist. In other words, investigating the metaphorically said segments of the lyric enables the researcher to uncover the standards with which the artist and the fans by extension measure things good/bad, right/wrong, desirable/undesirable. In another perspective, investigating the metaphoric segments of the lyric is an essential approach to make visible the idea that the artist suggests to be taken by his fans for the wellbeing of the society. So, examining the metaphoric sections of the lyric can help us to expose the central message of the work and the prime intention of the artist that motivated him to compose and perform Armash.

4. Analysis

This analysis focuses on three aspects of the work as indicated earlier. These are: the story narrated by the whole lyric, the frames that are fired recurrently and the underlying metaphor which is at work in Armash mapping known experiences to the unknown as explained in detail in successive sections.

5.1 Synopsis of Armash

When we see the whole story narrated in Armash, it seems to be the sequence of two main frames. The first one is the frame of suffering of a man whom we hear telling us his nostalgic experience, especially in the first part of the lyric. His misery is caused by a serious reminiscence of his country, Ethiopia. He is suffering from nostalgia and homesickness, not because he is away from his country, but the country itself went away, for the reason that her citizens are unable to live in peace and harmony. The second frame that we can see at about the end of the narrative of Armash is the frame of hope and aspiration, where Ethiopians come together, united and live happily ever after. So, the whole story of the lyric is succession the frame of the agony of a man (who is the narrator himself) suffering due to the departure of his country (which he sometimes refers to as his mother) and the frame of the coming of joyous era when Ethiopians will live in harmony Ethiopia will come back again.

Just like any story, the experience narrated above has both dramatic and emotional structures. The dramatic structure, for example shows us a man who is victimized by nostalgia and homesickness, because his country went away to a distant place and unable to comeback quickly as clearly indicated by words of melancholy. Let’s see some the lines excerpted from the lyric:

ቀን እየሌደቀን መጣ፡፡ ልቤ ከሃሳብ ሰጠኝ...

ኢትዮጵያ እንድትመጭ ስንት ቀን ይበቃል?

Days come and went while my heart is in vexation ...

How long shall it take Ethiopia for you to come back?

The suffering of the narrator in Armash, therefore, is severe, for the reason that it is not only caused by the absence of his country but also worsened by the sad fact that the time when she will come back seems to be long. His question “How long shall it take Ethiopia for you to come back?” is an indicator of the reality that he doesn’t know the exact date when Ethiopia will come back and he seems afraid of the fact that it will take too long.

Thus, it is natural for a healthy human being to develop a sense of fellow-feeling and sympathize with a person who is victimized by nostalgia in the past and is likely to suffer for a longer period of time in the future. This is a result of the linkage of this dramatic structure (hearing the story of a man who is victimized by nostalgia) of the emotional structure in our brain to the dopamine circuit (neurotransmitter) which naturally enables us to attach positive feelings as discussed in (section 5.2) above.

The act of structuring the narrative in such a way cannot be understood as a result simple coincidence. It rather is a consequence of the vocalist’s careful crafting of creative realities in a way they can arrive at the emotional faculty of his fans. So, the narrative is purposely fashioned in a way that it can produce a sense of sympathy to the narrator in the lyric, given it is natural for a health individual to sympathize with a

person who is suffering from nostalgia of his country and his mother, which makes the narrator a victim whose point of view is shared by the fans. In other words, people share the nostalgic feeling of the vocalist, due to the fact that thinking about something is neurologically the same as practicing it, for the reason that the same brain region gets activated not just when we do something but also when we think about it (Lakoff, 2011).

The development of the sense of fellow-feeling of the fans towards the narrator (towards the vocalist by implication) and their act of sharing his suffering on the other hand shows that they also hate the things that made him suffer and aspire the day when his suffering comes to its end. In other words, they hate ethnic conflicts and racial prejudices that are making him suffer, just like the suffering of a baby whose mother has disappeared. On the contrary, people who shared the suffering of the narrator love peace and unity, given the suffering of the narrator comes to its end only when there is peace, love and brotherhood.

