CHAPTER-6

CRITICAL ASSESSMENT AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

In retrospect, the preceding chapters have been concerned with assessing what the Oromo traditional moral values were, how they were expounded by Gada system, what essential components constituted them, and how they were expressed in treating others and in being treated by others with the end in view of appropriating the underlying metaphysical themes in Oromo conception of values. It is understood that Oromo traditional moral values as expounded by Gada System provide a framework for the concrete exercise of the human emancipatory potential and enrich certain traditional metaphysical dimensions of moral life.

This chapter is concerned with the critical assessment of the core concepts of these values, that were in one form or another reviewed in chapter two, three, four and five. Indeed, critical reviews in some cases were made right in the context of the subject in question or at the end of a given topic or a chapter. This chapter does not intend to repeat those points and critical assessments that were done earlier; rather it focuses on the ingredients of the Oromo traditional moral value that have universalizable features and the unaddressed shortcomings that hamper the flourishing of these values. For the sake of convenience, the chapter is divided into two major sections. The first section is concerned with the findings of the research. It consists of two subsections, one dealing with the strength and the other with the inadequacies or limitations of the Oromo traditional moral values. It is treated in the light of the Aristotelian views of ethics. The second section forwards recommendations that the researcher coin on the basis of the findings.

6.1. Findings: Strong and Weak Points

One of the major objectives of this research is to philosophically sort out and evaluate the strong and weak points of the traditional moral values of the Oromo of Ethiopia from philosophical perspective. The identified strong and weak points are the findings of this research. Whether these findings pertain to the fundamental and universal philosophical problems of the mentioned traditional moral value, is the central theme of the chapter. In the context of this work the word ‘finding’ means bringing to light and conceptualize the social phenomena that have so far been unnoticed or undermined although they are either positively or negatively important. Or it expresses the exposure of social experiences that have been
taken for granted as normal when in fact they have harboured formidable challenges, and can be known only when intellectually and critically conceptualized.

The strength or weakness of the subject of the research is considered on the basis of its relevance or irrelevance to the conditions of life and also in the light of the universal ideals of humanity. Good life which is the ultimate aim of morality cannot be achieved without good means. To this effect morality pervades almost all aspects of human life. On the basis of this premise, the subject of this study is evaluated in terms of the constructive roles it plays in solving social, economic, political and cultural problems, arbitrating conflicts or avoiding violence, promoting peace and harmony and directing the life and activities of people towards good end. In other words, we assess what roles this moral value plays in speeding up development and in securing harmony in the present context of the Oromo people and the country. Its weakness is considered in the light of its failure in playing constructive roles or in having detrimental effects on the economic, political, social and cultural development of the country in general, and that of the Oromo society in particular.

6.2. Framework of the Remarks

In response to the question, ‘where does the locus of morality lie?’ moral philosophers have established three major ethical traditions or theories- virtue ethics, teleological ethics and deontological ethics. Since the focus of the traditional moral value of Oromo is on the character of the moral agent, it is plausible if the fundamental moral problems it considers are appraised in the light of virtue ethics. In virtue ethics moral rightness or goodness is anchored in the character of the moral agent. Aristotle immensely contributed to the development of virtue ethics as a theory. The good of man, for him, depends on the exercise and development of his rational quality. Man internalizes the habit of right thinking, right willing and right acting through reason. What Aristotle calls virtue is this habit of right thinking, right willing and right acting.

There is a link between the character of a person and the acts and behaviours of that person. Thus virtue ethics focuses on what kind of a person one ought to be in order to do morally right or good. The habit of doing moral good or abstaining from committing moral evil is virtue. And vice is the habit of doing moral evil. Both moral good and moral evil are motivated by the character of the moral agent. Excellence of (good) character or virtue motivates the moral agent to do morally good, whereas defect of character [or vice] motivates
a person to do morally wrong. In Aristotle’s account virtue is an acquired habitual disposition of obeying moral laws, whereas vice is a habitual disposition of disobeying these laws.

Very similar to the theory of virtue ethics, the Oromo moral philosophy focuses on the character of the moral agent. It undergirds the idea that a person of good character always acts or behaves in a morally desirable way. Every family, in the Oromo culture, attempts to raise and cultivate children in a way they could become persons of good character. This is internalized as a moral responsibility. They believe that a person of good character does not do morally wrong unless and otherwise by accident; and with the same logic, a person of bad character does not do good unless forced by external conditions. Just as it was for the virtue ethics of the Greeks, for the Oromo too, there are different kinds of virtues and vices. Some of these are discussed in chapter four. The whole efforts of the Oromo morality are to instil good characters in the minds and life of each and every Oromo person. Using this as a theoretical framework, a venture is made to pinpoint some of the good [strong] and the bad [weak] moral qualities of the Oromo people. The strong are to be appreciated and promoted and weak should be criticized and avoided.

6.3. Strong Sides

6.3.1. Humanism

Although the behaviours and values it characterizes existed in human life from time immemorial, the term humanism was coined during the time of Renaissance. It refers to the philosophical and intellectual trend developed as a reaction or revolt against the dogmatic beliefs and the religious authority of the medieval times. Humanism considered that what decisively shaped the course of human history is not any supernatural or superhuman power but the “purposive human effort and human will.” (Tripathi, 003: 179) It argued that the realization of human values makes man truly and fully human. By emphasising the importance, dignity and centrality of man, humanism provided a basis for the development of modern concept of human values.

The Oromo, when they were fully under Gada leadership, had the belief that all human beings were equal, and hence had to be respected equally. Gada taught Oromo nothing but humanness, egalitarianism and compassion. Except in some insignificant area of life, Oromo treated all human beings equally with respect, love and care. The good reason they had for this, according to Chaalaa, is: “Oromo treated others morally not only because they
wanted to be kind or benevolent to others, but also because Gada prescribed that they ought to treat others humanely. It taught them to do this because it was right or good.” For the Oromo of Gada equality of humanity could accord with the law of nature. Neither Waaqa nor nature has created human races as superiors or inferiors. None was born with such values. Values, for them, are human creations. Therefore, in Oromo view, discrimination is a social construction and not a creation of a superhuman power.

Their actions and behaviours made the Oromo more particular than their values and convictions. Although their development varies, moral values are inherent to all humanity. But the application of these values and principles matters from one society to the other. Some recognize them in principle, but not in practice, and others strictly observe them through their practice. Oromo recognized the equality of humanity not only in principle but also in practice. This value, for them, was not an ideal but a reality - the mode of life they lived. The fact of living, in accordance with their moral conviction, makes them perhaps among the few who lived in the same way. The deep concern they had and have for all human beings and the unceasing translation of this concern into practice makes Oromo virtuous.

In any society virtue and vice co-exist despite their antagonism. We may not find a human society in which there are no evils whatsoever. It is also impossible to conceive of a society without some virtues. There are virtues because there are vices, and there are vices because there are virtues. The existence of one presupposes the other. The point is, to determine to what degree each is prevalent, or which of the two overrides the other. On the basis of the data of the research, before the fusion of their culture with that of others, Oromo had virtues predominating vices. The majority of Oromo used to act and behave according to their moral rules (safuu). Although after the conquest a lot of vicious behaviours developed in their culture the sound care and concern, respect and compassion that Oromo have for others is still remarkable. By comparison, the Oromo communities that have retained the vital components of their culture and morality have fewer vices than those who have given up some of the vital components of their indigenous moral values.

6.3.2. Human Treatment

Morality is not only a matter of theory, but more importantly it is a matter of practical application. Probably from other fields of philosophy ethics is the most applicable to the life situation of humanity. In their social ties people necessarily treat one another. We treat others
and others also treat us. We would like to be treated fairly, kindly, humanly, friendly and compassionately. All others also have the same interest, although there could be some exceptions. Generally, either all or almost all humans want to be treated in a morally desirable way. The point, however, is whether everyone who wants to desirably be treated for him or herself would like to treat others the way he or she would like to be treated.

Treating others the way one would like to be treated [by others] is one of the rules of morality. Indeed this was upheld as a golden rule by the outstanding philosophers, religious personalities, sages and thinkers of the world starting from the ancient time up until this time. Although theoretically it involves inconsistency it is the most popular and applied moral rule. Experiences of life and interactions, however, show that not all people treat others the way they would like to be treated for themselves. Moral problems arise when how we ought to treat others and how we actually treat them become different. The former is the ideal principle and the latter is the practical reality on the ground. Morality is necessitated because people do not always treat one another the way they ought to do it. “Human beings are social in nature, but not so social that we do not need to protect ourselves against the risk of being assaulted or killed by our fellow humans.” (Singer, 1990: 186) In other words, the moral agents who want to be treated for themselves in a morally desirable way may fail to treat others the way they would like to be treated for themselves. Peter Singer (Ibid) again remarks, “If people voluntarily refrained from assaulting others, or acting in other ways inimical to a harmonious and social existence, we might manage without judges and sanctions.”