Accordingly, it is possible to conclude that the vocalist has managed to share standards with which he rates social behaviors as right/wrong and good/bad. In other words, it is reasonable to presume that he succeeded to indoctrinate his fans that peace and unity are virtuous behaviors and racism and racial prejudice are immoral practices, as he portrayed himself as a tragic hero victimized by ethnicity which naturally leads to the adoption of his point of view. The success of the artist to reach out more than 7.7 million people only within the space of four months which is not possible for Ethiopian vocalists thus far, therefore, is traceable to his success to portray himself as a victim of the narrative of the lyric.

5.2 Analysis of Metaphoric Expressions

A single metaphor underlies the total message of the lyric Armash. Everything else is brought in to the musical narrative to reinforce this central metaphor and, thus is secondary. So, the metaphoric analysis revolves around this complex metaphor. Other metaphoric thoughts are also dealt with, as their investigation contributes a lot for a better understanding of the underlying metaphor, which in turn helps us to conceptualize the essence of the whole work and the very purpose of the vocalist in composing and playing the lyric.

We usually refer our country as a mother and as a home. It is normal to hear people saying ‘mother land’, ‘mother Africa’ ‘mother country’, etc. We usually do not know the reason why we refer our countries or our origins with the word mother, however. It rather is a result of an unconscious mapping of experiences of our brain due to its frequent observation of the common attributes of a mother and a country.

According to (Lakoff, 2004 &2008), understanding a nation in terms of a family is an activity that our brain usually does automatically without consciously thinking about it as a way of structuring our understanding of larger social groups. This automatic understanding of a nation as a family hence can be viewed as a consequence of the repeatedly co-activation of our brain regions that are concerned with motherhood and nationhood and the formation of the shortest possible path between the two as discussed in(section 5.3).

The metaphoric thought that that underlay Armash, therefore, is ‘a nation is a mother’. This can be evidenced by a number of clear indicators in the script of the lyric. Let us see some exceptions:

ስምሽንበክፉያነሳሽጠፍቶ

አርማሽከፍሲልሰማይላይወጥቶ

እኛልጆችሽልናይቁመናል፣

አንድቀንመጥቶ፣አንድያደርገናል።

Will crumble the tongues that tarnish your name

Your emblem will fly high in the skies

We your children will stand still to see it

Will come that one day which will unite all of us

As we can clearly see in the lines excerpted above, the vocalist says “Your emblem will fly high in the skies. We your children will stand still to see it”. Everyone who reads these lines (listens) the lyric can understand that the children who stand still to see when the emblem of Ethiopia flies in the skies are

Ethiopians. It is also clear for everyone that the mother of those children who shall stand still to see the emblem of Ethiopia flying high in the skies is Ethiopia itself.

Under normal circumstance, a country cannot bear children biologically, however. So, the act of referring to countries as a mother and citizens as children can be understood as a consequence of metaphoric mapping of experiences which is formed as a result of co-activations of the region for motherhood and nationhood in our brain as briefly talked of in this section. Accordingly, no one asks “who the mother is”? Or “who the children are?” as the co-activations are unconscious and the mappings are automatic (Lakoff, 2008).

Three common attributes appear to make the acts of activations and mappings automatic and normal. The first shared quality between countries and mothers can be their caregiving nature. Mothers care to their children and pay the maximum possible price, even though the price may be life threatening. Likewise countries defend its citizens from any attack by any means possible. The second common attribute of mothers and countries can be their patience. Mothers tolerate every pain for the wellbeing of their children. Similarly, countries endure every hardship for the betterment of its citizens. The third commonality of mothers and countries can be their capability to originate life; for the reason has everyone comes from a mother and a country of origin. So, it seems safe to conclude that these three common attributes that made the understanding of countries in terms of mothers quick and automatic.