Almost all the informants attended in this research, the documentary data and the observation of the practical life-style of Oromo show that Oromo acted on or behaved towards others in accordance with their moral ideal. The ideal they pursued is to take care of others as much as they would like to be taken care of. Human life is the system of multiple parts. Because of these multiplicities moral value that people ascribe to this life, are expressed in terms of the human interest, dignity, freedom, right, welfare, etc. The Oromo traditional moral values owed profound concern to these values regardless of sexuality, social position, religion, race, profession and ethnicity. Within the bounds of their social framework, no one was treated more or less than the way the moral agent would like to be treated. Very similar to the Kantian notion of humanity, Gada had a belief that being a human
alone is enough for a person to deserve care and concern, love and respect. Fair treatment and just approach for any human beings is indispensable irrespective of whatever background they have. I think the morality of humanity all over the world seeks and promotes this kind of treatment. Therefore it can be said that the Oromo traditional moral value has a practically and universally valid content.

We have no doubt that the moral values of other human communities also contain universal content. Even in the most violent and aggressive culture there are moral principles that are universally valid. They can surpass the limitations of time, geography, history and conditions. The point is to what extent the society observes and utilizes these moral ideals. Many human communities have written moral codes that have come down to them through Holy Scriptures, which is by far the advanced one. But they are not translated into deeds as much as they are revered. Oromo have unwritten moral laws, which they effectively observe or use. What makes the Oromo morally exclusive in this regard is their strict observance and application of the principles. For them moral rules are not matters of principles but rather the issues of practical life. So their adherence to their moral rules makes the Oromo people morally advanced.

6.3.3. Selflessness: Reconciliation of Self-interest and Other-interest

In moral philosophy the balance between self-interest and other-interest is the fundamental problem to be addressed. This is what determines the act and behaviour of the moral agent or that which makes him treat either fairly or unfairly. The balance is particularly important when the self-interest cannot be promoted unless the other-interest is sacrificed. Conflict is inevitable in a situation where the moral agent cannot obtain the object of his desire without costing the interest of the other. The precise point is which interest should get priority over the other when the two interests come in conflict with each other? Or how deep is the concern of a moral agent for the self-interest as well as for the other-interest? In response to these questions two theories of ethics were developed – egoism and altruism. Egoism is a teleological (consequentialist) theory of ethics that holds that the ‘I’, the ‘ego’ or the ‘self’ is the central concern of morality. An egoist may answer to the question, “How ought I to act?” by saying “I ought to act in the best interest of myself.” For this moral agent, benefit, pleasure or the greatest possible good of oneself is the ultimate standard. Diametrically opposite to this theory altruism [in its strong sense] holds that rendering a
selfless service to others is the standard of morality. If a person is an altruist he answers the question “How ought I to act?” by holding “I ought to act in the best interest of others.” From this one can draw a conclusion that selfishness and selflessness are mutually incompatible.

The moral agent is responsible for his self-interest and morality as a norm of the society is accountable for the other-interest. The moral agent has two ambivalent choices – promoting self-interest at the expense of the other-interest [i.e., egoism] or obeying the moral law that stands in favour of the other-interest [altruism]. If one acts by choosing the former option then the consequence of the act is illegitimately beneficiary to him/her but harmful to the other and hence it is immoral. If he/she chooses the latter then the act is morally right but the consequence of the act may or may not be beneficiary to the agent.

Selfishness, in the history of moral life, has had strong power to motivate and dictate the actions and behaviours of people. “The primordial sin of selfishness and egoism still bedevils the human condition resulting in unrestrained drives for power and wealth, at the expense of human rights, social justice and peace.” (Blanchette, 2001: 125) Human mind produces evils not only out of ignorance but also out of the lack of will to recognize virtues and act in accordance with it. Although the agent knows what act or behaviour is virtuous he or she acts or behaves contrary to it because of the dictation of self-interest. Selfishness is one of the chronic threats that humanity has thus far failed to avoid. There have been continuous battles between the forces of altruism and that of selfishness, or between morality and immorality. Altruism is more or less on the right side of history; selfishness is obviously on the wrong side. Yet the world is still in the grip of selfishness. That is why virtues are held back from flourishing. People are unable to transcend their self-centredness because they lack good will.

The Oromo safuu attempts to balance these two conflicting interests. It encourages the moral agent to act more in the interest of the others than in the interest of the self. That is why it is more of friendly, humanely, sympathetic and compassionate than the otherwise. It underscores that when self-interest dominates other-interests violence gets preponderance over healthy and peaceful relations. Or moral problems arise when self-interest is promoted at the cost of the other-interest; and the other-interest is promoted at the expense of self-interest. In other words, it teaches that good life cannot be attained when the self-interest dominates the other-interest; and creative efforts and individual developments or self-realization gets
hampered when the other-interest stifles self-interest. It does not allow the one to dominate the other. Rather it provides a middle ground in which both remain in balance. Denying self-interest for the sake of other-interest and ignoring the interest of others for the sake of one’s interest have their own undesirable fall outs. The fact that safuu tries to keep them in balance is against the vices of the two, and hence is virtuous.

In an attempt to explain why this balance is required thinkers have aired different views. Grayling (2005: 29) quotes Albert Camus, “Should I commit suicide?” and answers, “If the answer is “No” it is because there is a reason to live: there is something worth having, doing, or being, which gives purpose to life, and thereby makes it valuable.” We want our life to be intrinsically valuable. You and others also want the same. But do we wish that your life and that of others have the same value as ours? My life is intrinsically valuable only if that of yours and others are ascribed the same value to, because it is intricately related to that of others. I exist because others exist, and others exist because we exist. As the African’s saying goes, “I am because we are.” If I cannot live without the others, it means it is those ‘others’ who partly make my life possible. The lives of others are in my life and that of mine is in theirs.

Apparently persons are separate, discrete and atomized entity. But in reality, they are essentially bound together through thousands of invisible threads. In these interwoven relationships when we hurt the interest of others we at the same time do damage to ours. The difference is that of the former is felt explicitly and immediately but that of the latter occurs implicitly and eventually. That is why Pojman says, “In caring for others, we often indirectly care for ourselves.” (2005: 30) I can make others to treat me the way I would like to be treated only if I treat them the way they would morally like to be treated. Treating others in a morally desirable or undesirable way is indirectly treating oneself in the same way. In the Oromo traditional morality there is no rigid boundary between self-interest and other-interest. If the former absolutely excludes the latter then the latter also does the same to the former. This poses threats to life. To a certain degree self-interest is within other-interest and the vice-a-versa. Half of the individual self is in him/her self and the other half of his or her self is in others. This is the reason why the Oromo traditional moral value attempts to balance the interest of the self and that of others. The whole effort of morality is to reconcile both. In view of this the Oromo morality is universally sound.
6.3.4. The Integrating Power of Oromo Morality

All the data and information of this research show that Oromo did not have much difficulty in assimilating themselves with others. This had happened either by changing others into themselves or themselves into others. They used two ways of assimilating people to their own selves – making the non-Oromo take the identity of Oromo voluntarily or humbly accepting any non-Oromo settled among them with their original identity. Even the nafteynas who settled among them and unfriendly treated them, were able to keep their own identity. Also the Oromo society and their land have been the avenue through, which all the ethnic groups of the country interact or interchange. There are as many as a million of non-Oromo people permanently residing among Oromo. Not only they welcome others to their own territory, but also permit people from different parts of the country to interact with one another. Thus Oromo has been the cement for the unity of all the ethnic groups in the country.

In the Oromo society, tolerance is a widely upheld moral norm. This is another virtue of Oromo. For multicultural societies such as Ethiopia tolerance is the imperative value that makes people of diverse cultures to harmoniously live together. People are tolerant means they are less affected by bias and prejudice, sense of superiority or inferiority complexes. One major cause of violence that human history knows has been intolerance. It is debatable as to what the source of intolerance has been. However, arrogance and ignorance, bias and prejudice, selfishness and ethno-centrism, complexity of superiority or inferiority are some of the major causes. These are said to be known as vices. The fact that Oromo are tolerant of the diversities of others proves that they are immune to all these vices. Thus, it is their tolerance and humanism greatly contributed to make all the ethnic groups in the country live together.

6.3.5. Democratic Culture and Life

Politics is one fort where many forms of virtues and evils are harboured. Wickedness such as greed and lust, arrogance and ignorance, bias and bigotry, racial and sexual discrimination, corruption and insensitiveness use politics as their legal shelter and tool for hiding their evil nature. This is the domain where moral philosophy and political philosophy intersect. Politics is an indispensable social institution that is originally called forth for helping people live together. For Aristotle, man is by nature a political animal. Although it is debatable whether nature or history makes man a political animal, politics has been one of the
fundamental problems of philosophy. What humanity has ever been seeking is not only to live together but the best means that makes this togetherness harmonious, honourable and graceful. This is necessitated because of the social beingness and the moral beingness of man. As a social being man cannot exist as human without social milieu. As moral being this man seeks to live in harmonious social environment. Moral and political philosophers have ever been attempting to find solution to this fundamental problem.

The experiences of human history show that there have been many kinds of political systems. Some were more vicious than virtuous, and few were more virtuous than vicious. Out of all the systems of rule that human history so far has recorded democracy is less evil; and hence it is close to the moral ideal of humanity. The Oromo of Gada was a democratic system. Long before the modern variant of democracy emerged Oromo had democratic life, culture or value – the system that is universally cherished. Although disrupted in the 19th century the fact that Oromo had a highly developed democratic administration and life style for about five centuries is beyond doubt. To this account Legesse adds,

There is abundance of historic and ethnographic evidence showing that the Oromo had a highly developed democratic-legal system during the past five centuries that the system has endured among the Borana, the Guji, and the Garba in southern Ethiopia until the present time.” (2000: 30)

There are some Euro-American scholars who tend to contend that there is no such a thing ‘as an indigenous’ Oromo ‘democracy’ or ‘government’. (Legesse, 2000: xix) It is no wonder if these scholars think that “democracy is a unique western invention that should not be lumped together with the institutions of other ‘inferior societies’” (Legesse, 2000: xix) not because there were/are not such institutions in the world but because they are unable or unwilling to see or recognize them. In the western culture the classical Athenian democracy is popularly known in history. Philosophers of the ancient Greece in general and Plato in particular did not cherish democracy. He critically examined different systems of rule such as timocracy, oligarchy, despotic, democracy and aristocracy. He characterized the first four systems of rule as bad, pinpointing the defect of each. Democracy, according to him, is a mob rule. Plato undermined it, thinking that it puts the “management of the state into the hands of ignoramuses unable to distinguish right from wrong.” (Grayling, 2005: 126) Convinced as the best kind of rule since it combines power and wisdom, he preferred aristocracy; the rule of
the few but the best. Indeed democracy is a value that universally expresses and addresses the fundamental problems of managing the relations and the life of people.

Western democracy in its modern form and content is of a recent phenomenon. According to Legesse when democracy was not fully established in Britain, the United States, France and other European countries as far back as 16th century Africa had some varieties of firmly planted democracy. (2000: 30) The colonialists who destroyed the democratic values, institutions and cultures of African people established the same institutions that they destroyed in Africa back in their home land. Thus democracy as a political system, according to the contention of Legesse, was invented again and again in the history of human kind. (2000: 93) One of these was the Oromo Gada which survived for five centuries until the end of the 19th century.

It can be debated whether Oromo perfectly used democracy in the true meaning of the word. It is difficult to say that it was all perfect. But it can perfectly be said that its democratic essence can never be doubted. This can be understood from the following statements of Legesse. “Sometimes the electors do not respect the collective sentiment of the luba and the clan, in which case some unpopular candidates may find their way into a position of power. There are no effective ways for preventing such an eventuality. On the whole, the electors’ choices do adequately reflect the desires of people.” (2000: 117)

Basically democracy is not an all perfect system of rule; but comparably it is less evil and more moral than all others that have so far experienced. In the words of Grayling, “... democracy is bad, but the alternative is worse.” (2005: 126) In short its goodness is comparatively relative.

Ethiopia is one of the unfortunate nations of the world in lacking a desirable kind of political system in its long history. It is un-popularly known for its undemocratic and repressive practices. The country is one wherein there is a large community that had and has very ancient and developed form of democratic value. Oromo is probably the first in history for establishing and sustainably practicing democracy over several centuries. In the last one century, however, these people became a society where democratic values and systems were absolutely treaded on by the autocratic rule of the monarchical system, dictatorial rule of the military regime and the unidentified repressive rule of the incumbent regime. The fact that Oromo to a certain extent retained some of the democratic values along with their Gada
System makes their system very relevant to the 21st century. They are more proximate to democracy than they are to autocracy. Thus Oromo both in their moral and political life have fertile ground and bountiful potential for the construction of democratic life and society.

6.3.6. The Value of Peace

Peace is a universally shared value. There is no human individual or community that does not need peace at least for the self. A life that is under perpetual threat of violence and insecurity is not worth living. The crux of the issue, however, is whether anyone who needs peace for himself also wishes the same for others. The whole story of war and peace, violence and tranquillity lies in the fact that there are humans that deny to others the very good thing that they owe to themselves. Those who unleash wars against others definitely need peace for themselves. But they deny it to others by setting wars to them. Denying to others the good thing that one wants for himself is immoral. There had been a lot of effort in history to promote peace and avert wars. Just as it was in the past still it is an urgent question to be addressed. This proves that the moral consciousness and life of humanity has not been strong to warrant peace and ward off wars.

The Oromo concept of peace and their mechanism of keeping it address the fundamental philosophical problem of peace and violence. For them peace is holistic. It is the virtue of manifold virtues. Intrinsically being a virtue it contains many other virtues such as wisdom, courage, patience, selflessness, justice and serenity, all of which are the means to attain it. Oromo wish others to have the peace that they want to have for their own selves and allow them to unconditionally enjoy it. They owe it to others as much as they do to themselves. “I owe peace to others because I want them to allow me to have it. A certain human community could be at peace only if all others are also in peace.” (Mormor) This is a virtuous act and behaviour that only a virtuous man and society can have. However, it is neither the interest that Oromo do have for peace nor the fact that they wish it for all human beings that make them peculiar, rather what they practically invest in peace so as to make it a reality of life.

An individual, according to Oromo belief, is at peace only when all others are also in peace. If I do not allow others to have the peace that I want for myself and if others do not allow me to have [enjoy] the peace that they want for themselves, it is impossible to secure perpetual [sustainable] peace. There is no exclusionary peace. I ought to allow others to enjoy
whatever good they claim by virtue of their own rights, and others ought to permit me to do, have and to be whatever good I claim by virtue of my own right. This moral responsibility is charged when people develop the attitude of regarding the interest of others and oneself in balance. Unless the attitudes between self-regarding and other-regarding are rationally balanced it is difficult to secure peace. Thus peace is maintained or restored only if the interests of all the parties involved are reasonably taken into account.

Wars and violence are always on the wrong side of human history. In principle, human beings prefer love to hate, peace to war, togetherness to isolation, life to death, good to evil, etc. Pojman remarks, “We generally prefer to survive, to be happy, to exercise love and friendship rather than hatred and enmity, to be successful in reaching our goals and the like.” (2005: 81) The best minds of human kinds have ever been trying to find out ways of dispelling all forms of evils so that good can flourish. But this did not happen. For all of the evils humanity had faced and is still facing the major cause is man himself. It is again this man who pays the heavy price that this evil incurs. The history of human society proves this truth. Why man is not able to reverse this tragic course? Why immorality and vicious behaviours infest human relations when it is possible to avoid or mitigate all these? Moral philosophers look at the cause of these vices in the greed and lust, ignorance and arrogance, negligence and selfishness of man himself.

It is man who needs peace, because peace appreciates life; it is man who hates war and violence because they are harmful to life and its development. And it is again man who inflicts war and violence. This is where one of human paradoxes lies. No one denies the overall destructiveness of war and violence. But this does not mean that there is no one who gains out of this war or violence. If there were no purposes that it could serve no violence of any kind could be chosen. As one informant remarked earlier, “No war could be fought without some kind of purpose – it is either to dominate or to liberate.” People aggressively go against peace because they are overpowered by the ambition of gaining material benefit, colonial subjugation or personal glory. War which is essentially evil is intertwined with benefit – benefit that the few collect at the expense of the many. The core reason why wars and violence have become the persistent challenges of humanity is rooted in the selfish interest of the minority that always risks the well being of the majority.
The question is why peace which is sought by almost all people is unable to win a battle over war and violence that are devised by the few? Many different reasons or causes can be hypothesized. Some have already been pointed out. There is one more crucial point worth noting – the passivity of the majority. Grayling explains this, “... it is in the laziness and inattention of the majorities that tyranny finds its toehold, so that by the time people bethink themselves, it is too late to bestir themselves.” (2005: 144) Traditionally the issue of war and peace, by and large, is left to the discretion of political institutions and their functionaries. This could be one of the basic reasons why the efforts that humanity has been exerting to promote peace failed to put an end or at least mitigate the prevalence of war. In wars we have two groups of people - those who mastermind and those who fight it. We really wonder if there could be wars in a situation where those who fight are also those who mastermind it. From this one can imagine that those who drive the wheel of the world have become so careless for the wellbeing of the others. They are not only careless but also ego-centric who extrinsically use other human beings for their personal desire.

The Oromo traditional concept of peace and the mechanism they employ for keeping it seem to suggest some theoretical and practical solution to this problem. One good lesson that can be drawn from it is the direct participation of the entire people for maintaining, defending, building and restoring peace. In the Oromo view peace is a very delicate social phenomenon. While one crazy individual is enough to disturb it, the effort of all or at least the majority is required to maintain or restore it. For this purpose Gada has a mechanism by which it makes people work for peace. In both of its preventive and remedial mechanisms it makes people to directly or indirectly participate in peace keeping. Even the most disabled and elderly can participate in peace building at least through blessings and prayers.