The entire work of Armash and its parts can only make sense if we see it in the light of cognitive metaphor. Otherwise, there are many expressions that do not make sense if we try to understand them in a normal sense. The narrator of the lyric for example tells us that his country (Ethiopia) went away and he is waiting for her to come as accounted in the synopsis of the work. This idea is nonsense and meaningless if we try to understand it in a normal sense, given a country is an inanimate being which can't come and go physically.

There are several other instances in which the vocalist made reference to Ethiopia as a mother. For instance Ethiopia that the narrator in Armash (the vocalist by implication) is suffering from her absence and longing to see is female in gender, which again is a maternal attribute. He also says the following at the beginning of the lyric:

መጥታታብሰው እንባዩን

አገሬን ጥሯት አርማዩን

Call my country, my only crest,
To come and clean my tears and soothe me

Under normal circumstance a country can't be called to come. It can't also come from a place to another. Again, a country can't clean the tears of a weeping person. So, the idea of calling a country to come and clean the tears of her weeping citizen and soothe him/her is nonsense when it is viewed from a literal perspective, given all these attributes belong only to a human being.

Nonetheless, we understand such types of expressions without any confusion, since our brain automatically maps from the known domain (motherhood) to the unknown domain (nationhood). We understand those expressions without confusion, including foreign audiences, like Barak Obama (who most likely listened with English subtitle), because the attributes indicated in the lines belong to mothers. Mothers naturally are kindhearted and sympathetic beings. They can't endure to see the suffering of their weeping child. They usually soothe and mollify their crying child cleaning his/her shedding tears and help him/her emotional strengths. Likewise, people get emotional strengths and stand against miserable experiences when they get the things they need from their countries like peace, love, brotherhood, justice, economic prosperity, etc.

On the contrary, the absence of those needed things (peace, love, brotherhood, justice, economic prosperity) makes citizens suffer just like a baby who is crying but has no one to soothe and mollify him. So, it is only when we see in this light of cognitive metaphor that the statements, like “Call my country, my only crest. To come and clean my tears and soothe me” can make us sense, although we do not usually ask such questions as our brain automatically and unconsciously maps it without conscious deliberations.

There are also a number of other motherly expressions that can show the “the nation is a family metaphor” in Armash.

ወጥተሽበምስራቅአንቸዮአለምጀንበር፣
አንድአድርገንእናጠላትስሽይፈር።...
ዘመምሳይልቀንጎድሎ፣
ባክሽኢትዮጵያንይቶሎ።

You light of the world, rise in the East
And unite us, so that, make your enemy be ashamed...
Please come back now, Ethiopia
Before it bends to sorrowful days,

Children usually quarrel with each other when their mothers go away. Usually children, especially elders dominate the younger ones and try to secure their interests by force. But this kind of problem gets solved immediately after the arrival of mothers, as mothers are usually endowed with the capacity to appease and pacify family members. The prevalence of peace in a family which has been in chaos due to the coming of the mother naturally makes enemies of that family angry. So, peace and unity will come to a family following the arrival of mothers. Thus, the vocalists appeal to Ethiopia to rise in the East, come and unite its citizens and make its enemies ashamed is a metaphoric mapping of the experiences of families, given families usually descend in to chaos following the departure of mothers and love, peace and harmony will prevail with the coming of mothers.

It is due to this cognitive fact that expressions, like “rise in the East, unite us and make your enemies be ashamed” make us sense. They not only make us sense, but also test us sweeter, especially when they are compared to expressions which are directly stated, for the reason that it fires the frame of motherhood which is the most beloved and the dearest thing in the world. In actual fact, the success of the artist to win the hearts and minds of nearly eight million viewers only within four months is attributable to his act of using the “nation as a mother metaphor”.

The last two lines (Please come back now, Ethiopia, before it bends to sorrowful days), also makes sense within the framework of the “the nation as a mother” cognitive metaphor. The absence of mothers in one’s own home is the most horrible thing, especially for little children. In fact, Ethiopians refer to a baby who grew up without having his mother by his side as a seedling which is doomed to grow up in a barren and waterless land. So, the absence of mothers can actually bend the lives of a family, especially the lives of children to sorrowful days.