This seems to be reasonable. The presence or absence of peace directly or indirectly affects the masses. It is the ordinary people who seek peace more than any one. Wars mainly hurt not the war-mongers, but the innocent people who always remain to be the un-missing target during the time of war or violence. They are also the ones who are made to fight the war for which they are not the cause, the war that is contrary to their own will. The billions need no war or violence but peace and development, peaceful and meaningful life. There was no time in human history when war or violence was the choice of the majority. This suggests
that wars and violence are always the choices and decisions of the few. But it is not the few but the majority who suffers all the crises that war or violence inflicts.

It is when the masses that need peace most, remain passive in defending and promoting it, that peace suffers in the hands and minds of the few. The passivity of the majority creates a fertile opportunity for the few agents to abuse the value of peace in a way it serves their own personal purpose. If people from all walks of life are made responsible for peace keeping the world will be much safer than when it is left to the discretion of the few. But the system of the world has made the majority powerless to promote and keep its interest. Take for instance, if the American people were given the opportunity of deciding over the proposed war against Iraq by the George Bush’s administration, it might have not been endorsed; and the atrocities and messes incurred could have been averted.

It is probably cognizance of this problem that made Oromo to have a system in which almost all participate in peace making and promotion, by and through Gada System. It is the moral duty of each and every Oromo to refrain from committing anti-peace acts and to perform activities that help the promotion of peace and at the same time to resist any violence that breaks the order of peace. In that sense, the issue of peace and war is not the concern of a particular group rather the subject in which everyone has a stake. Its sustenance and promotion could be guaranteed if all people of a given community actively participate in its making or building. The Oromo seem to be right when they believe that everyone should have a role in making peace. History has shown us that it was not those who masterminded [although it finally judged them in one form or another] the wars who immediately suffered unspeakably from the atrocities these wars inflicted but the innocent majority that absolutely had been voting for peace, [or those who had no stake in war and violence]. The Oromo approach that makes everyone responsible for the promotion of peace could be considered as a viable method of peace assurance. If the making of peace and the avoidance of war is the concern of every one, then the maintenance of peace becomes secure. If it is left open to the acumen of only certain group of people then it becomes vulnerable. Therefore, the fact that the participation of people at all levels in peace keeping, is emphasised in Oromo culture could be a sound idea to consider.

The other interesting lesson to be learnt from the Oromo traditional notion of peace is the means to be employed for maintaining or restoring it. The study of human history shows
that either a peaceful or non-peaceful means had been used to regain peace. From the perspective of Oromo belief genuine peace is gained through peaceful means, not otherwise. It is not gun, violence or any coercive measure but mind or dialogue that frames peace on firm foundation. No good quality is required to ignite war or violence since any wicked person can do it. It is not a person of good character but one who has evil intention that provokes a war, at least the initial war. In connection to this, Grayling (2005: 150) beautifully states,

> It is very much easier to be intolerant, angry, jealous and resentful than it is to be generous, patient, kind and considerate. Without question it takes far more thought, and far more work to treat others from the standpoint of these virtues than from that of vices, which is why the latter are so prevalent.

It is very easy to disturb peace. Any foolish act is enough to threaten it. But it requires a community of high profile to extinguish the flames of war through peaceful means. Genuine peace-making is impossible without wisdom, humane and moral sensitiveness. Thus it is a virtuous person or a community that seeks peace and averts violence. Amsalu says, “Those who fight for peace against violence are those who know not only that peace is the lasting solution to human problem but also who believe that becoming more humane and moral offers a solution than any other endeavour.” For the Oromo it is nothing but peace that salvages the world. They believe that it is achieved through persistent efforts. As peace-loving people they sacrificed their energy, time, wealth and even life for the maintenance of peace. If they were engaged in war, it was only to regain the disturbed peace. Borbor observes that people go out for war in order to dominate others or liberate themselves from the domination of others - either to threaten peace or to restore it. In history there was no time when Oromo fought aggressive wars against others. It was only in self-defence that they engaged in wars. In connection to this Abera remarks, “In their history Oromo never fought a war that threatened peace. I can say almost all the wars they fought were aimed at securing peace.” A war that is fought for the restoration of peace has a lofty cause, and hence it is one that constitutes what is known as just war. Its objective is not to inflict harm on others but to bring back the peace that is lost. A just war, according to Grayling, refers to “a legitimate use of violence to defend against aggression and to put an end to oppression and genocide.” (2005: 140) It is fought not to disrupt the peace of others but to restore the disrupted peace.
“Oromo do not plunge themselves into war unless they exhaust all possible peaceful alternatives.” (Teib)

The other most important point worth assessing is the value that the Oromo give to mind or dialogue for securing peace. Abdulkerim comments, “War is prevalent because human mind is too weak to solve human problems.” The world has suffered from brutal wars and violence of different scales more in the modern world than it had ever been before. It is terribly regrettable that the world in which human mind has epistemologically developed more now than it had ever been in the past is unable to use mind for the lofty causes of the world. Wars and violence are initially conceived in human mind. Mind resorts to undesirable violence because of excessive selfishness, ambition and temptation. Humanity has thus far failed to resolve the problems of violence due to the weakness of this mind to avoid vices. Human conflicts, according to Oromo culture, could genuinely be settled not through fierce violence but through thoughtful minds. “Oromo do not believe that physical confrontation is a solution to problems. We prefer dialogue or conversation to address conflicts. We do not allow one conflict to give rise to another. For this purpose we use mind, not force.” (Teib) In connection to this point, one can observe the peculiarity of Oromo not in their recognition of the importance of mind for peacemaking but in the practical use of this mind.

The traditional conflict resolution mechanism of the Oromo society required skill, wisdom, courage, good will and humanitarian commitment. It was like waging a battle to win victory over violence through peaceful means - peaceful war launched against the violent war without fire arms and ammunitions, force and violence. What act could be more heroic than peacefully fighting and subduing violence and war? “Those who oppose” war-mongers “not with returned gunfire but with offers of peace are as high above them morally as Everst is above a worm cast.” (Grayling, 2005: 150) Thus the idea of settling conflicts through dialogue deserves appreciation, because it is peace and reason that saves the world not war and emotion.

Failure to accept differences is one of the chronic challenges of peace in the present day world. History has shown that intolerance to diversities is one of the stumbling blocks of good and peaceful life. In managing conflicts of differences Oromo used rational conversation rather than coercive measures. Gada taught that it is not force but mind; it was
not violence but dialogue, not imposition but agreement that harmonizes the diversities of people. It is a matter of fact that there was, is and will be no time when humanity lived without differences. They are inherent to human life, relations and thoughts. If it is an obvious fact that humans cannot live without differences then why these humans make it a source of problem? Denying the undeniable reality of life is a moral failure for the Oromo.

Peacemaking and keeping involves good will, selflessness, forgiveness, etc. Unless each and every one resigns some of her or his claims and interest, for the sake of peace the latter cannot be achieved. Good will and forgiveness in their turn presuppose wisdom, because they may not appropriately be used unless they are enlightened by the latter. The perception of the ultimate advantage beyond the immediate benefit is impossible without wisdom. In morality “We allow some disadvantage in order to reap an overall, long run advantage” (Pojman, 2005: 33), because, “Being faithful, honest, generous and kind often requires us to act against our own interest.” (Ibid: 34) This is actually what the Oromo in their moral life did.

Oromo believe that peace is required not only for humans but also for everything and systems, the regularity of which could be disturbed by its absence. Wars and violence do not only afflict harm to life but also destroy resources including natural environment and species in it. Nature for them is not the homes of wild beasts alone but also that of humans. It is not only the home of humans but also their source and resource with which they are tied through flesh and blood, soul and spirit. Thus it must also be at peace.

6.3.7. Appreciation for the Rule of Law

One of the moral challenges of humanity comes from the failure to respect the rule of legitimate law. Respecting or disrespecting the rule of law entails a moral and ethical concern. In principle having a regard for a legitimate law is morally right, because it is tantamount to doing justice or promoting good; and taking the opposite stand is morally wrong for it is equivalent to committing injustice. It is only a virtuous person or people who unconditionally respect the rule of law. Considered generally, Oromo are the law-abiding people. Breaking a law would mean acting against safuu, which is the commission of crime, sin or injustice. In their culture there was no tendency of putting one’s interest above the law that is supposed to protect the interest of the majority. That which should rule is not a person but the law and hence person should be more than the law. “Law must have more authority
than humans next to Waaqa. It is, therefore, the moral obligation of each and every person to abide by law. In our society the rule of law is a cherished value.” (Mormor)

In his attempt to answer the question, ‘what is the profound reason for the Oromo to commit themselves to the rule of law?’ Amsalu asserts that Oromo has safuu for everything. Gada, safuu and the rule of law are inseparable. Other informants also share the same idea. Gada makes a law and teaches that everyone should be ruled by law, because it protects the life, dignity, interest and property of each and any one. A man who has a regard for the rule of law does not violate the right of everyone. As we need a law to protect us from harm, the law needs us to respect it. It can protect us only if we unconditionally accept its rule. A person who obeys the law is one who also unconditionally respects Gada and safuu.