The core message of the vocalist in those lines accordingly is the absence (the shattering of a country by implication) will bend the lives of citizens in to sorrowful days, just like the absence of a mother bends the lives of her children in to sorrowful days. So, these lines can be understood as the artist’s advice of his fellow Ethiopians to avoid their secessionist views and practices, because it finally leads to a dire consequence of statelessness which is metaphorically equivalent to motherlessness to children.

The artist’s act of referring Ethiopia as the morning sun that rises in the East is also traceable to the feeling children have whenever their mothers come back from their journey. We naturally feel happy when the sun rises in the morning and the darkness goes away, which can be viewed as the vocalist’s conscious act of activating the frame of hope as light and better future are metaphorically equivalent. Our daily expression of ‘bright future’ is the best example for our brain’s automatic act of equating hope with better future, even though the future is the succession of both light and darkness for both good and bad days. The famous black rights’ activist, Martin Luther Kings (jr.) expressed this reality in his famous speech entitled I have a dream as “Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice”, which also shows the fact that our brain equates better days (the time of racial justice in this case) with light, especial with the morning light of the East. So, it is natural if the artist expresses the coming of peaceful and united Ethiopia in terms of the dawning of the morning light of the East, because light naturally activates the frame of hope and the beginning of a brighter future.

On the contrary, we feel fear and bad when darkness comes, which can be understood as the cognitive equivalent of the absence of our mothers. In a similar fashion, citizens naturally feel fear when their countries descend in to chaos. So, the coming of peace, love and unity among citizens can be considered as the rising of the sun in the East winning darkness or the coming of peace, love and harmony in to a family due to the arrival of the mother of that family from her distance journey as they all are activators of the frame of hope in our brain and markers of the dawning of a joyous era.

The idea of making enemies ashamed due to the coming of Ethiopia again, is a manifestation of our brain's mapping of family experiences. Families usually descend in to chaos following the departure of mothers. This oftentimes makes enemies of families, especially their bad neighbors happy and worsens the grievance of the chaotic family. In a very similar fashion, the fight between and among Ethiopians obviously makes its enemies, specifically the Egyptians happy, given the conflict in Ethiopia is a result of foreign intervention.

The coming of peace, love and unity to Ethiopia will undoubtedly make Egyptians ashamed, seeing that their dream is to see no droplet of water of the river Nile is used by Ethiopians till the Day of Judgment. However, this dream of the Egyptians can only be actualized when Ethiopians quarrel and fight among each other. So, the vocalist's act of entreating Ethiopia earnestly to come and pacify its citizens and make enemies ashamed is a cognitively mapped experience of a chaotic family which gets pacified immediately after the arrival of the mother which obviously makes its foemen ashamed. This is because hostile neighbors naturally dream to see sustainable fights between their enemies, just like the Egyptians dream to see sustainable fighting in Ethiopia till the Day of Judgment.

The act of equating of the coming of the journeyed mother with the morning light of the East seems to me motivated by the artist's intention to activate the frame of hope and indoctrinate his moral lesson, in addition to his message of warning his fellow Ethiopians to stand in unison. As it is talked about in (section 5.3), moral standards are the results of regular metaphoric co-occurrences of experiences that secure the well-being of an individual, his group and others with other experiences (Lakoff, 2008).

As clearly discussed in the political mind, Lakoff argues that we people feel well when we act in the light than when we act in the darkness. In other words, the feeling of well-being regularly co-occurs with the experience of acting in the light. Consequently, we develop a metaphoric standard of morality i.e. morality is light and immorality is darkness (Lakoff, 2008).

The act of referring to Ethiopia as the morning light of the world which rises in East (as indicated in the first line of the lyric extracted above), therefore, goes in line with the "morality is light" metaphor. The metaphor is so complex that it requires the investigation of a number of envioning contexts and "the nation is mother" metaphor is always at work.

Understanding of the underlying metaphor in referring to Ethiopia as the morning light of the world which rises in East can be understood better with Lakoff's formula, i.e. you are better off if you do/have 'X', so morality is 'X' and the opposite of doing/having 'X' is immorality. When we calculate the metaphor that refers to Ethiopia as the morning light of the East using this formula, it gives us the statement "you are better off if the morning light of the East rises". So, the rising of the morning light of the East is morality and its opposite is immorality.

As recurrently discussed in this section, children feel happy whenever their mothers come from their distant journeys, because mothers are capable of soothing and mollifying their grieving children. So, we can see here in the lyric that the experience of the natural feeling of happiness of children due to the coming back of their mothers metaphorically equated with the coming of a country to its citizens, an expression which appears abnormal at the surface.

Under normal circumstance, countries do not come and go. However, the vocalist repeatedly entreats Ethiopia to come back throughout the work (Arماش), not because it is capable of coming back, but because the reality that he is dreaming to see in Ethiopia is similar with the experience of children whose mother has come back after a longer period of departure. The reality that he is dreaming to see in his country is peace, love unity and prosperity, realities which happen in a family which are oftentimes possible with the presence of mothers. So, it is logical to understand a country which provides protection,

peace, love unity and prosperity to its citizens as a mother which as recurrently discussed is the basis of the “nation is a mother” metaphor.

The rising of the morning sun in the East also naturally creates the feeling of happiness, especially on innocent children, like the coming back mothers from a distance. So, it seems logical for our brain to understand the life giving sun in terms of the life-giving mother, as they both are sources of life and happiness. Thus, it is possible to conclude that it is due to common traits of the mothers and the sun (serving as sources of life and happiness) that the vocalist made reference to Ethiopia as the morning light of the East, for the reason that it is the metaphoric equivalent of his mother.

In another perspective, the coming of a mother means the coming of the country (Ethiopia) or the rising of the morning light of the East. On the contrary, the absence of mother means the absence (the disintegration) of the country or the absence of light and the falling of darkness. On the other hand, all the three realities (the absence of mothers, the disintegration of countries and the falling of darkness) are dreadful and unwished-for experiences by anyone with a healthy mind.

To put it in another way, the artist’s act of dreaming the coming of mother Ethiopia is an act of dreaming love, peace, unity between and among Ethiopians which is metaphorically equivalent to the coming of the morning light of the East. So, we can understand his dream as an act of teaching love, peace, unity as morally acceptable behaviors and racial discrimination, ethnic conflict and divisive movements as immoral practices. To put it in the words of Lakoff, he is indoctrinating the idea that we (Ethiopians) are better off if we love each other, live in peace and stand in unison, practices that are equivalent to the rising of the morning light of the East. To be precise, the vocalist is educating his fans that love, peace and unity are morally just and virtuous behaviors. On the contrary, he is rating that hatred, conflict and racial divisions are immoral practices which can be metaphorically understood as acting in the darkness or living in the absence of mothers.

Racism and ethnic conflicts are also referred to in Armash as sickness as visibly stated in the following lines excerpted from the lyric:

በመባረኪያችን በመንገድ ላይ ዝለን፣

አይበቃም ወይ ማሳል በዘርጉን ፋንታ መን።

Getting frazzled at our time of blessing

Haven’t we coughed enough, from the common cold of racism?

The question of coughing for a longer period of time indicated in the last line of the above quotation directly refers to the suffering of Ethiopians due to the implementation of ethnic political programs as it has led to the degenerating socio-political circumstances. So, the coughing citizens for a longer period of time due to the common cold of racism indicated in this line is the suffering of Ethiopians from racist political dispensation, following the coming to power of EPRDF, the then ruling party which had been in power for nearly three decades since 1991.