Gada does not only recognize the rule of law but also it teaches that all humans are equal before the law. This is very important. A law is a law not because it is declared to be a law but because it has the authority to command the act, behaviour and relationships of people. Its authority objectively and effectively rules the society only if it is impartial. Its objectivity avoids subjectivity and partiality if only it serves the good purpose of the citizens equally. “We have laws just as we had it in the past. It is because there is a rule of law that I, you and others freely move from place to place. It is because of the rule of law that we understand each other. But we should not stop praying for the law that treats us all equally.” (Toore) If everyone is treated before the law fairly then it means the law objectively treats people. This narrows down subjectivity, which in turn reduces the probability of its violation.

One can understand the value of the rule of law if he/she compares it with a state of lawlessness that may occur sometimes in history. This is a situation in which life is haunted by uncertainty and callousness. It is marked by helplessness and hopelessness, crying and screaming, disturbance and tension, confusion and chaos. From this perspective it is impossible to doubt the importance of the rule of law. But it must be noted that even a law of a repressive state can do this. Should we respect the rule of law simply for the sheer fact that it helps us to live? Nazis, Fascists, dictators, autocrats and oppressive regimes had laws. The purpose of laws for these regimes was more to safeguard the power of the regimes from the counter-forces than to protect the subjects. Millions of people were murdered because they fought against or ceased to be the supporters of the repressive laws and the evil acts of the regimes. Thus the rule of law should be considered not only in terms of serving the
purpose of survival but more importantly for helping the promotion of good life - this is the moral dimension of the rule of law.

A law is respected either because of its coercive nature or because of the free choice of the moral agent. Oromo society would like to respect the rule of law more out of its free will than being forced by an external agent. Why do we need an external force to make us obey law if we really know the importance of this law? Abdulkerim comments, “If we all respect the law without being conditioned by the presence or the absence of the external agent to enforce it then the effectiveness of the law is immensely great.” Tripathi (2005: 57) also observes, “Rule of law cannot be very effective if it has to rely only on the coercive power of the state. Respect for law, legal institutions and legal processes must be a part of the general value temper of the society.”

The respect for the rule of law begins with the making of the law. Those who are very near to laws are those who make, enforce, interpret, administer and execute it. In the Oromo Gada system it is the Gada assembly that makes law. It makes it in a way it rules the relationships of the society harmoniously. “The effectiveness of rule of law is very much dependent on the ethos and integrity of the members of the legal profession, both on the bar and on the bench.” (Tripathi, 2003: 58) Anyone who closely observes them will find that Oromo legal professionals and non-professionals today have considerable ethos and integrity in the making, enforcing and administrating laws.

Corruption, which is immoral and unethical, is largely connected to the rule of law. Wherever there is corruption there is lack of sound rule of law. In other words, corruption becomes endemic when the rule of law in the true sense of the word, is ignored, defied or abused. In the present Oromo society even when Gada does not have a direct influence on individual behaviours (as it had a century ago) the Oromo professionals have less affinity for corruption. Although we do not have statistical data, empirical observations and the informal views of people indicate that Oromo professionals are less corrupt. They are less tempted to abuse their power, profession, skills or opportunities for personal benefit. In this sense, they honour more the trust entrusted to them than abusing it for personal gain. This is also another merit of the Oromo traditional moral value.
6.4. Weak Sides

In the previous section we discussed the strong aspects of the Oromo traditional moral value. The objective of this section is to figure out the core shortcomings of the mentioned value. Many of the weak points were critically assessed directly in the text they appeared. In this section we look into those that were not critically evaluated in the texts.

6.4.1. Failure to assess the repercussion of moral act

One of the grave shortcomings of the Oromo traditional moral value is the failure to consider the repercussion of its fair treatment. Whether the fair treatment that the Oromo offered to and the respect they had for others, had strengthened or weakened them, or brought them respect or disrespect should have been reviewed. The informants feel that Oromo have gone too far to respect the non-Oromo, who did not have the same kind of respect for them. Teib said, “Oromo had been sacrificing even their own legitimate interest for the sake of others, whenever they thought it could serve good purpose.” Indeed, from moral viewpoint, this is good. In principle humans should do good without anticipating some other good in return for themselves. But they should not fail to question whether whatever right they always do to others, perpetually inflicts harm on or bears respect for them. The circumstance in which the moral agents act should be one that recognizes the merit of their action - it must not be that which intentionally abuses whatever right they do for the sake of others. If the fairness, generosity or kindness of one people is misinterpreted as timidity, foolishness, ignorance, docility, or stupidity then the act serves no good purpose. It is just like denying one’s self-interest for the sake of bad intention.

It must be noted that in moral life it is impossible to talk about pure or undiluted form of self-interest or the interest of the other. There is no rigid boundary between the interest of oneself and that of others. If self-interest excludes other-interest, and the latter does the same to the former the survival of both parties becomes precarious. This is because as Grayling (2005: 30) puts it,

> when legitimate and appropriate self-interest turns into indifference or callousness, making us shut our eyes to the claim that others’ suffering makes on us, then the world’s moral machinery is out of kilter, and in the end threatens our own well-being too.

In fact, there is nothing wrong in pursuing both self-interest and other-interest. Moral problems arise when self-interest is pursued at the expense of other-interest, or when other-
interest is promoted unnecessarily at the expense of self-interest. One should not extrinsically use the other. To put it in a different way, the interests of the two parties should be intrinsically recognized. Oromo did not pursue their self-interest at the cost of others, but they have been advancing the interest of others at their own expense. This is an immoral act they committed because of the failure to discharge the moral duty they had towards themselves.

It is morally desirable to tolerate the diversities of human cultures. But everything has a limit of tolerance. Limitless tolerance is injurious. If people tolerate those diversities that reciprocally tolerate their own diversities it is justifiable; whereas if they tolerate the diversities of others that do not in turn tolerate their own diversity it gives a way to brutal oppression and exploitation. The fact that Oromo tolerated the diversity of the ruling elites and others that attempted to virtually eliminate their own identity contributed to their failure in all aspects of life. Thus the failure of Oromo to critically assess the setbacks of their traditional moral values is the serious drawback that has given immense strength to the brutal rule of the Abyssinian elites and at the same time has brought vulnerability and subjugation to the Oromo people.

6.4.2. Lack of Literary Culture

The Oromo moral value not only remained undeveloped, but also unknown to the world because it was unwritten. In terms of its substance, rationality, logical coherence, pertinence and organization, it is comparable to the developed moral tradition of the world. But the fact that it lacked written form made it not only unknown to the world but also to be walked over. Thanks to the oral literature that has made its survival possible; it is because of it that we are able to know some of its qualities. Still one can guess that it might have lost some of its original and vital ingredients. More importantly, because of its unwritten form it is not conducive for research, it cannot be taught and learnt, theorized and conceptualized.

6.5. Implications and Suggestions

We have seen that there are strong and weak sides in the Oromo indigenous moral values. On the basis of the identified strong and weak sides, it is imperative to point out certain recommendations that may be helpful in preserving and promoting the strong and avoiding the weak ones. Morality seeks to promote good and avoid bad. The recommendations aim at figuring out the ways and means to be used for this moral end. The
first two recommendations are general. They are intended to establish the premises from which the other recommendations are drawn as conclusions.

6.5.1. Moral Imperative

It is imperative to establish that man is a moral being. The desire to have a well-lived and fulfilled life has given rise to the norm of judging human actions and behaviours as right or wrong, good or bad. The basis of this judgment lies in man as a moral being – the man who is endowed with the capacity of giving judgment. Coined by Aristotle, it is insisted that human beings are social and political animals. Today it is popularly known that humans are social, cultural, religious and political beings. But there is another dimension that the world does not emphasize as much as it does others – i.e., man as a moral being. We can take a simple example to show that humans are undoubtedly moral beings.

Do we, as parents, want our children to be good? The answer is certainly “yes”. Do we, as humans desire that others treat us kindly, honestly, compassionately, fairly, equally and humanely? Without any doubt the answer is again “yes”. Can we stop thinking about the goodness or badness, rightness or wrongness of human actions and behaviours? No, we cannot. Do we want to be happy? Certainly “yes”. Do we want to avoid anything that makes us unhappy? Definitely ‘yes’. Others also have the same aspirations. This clearly shows that man is a moral being. The survival and flourishing of human life is impossible without being morally treated by others, and without morally treating others.

In human context moral treatment is mandatory, not discretionary. It is morality that decisively makes and fosters the human world. Viewed from this perspective, the failure to develop moral life, for humanity, is not only a moral degeneration but also a grave self-defeat. The questions of right or wrong, good or bad have never been alien to humans. Probably before they became political animal they existed as moral animal, because the judgment of right and wrong, good and bad precedes the making of political laws and institutions. Thus a human being is a moral being just as he is a social, political and thinking being. This acumen is very important, because if man realizes that he is a moral being, then he will not downgrade morality.