Normally, people do not cough due to the implementation of political programs that they do not like, but they suffer for a number of reasons. For example, ethnic conflicts, genocidal acts, mass displacements, discrimination based on their identities, and many other malpractices have become common practices in Ethiopia since the time when EPRDF came to power. So, ethnic politics is metaphorically equated with sustainable coughing, because they both make people suffer.

The equation of racism with some kind of sickness, therefore, is an act of teaching a moral lesson. If put them in Lakoff’s formula, we get, ‘you are better off if you are healthy than if you are sick. So, morality is healthiness and immorality is sickness. That is why we usually refer to people with some ode behaviors as a sick person. Indeed, the vocalist also referred to racist behaviors as an act of ‘frazzling at the time of blessing’, another evidence of the equivalence of racism with some kind of sickness. So, we can safely say that the artist successfully communicated his moral standard (unity is morality) and effectively vilified racism as he equated it with sickness and immorality.

The “racism is sickness and thus immorality” metaphors are prevalent throughout the lyric. Let us see the following excerpt as final evidence.

ቀናበል አሁን፣ ቀናበል ቀና

Stand upright, stand upright

ጥንት አባቶችህ ያቆዩህን፣ ከፍ አድርገህ ይዘህባን ዲራህን

Waive on high the flag

That your forefathers have kept engrained

As talked about at the beginning of the analysis, the title of the lyric Armash means your emblem upright, which suggests that uprightness is a desirable behavior. It also suggests that it's opposite (lowering down) is naturally an unwanted reality.

We people stand upright and feel tall whenever we believe that we have done right and acceptable things. Quite contrary to this, we feel shorter and lower down our heads, if we believe that what we have done is not a right thing. If we calculate the reality using Lakoff's formula, it gives us that "you are better off if you stand upright than if you lower yourself down". This leads to a natural conclusion that morality is uprightness and immorality is lowering down.

It can be safely concluded that we all appreciate and remember Bob Marley's famous lines "Get up, stand up for your rights". On the other hand, the act of standing upright of Ethiopians can become a reality only when they stand in unison. On the contrary, the desired dream of standing upright of Ethiopians can't be actualized if citizens get divided along ethnic and religious lines, which can metaphorically be understood as an act of lowering oneself down.

Accordingly, the vocalist's choice of such types of cognitive metaphors is motivated by his intention to teach his moral lesson that unity is uprightness and thus is morality. Indeed, he repeated the phrase "stand upright" for more than fifty times within the space of one minute and thirty seconds, which shows that unity is his primary message. Quite contrary to this behavior, ethnicity is lowering oneself down and hence is immorality. So, it can logically be concluded that the vocalist has effectively communicated his message that ethnicity is an immoral behavior, for the reason that he successfully vilified it by metaphorically equating it with an act of lowering oneself down.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the central message of the lyric Armash is: peace, unity and brotherhood are morally just and virtuous practices. They are morally just and virtuous, because they are capable of securing the well-being of Ethiopians as whole. On the contrary, ethnicity, ethnic conflicts and racial hatreds are immoral practices as they can't secure the well-being of Ethiopians wherever they are.

The success of the artist in producing such a great piece of work and communicating those moral messages on the other hand is dependent on three things as the findings of this study show. The first one is the artist's success to beautifully craft a narrative in which he is portrayed as a victim of ethnicity which made him suffer from the feeling of exile while he is in his own country. So, the structuring of the narrative in such a way seems to be one of the reasons for his success in winning the hearts and minds of his fans as evidenced by the capacity of the work to be accessible to nearly eight million people in about three months. The second factor that made Armash great is the artist's success in recurrently firing both the frame of misery and the frame of hope, neural circuits which naturally are capable of developing the sense of sympathy and fellow-feeling. The third factor that contributed a lot for the success of Armash is the prevalent usage of "the nation is mother" cognitive metaphor, seeing that he equated the nation (Ethiopia) with mother, the dearest thing in the world.

Declarations

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This article is exclusively written by us and no other scholars contributed to it, except their works are made reference to.

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