6.5.2. Human Dignity and Development

In principle, the ultimate goal of development is the development of human life, systems and relations. Very often we perceive development in terms of material things or wealth. It is man who develops and it is again man for whose sake development is required.
As such man is the subject and the object, the means and end of development. As a subject man is the agent of development. He is the one who makes it possible. As its object, development should develop man. It is required for making human life better. The very essence of development lies in the fact of taking human life to better, safer and happier state. In short man is the centre of development.

Life changes for the better when this development solves problems and answers questions Viewed from this angle development is not only an economic concept but essentially a moral concept. Human actions, activities and experiences that make living conditions, relations, spiritual and mental states of man better both in quality and quantity bring about development, and hence are morally praised. In this sense, development should basically aim not at the promotion of the material dimension of human life alone, but also at all of its spiritual, intellectual, moral and material advancement - which in other words means good life. Human development that involves the advancement of all these promotes the dignity, freedom and security of man.

6.5.3. Indigenous Moral Values

Gada, being a comprehensive political, social, cultural, religious and philosophical system, is built on the principle of rightness or wrongness, goodness or badness of actions and behaviours. It is the system that has been orally passing down from the preceding to succeeding generations. Tradition is the body of practice and belief which is socially transmitted from the past. In the western culture axiological disciplines particularly morality and ethics are devalued, and science and technology are viewed as the sole means for humanity to construct a better world. Consequently the best minds of the present world are preoccupied with the development of science and technology. Indeed the helpfulness of these achievements is beyond doubt. They have helped people to be more efficient and effective, and have made their working and living conditions more comfortable and enjoyable. But they have no power to make people virtuous.

The culture of the west dominated the rest of the world in two ways – by indoctrinating that the advancement of science and technology is the sole means of solving the problem of the world and by imposing its value through various means. Being dictated and misled by these denigrations people are increasingly abandoning their indigenous moral values.
The achievements of science and technology are serving not only the good purpose of man but also his evil purposes. If the goodness of their immediate results that are mainly measurable in terms of quantity forces humanity to lose sight to the goodness of values that cannot be quantified, then these achievements must critically be reviewed. As explained elsewhere, the reality of humanity is composed of facts and values, of which values play the decisive role in making the distinctive feature of man. One statement from Titus will suffice to make this point clear. “While man is a physical, chemical and organic world he has also a rational and a moral nature which places him apart from those things which are merely physical, chemical and organic.” (1954: 508) Undermining morality in view of the development of science and technology is alienating this humanity from that which decisively has made it human.

In fact, we do not argue that all the indigenous values are valid or good and all the exotic ones are invalid or bad. In ‘tradition’ we may think that we do right while we do wrong. It is also possible to think that we do wrong while we are right. We may think of ‘tradition’ as valid when in fact it is full of irrational, superstitious, dogmatic and unchecked assertions and beliefs. It is equally possible to think that it is entirely useless when it actually contains dynamic elements that can serve the good purposes of the present day man. The same is true to all the borrowed values of the west. Thus it sounds to us to argue that no indigenous value should be considered useless before critically evaluated, just as no values of the west should be endorsed before its relevance and applicability is critically judged.

In societies which are tradition-dominated, it is indispensably important to critically study traditional value systems in order to identify what good or bad they entail. Even Plato and Aristotle who are more than 2000 years as far back from us taught their people to “… retain many of the values of traditional morality but not retain them uncritically.” (Pojman, 2005: 10-11) They attempted to make their people retain the traditional Greek conceptions of virtues, such as courage, moderation, wisdom, piety and justice (Ibid) not as they were handed down to them but by putting them on rational foundation. Adhering to the modern value of the west, without clearly knowing what good the indigenous value has for us in reserve, and abandoning it without exploring what harms it inflicts on us, is a folly.

Traditional moralities are neither totally valid nor invalid. Some of their components can be obsolete, and hence they do not have a vital power to survive. In the absence of
rational and critical attitude they seem to exist when they do not. Although they should have been avoided they still could be held as truth in the uncritical minds of the masses. They do not only catch the perceptions and conceptions of people but also hide the actual reality which is out there. In this sense, they more hurt than help. But other ingredients of these moralities could still be as young and vital as they were in the past. They are rational and universal ingredients that can stand the test of time. Such moralities can be the vital part of the present as well of the future. Viewed from this angle, it can help more than hurt. In the latter case there is no rigid boundary between the so-called ‘tradition’ and ‘modern’.

Every tradition has its own strength and weakness. So does the Oromo traditional moral value. It is strong as long as it contains dynamic elements that create, promote and maintain all good things that lead humanity more and more to better life. It is weak if it fails to serve the good purpose of man. The strong sides of the Oromo traditional moral value by far override its weak sides. Although the way it had been managed and transmitted makes it ‘traditional’ the quality of its content is largely modern. Despite its difference in words and terminologies the substance it contains is more or less similar to the world-wide popular moral principles. Efforts must be exerted to use and promote the valid, rational and relevant values of traditions. If we had given to ourselves the chance of checking what we had and what did not, probably we would not fail to solve at least some of our major problems. It is that which we have already in our store that we most of the time borrow from outside in different language and theory. If there is a need of developing a morally vibrant community in the context of tradition-dominated societies their traditional values must be taken into account. The moral and ethical viability of these values should be tested in the light of moral philosophy.

6.5.4. Integration of Moral values

The world is increasingly becoming a small village because of many dimensional developments. This is understood not only in terms of geographical dimension but also in view of cultural assimilation. Values are either integrative or disintegrative. Particularly moral values bring different people together to form a harmonious unity or do the otherwise. In the present day world, we have two value systems – one is the world-wide dominant value of the developed nations [western] and the other is the indigenous value. By using an “either... or” principle people very often antagonize the two. Denying one in favour of the
other is a folly. Some of the Oromo educated and political elites have largely abandoned their indigenous moral values in favour of either the Abyssinian or the western values when the majority of the Oromo people are still with their local morality. This creates a situation in which the masses do not understand the elites and the elites do not really grasp the reality of the masses. All the values of the west acquired through training may not wholly applicable to the context of the less developed cultures, and all the indigenous values of the latter may not be useless.

It is desirable to know that there are universal moral principles in the indigenous moral value that are as valid as the universal moral rules of the western world, and also there are wicked elements that are injurious in the moral value of the west as well as the traditional societies. There is disparity between the reality of the value of the indigenous people and the value of the west that is alien to the reality of these people. Awareness of this is very important for mutual understanding and the utilization of the rational elements of the world value systems. In deed there are elements that antagonize as well as harmonize the two value systems. The rational and valid elements that we have in both are integrative forces whereas the irrational and irrelevant ones are the antagonizing ingredients.

The formidable problem, however, is how to identify and distinguish those which harmonize from those which antagonize. Instead of denying one in favour of the other we need to develop the capacity of identifying and using the relevant and universal components in both the moral values of the developed and less developed societies. There are valid values of the west that are applicable to the context of the less developed, and there are pertinent values of the less developed communities that are as valid to the context of the developed as they are to the less developed. Along the universal moral principles the particular ones that are still valid and meaningful to the less developed societies must be given due attention.

6.5.5. Research on Values

Today researches are conducted more on facts than values. As mentioned elsewhere this alone cannot reveal the complex reality of man. In making the human personality, shaping or cultivating their behaviours, in guiding their actions in the right course and in settling their conflicts of life moral values have more roles than facts. In Ethiopia each and every ethnic group has its own indigenous values. This has immense impact on making their togetherness either harmonious or the otherwise.

335
To identify the virtuous and vicious ingredients of moral values in each traditional society, every ethnic group must be taken into consideration for a critical study. Harmony could be attained only when virtues override vices. It is possible to know as to what extent the desirable content of moral values is helpful and the undesirable one is harmful to humans only if they are critically investigated. Thus academic institutions and capable personalities must make philosophical reflections on indigenous moral values.

6.5.6. Moral Values in the School Curriculum

Generally in Ethiopia, value education has not so far been made compulsory for school children. The content of school curriculum is predominantly the knowledge of facts, languages and quantities. What are being taught and learnt largely about matters of facts that are evaluated in terms of truth and falsity. But, as mentioned earlier, humanity cannot be explained and understood by the knowledge of crude facts alone since it is also composed of beliefs, imaginations, emotions, intellect and values. When we are made to know only our factual reality while the core ingredients of our reality are both facts and values, we acquire only partial knowledge of ourselves. Ignoring value that has a decisive role in making what and who we are, it is impossible to get the correct knowledge of ourselves. Thus knowledge of hard facts without sound sense of humanity is not only one-sided but also lacks the essentials of humanity. It is unlikely for a person to become virtuous without knowing what virtue is. Thus academic institutions at all levels should commit themselves to the incorporation of value education in their curriculum and to imparting it.

There is no relevant virtue to a people than the values of the society to which they are born and in which they are raised. Even if they are useless their uselessness must be addressed. Whether we like it or not they are deeply rooted in our reality - they are the core of our identity. Ignoring the teaching-learning of our indigenous moral values makes us turn our eyes blind to our reality. This study would, therefore, like to highly recommend that children must open their minds to the world and the world must be opened to their minds through their indigenous values to which they are born. The history of the country had no constructive attitude towards the diversity, plurality or cultural multiplicity of its people. Derogatory expressions and terminologies that were set to damage the reputation of people are the best evidence for this. Myths, mystifications, delusions and misrepresentations were used to disfigure and denigrate the reality of people. What best means do we have to prevent such
vices from invading the minds of the young people and to remove them from the minds of the adults, other than moral philosophy and education?

Applied science cannot remove bias and prejudice. Not only it fails to remove bias and prejudices but it could even be used for evil purpose if it is not guided by ethical principle. Without moral and ethical education and reflection human mind and internal life is left unprotected against all the malicious attitudes such as bias and prejudice, arrogance and complexes, jealousy and gossiping. All these are the anti-dots of good living. Therefore, moral education helps us to exorcise the vices that we have so far internalized and replace them by virtues, and prevent our inner life from being invaded by new vices and develop virtuous life.

6.5.7. Institutionalizing Morality

The deep attention and concern Oromo had for safuu was sound and remarkably commendable. In Gada system politics, laws, morality and religion were integrated. When a political or legal action was undertaken the moral principles and religious values were thereby practiced. Each of the above has acquired its own specific domain, although there are interrelations and overlapping. This is to say, except morality all others are institutionalized. For religions, sciences, technology, politics and fine arts we have institutions. All of them are about the intellectual, political and spiritual life and activities of men. But today people no longer experience such a life and system. The Gada system with its integrative power had vanished, and replaced by a system that structurally looks modern while it remains un-modern and brutal in content, i.e., repressive and brutal ruling system.

Indeed, morality is still functional. People daily make judgments, decisions or choices on the basis of moral rules or principles. More than anything else it is morality that still desirably binds people together. It is not only the political and social laws that guard the wellbeing of people everywhere rather it is the moral law that regulates the sentiments and desires of people. But it is not taken care of as much as it takes care of humanity. It has been refrained from unfolding itself and fully playing constructive roles in human history. In the contemporary world people customarily act or behave morally by virtue of being moral beings, not by the fact that they are taught moral laws. Thus for morality to have a sound ground in the life and relations of humanity it must be organized into a strong institutional form.
6.5.8. Ethiopia and Oromo

The Socratic dictum “know thyself” is the heart of moral philosophy. Socrates insisted on this point because he believed that chronic problems arose from the ignorance of one’s self. The creation of good individual and societal life requires not only the knowledge of other-things but also of oneself. If you tell a layperson ‘know yourself’ he gets offended and may even clinch his fists for fighting. He may respond, ‘how dare you are in telling me to know myself?’ This is the indicator that he is still ignorant of his ignorance. He thinks that he knows very well when actually he has little knowledge of his own self. It is true, we know ourselves since we are not a stone, a tree or a cow. But the simple fact that we know that we are not stones, trees or cows does not, however, make our self-knowledge sound. “Understanding external reality is a difficult task. But knowing one’s own self is still more difficult.” (Tripathi, 2003: 87)

The human self is a complex reality, and hence self-knowledge involves not only facts but also as Tripathi again says the understanding of “motives, feelings, preferences and values.” (2003: 87) The identity of a person is constituted by the integration of objective and subjective entities – entities that are in their turn resulted from a myriad of relationships. No one can know genuinely who he is unless he examines himself in relation to all other humans and non-humans. The answers to the questions such as, ‘who am I to them, and who are they to me?’ ‘Am I right to others, and are others right to me?’ constitute self-knowledge. More importantly self-knowledge is not only knowing what and who we were and are but also how strong or weak we were and are. In Tripathi’s (Ibid: 87) words, “Self-knowledge also means one’s own weakness and strength.” How strong or weak we are, what our strength is based on and from where our weakness arises should be known.

Self-examination of all dimensions, in the present context of Ethiopia, is an urgent need to be addressed – in order to track down what has gone wrong in the moral system of the country. Ethiopia is a country and a nation in which Oromo is the largest constituent. Oromo as one of the constituents of Ethiopia is related to all the institutions and other ethnic groups of the country in many ways. Talking the strength and weakness of the Oromo morality bears little significance when the moral order of the country remains intact. How the relations of the Ethiopian people are composed greatly influences the moral development and the strength of the country.
The relationships in which all people are fairly treated improve the living conditions of these people, and thereby scale up the development of the nation. The relationships in which there is subjugation, discrimination and injustice enriches only the strong few at the cost of the majority. The deeply entrenched vicious value system of the country has been poisoning the relationships of the Ethiopian people. Values of superiority and inferiority have been assigned to different people; fabricated mystifications about all [except one] disfigured each. All these created a hostile social, economic and cultural environment. Owing to their geographical, demographic, ethnological, economic and natural features Oromo have been the front target of these evils. This anomaly is not only disparagement to the Oromo but also a terrible impediment to the development of the nation as a whole. This proves that there is chronic moral problem in the dominant value system of the country.

The country claims a history and a civilization of over three thousand years while it is unable to rescue millions of its people from hunger and famine in the 21st century. On its own, it is not wrong to claim a long and ancient history and civilization provided that it is true. But the point is why it failed to materially, culturally and intellectually mature corresponding to its ancient history and civilization? Where have we been for such a long time? What have we been doing all the way to this day? Why such a grave moral failure? This requires a profound philosophical reflection, which is beyond the reach of this study. Only for the purpose of the present work, let us make some hypothesis that suggests answers for the questions.

One hypothesis could be to deny that Ethiopia or Abyssinia, as the case it may be, did not exist as an ancient country or state. But there are solid evidences that prove the truth of its ancient civilization. It is impossible to deny the civilization of Axum, whose steles or obelisks and ruins of palaces are mysterious even to the present day man. This will take us to another hypothesis. The second hypothesis, those people who were the bearers of that civilization are not the ancestors of the present peoples of Ethiopia. From this many other questions can crop up. Where did those people go, and how did they totally disappear, without leaving any human trace behind? If we are not their continuation then who are we, and where did we come from?

It is not easy to answer these questions. One thing, however, is certain. It is believed that the present generation of this country is the continuation of those civilized ancient races.
of it. If that is the case why that civilization was not able to continue through the subsequent series of generations? Why the successors were not able to inherit at least some of the technologies and the know-how of their predecessors? Why the great grand sons and daughters of those who built the ancient civilization of the country failed to, at least, feed their own people? More surprisingly, how a civilized generation could leave uncivilized one behind it: We do not think that the present generation has a sound moral standing to be proud of the achievements of those civilized ancestors of Ethiopia while groaning under the burdens of moral poverty in the 21st century. It must rather be ashamed of its vices, lethargy, poverty, ignorance and arrogance.

The best minds and the powerful technology of the 21st century were needed to bring the Axum stone obelisk back to Ethiopia from Rome and re-erect it in 2008. On the basis of this experience, it could be argued that the superiority of the best minds and technology of the 21st century is questionable, when compared to that of the Ethiopians who even lived some centuries before Christ was born. Our question is again, why the present generation of those brilliant ancestors has failed to solve its riddles? We have neither the capacity nor the intention to answer these questions. Our intention is rather to show how little we made Ethiopia in comparison to those who had made this country great even before the Birth of Christ. The mystery lies in the failure to philosophically examine ourselves. Particularly there is deep moral impairment in the culture of the Ethiopian societies.

We always externalize the causes and problems of our failure when we are decisively the ones who are responsible for it. We like pointing to others when actually our conscience tells us from inside, that we are the ones for the causes of the problem. We do not like critical minds, creative and talented individuals. In other words, we do not want to be criticized but we pretend to show our brilliance by severely criticizing others. A lot of time, energy and resources are spent particularly in denouncing the deeds and doers of the past while we know that we ourselves are committing more evils in the present than the former. We spend much more time in thinking and doing petty things that bring immediate benefit to our selves than in working out thoughts that deliver a lasting solution for the nation. We do not develop far-reaching missions and visions that enable us to transcend our immediate self-interest. We prefer hiding problems to exposing it. We always talk about success, achievement, prosperity when our reality vividly depicts our catastrophe. We lived in unspeakable poverty and
destitution while the regimes of the country [one after the other] were reporting to us a success story. They have been telling us that they would give their necks for the sake and the love of the country while practically cutting the throat and head of that country and her people. All these are due to ignorance, arrogance, selfishness and negligence. Put together they show the rampancy of moral poverty in the country.

More specifically it is the Ethiopian politics that has been ravaging the country particularly by denying and suppressing the realities of people. Oromo have been treated not as citizens but as enemies, not as natives but as strangers. Being at the centre in terms of economic, demographic, geographic and historic Oromo have been politically, culturally and ideologically marginalized. This is a fatal error or blander that the Abyssinian ruling elites have been committing. The political and cultural marginalization of Oromo when all other basic features of their reality place them at the centre is, therefore the dilemma of Ethiopian politics. The ruling elites are always very vocal for the enhancement of development and betterment of the country while brutally holding down the Oromo who accounts nearly half of the total population of the country.

Developing a country is virtually impossible by under developing its people. It is man who develops, and it is again he who is developed. A nation develops only when its people freely, creatively and equally develop. But the Ethiopian politics has made the country and generation lose much by trying to make the impossible possible. The ruling elites spent much of their own time, the energy and the resources of the nation for the purpose of devising and intermeshing systems that perpetually keep Oromo and other ethnic groups in trap. This is not only immoral or unethical but also a crime against a nation and generation. Thus to a genuine mind, that which may save Ethiopia is acknowledging the centrality of Oromo in all possible aspects of the reality of the country, in which all others have their own legitimate places and roles.

Men of intelligent minds measure their success and wisdom in terms of the quality and number of problems they solve not in terms of the problems they create. This is what greatness is. A great mind does not lead humanity to tragedy, but to a better and safer world. The Ethiopian elites in general and the rulers in particular have been contrary to this virtue. Unfortunately it was upon the strong headed, stubborn, self-centred and ruthless personalities that the history of the country always bestowed the power of leading the nation.
Consequently the social environment of the country in all of its dimensions is immorally and unethically infested. We sympathize with those who suffer amidst these cynic and vicious crowd of sinister, for the genuine and innocent cause of the country and the people. It is hard to think and hope for better life when the environment of human relationships fouls because of such evils that human mind invents.

Oromo at the moment stands in a precarious position. They are plagued by uncertainties. With the knowledge of what happened to them in the past and what is being happening to them at the present they are not at all comfortable. Given their present economic, political and cultural status no one is certain of the kind of future they are heading to. Indeed no one denies that they have started to regain the values and dignity they lost over the last one century – at least constitutionally. It must, however, be noted that they are still far from actualizing their potentials, talents, resources and identities. Whatever good is achieved could be prevented from being reversed only if the achievements so far have been scored are protected, cultivated or developed. But there seems nothing that guarantees this.

The Oromo question [and also that of others for that matter] is not a matter of having disagreement on particular subjects rather it is a fundamental issue of acting, living and developing in the political, economic, cultural and social life of the country according to their geographic, demographic, ethnographic and economic potentials. By stifling all the powers, talents and potentials of the Oromo people, the ruling elites contribute nothing to the country but failure. Ethiopia is by and large Oromo, and hence the effort to develop the former without the realization of the potential of the latter is not only unrealistic and misleading but also immoral. The question of Oromo and that of others is the question of Ethiopia above all it is the moral question of the country.

An Oromo will never be a good Ethiopian unless and otherwise his/her goodness as Oromo is well organized, recognized and ensured. Not any kind of recognition - only the recognition that accepts what they deserve in their demographic, geographic, ethnographic, cultural, economic and moral profile and potential. This is also true of all the other ethnic groups of the country. Those who claim that they are genuine Ethiopians are so only if they admit the reality of the country's diversity. They must not consider Ethiopia as one thing and its people as another. This dichotomous philosophy has so far been the guiding principle of the Abyssinian elites. For over a century it ravaged the nation. Thus it should not be allowed
to continue. A true Ethiopian is not a true Amhara or Tigre rather one who has equal and fair attitude towards all other ethnic groups in the country. Unless and otherwise all the ethnic groups in the country are fairly treated the perpetuity of tension and violence is unavoidable. This together with other national, global and natural challenges may ultimately take the country to a tragic end.

Therefore the necessity of moral and ethical development in Ethiopia is acclaimed not only for the treatment of humans but also for the economic, social, cultural and political development of the nation, which is also of human in its essence. It is not possible to create a great nation by making its people little. This is the harsh reality that the Ethiopian leaders and regimes have been doing in the modern history of the country. Obviously, this is not only immoral but also a crime committed not only to the present but also to the future human generations. The future generation is dying in the hands of the present value system of the country – it is a system that jeopardizes the links and rings in the chain of generations. All the myths and mystification about the political, historical, cultural, sociological and anthropological aspects of the country and its people should be deconstructed and demystified.

If there is a genuine concern for Ethiopia to come out of the present shameful situation it must be founded on a new paradigm. It is not the mystic and myth, dreams and whims of the individuals but rather the general will and consensus of its people that should be the basis of the new paradigm. The paradigm of the elites of the northern Semitic speaking culture is full of evils and ills, pains and myths, egoism and ethnocentrism. It is one that makes the figures of one ethnic group to ill fully decide on the fate of the whole nation. All the regimes that the history of modern Ethiopia knows are the different versions of the same paradigm. What makes the succeeding regime different from the preceding is that it is crueler, more cheat and cynic than its predecessor. Ethiopia and its people cannot afford to continue with such brutish, infantile and arrogant paradigm. The heart of the problem of the nation lies in the moral values and practices of the country. The history of bringing this country from the wrong to the right side of history can begin by critically reflecting on these values and practices.
6.5.9. Fostering Philosophical Inquiry

Value crisis is not a given fate or an imposed evil rather a man caused challenge – it is a self-caused human predicament. But why and how man has created this crisis? Certainly it is because of ignorance, arrogance, selfishness and carelessness. These in their turn are the off-shoots of un-philosophic mind and culture. It is in the human minds that evils are first conceived and hatched out in the form of wars and violence, bias and prejudices, etc. The bulk of the world population thinks on the basis of traditions, customary beliefs, dogmas and stereotypes. This way of thinking is not only incompatible with the rapid development of the world but also harbours a lot of vicious traits. Particularly at this time when the rapidity and complexity of science and technology have shrunk the world into a small village and when some of the human achievements critically threaten the continuity of human survival, remaining with uncritical mind is unworthy. Thus the complex challenges that the present world inflicts on man makes philosophy more relevant and indispensable than anything, since the survival and development of people with uncritical mind in the critical world incurs a risk.

The basic problem of the present day man comes from the negligence of moral value, which falls in the spectrum of philosophy. Since they do not take pain for making philosophical reflections men fail to understand the merits and demerits of moral values. According to Grayling people have solution in their hands for their problems. Unfortunately they failed to understand that their fate could be changed for the better simply by rationally using what they do have. This solution, in Grayling’s contention is philosophy. He (2005: 264) writes, “In fact, modern westerners are like thirsty people drinking from a muddy buddle on the banks of a great river of clear water, as if they simply had not noticed the river’s existence, or did not know they could drink from it. The river in question is philosophy.” (2005: 264) This holds true to all humankinds. To provide a holistic guiding principle for human development and transformation philosophy is an indispensable tool.

Philosophy has ever been relevant to human life. Through its metaphysical, epistemological and axiological tentacles it is rooted in the life and thought of humanity. Even a lay person makes philosophy when he encounters a daunting challenge. With the help of questions such as why, how, where, who, what and when he reflects on the cause and solution of the challenge. That means, philosophy is always there with man wherever there is
unaddressed problem and unanswered question, to ignite a light of search. As there was no time when philosophy ceased to be relevant it is still pertinent to the current reality of the world. The intricacies of the present rapid transformation of life and the era of globalization make it even more relevant than it had ever been in the past. There are many questions and problems that no other disciplines can rationally address. The bygone 20th century and the contemporary world can witness what humanity looks like without morality and philosophy. It is not enough that each and every one wishes for a well-lived life. It is equally important to get armed with the appropriate means.

Unfortunately, philosophy itself is under arrest - held back from unfolding itself and liberating man from the world of unreason. The world has never been as kind and comfortable to philosophy as it has been to un-philosophical ideas. Philosophy is continuously growing unpopular. The reason is, not because it is irrelevant or useless but because it is not understood or wrongly understood by the majority and it is unwanted or unliked by some others (minority). In short it is made unpopular by the uncritical or un-philosophical minds of the world on one hand and by arrogant, uncaring and impassionate mind of the few on the other. Thus without exaggeration the world of a rational being is still under the authority of unreason. In precise words, ignorance and arrogance, bias and prejudice have prevented philosophy from empowering humanity.

Today philosophy is being hosted mainly by the academic institutions. It is locked up particularly in teaching and learning the history of philosophy. Even there it is cornered or marginalized. Papers and researches of philosophical nature may help for the academic profile of the agent, but have no much significance to the world. At best they can add to the stockpile of philosophical abstraction that is already in state of saturation. Even those intellectuals who have acquired knowledge of philosophy had little to say about ethics for the most of the 20th century, when most of the human tragedies had been basically of moral and ethical nature. Grayling contends that, those who have made philosophy their own profession locked up themselves in the academic institutions, and hence had very little to say about the subject outside that. In conclusion he says, “Academic philosophers thus appeared to make themselves irrelevant to the great practical questions of ethics at the precise time that these were most pressing.” (Grayling, 2004: 185)
In general humanity has not used philosophical knowledge and treasures as much as it is needed. No much effort has been exerted to use philosophy for practical purposes except in politics and its ideology. Even the role it had in politics declined in the post cold war era. In short, philosophy does not play significant role in nurturing human knowledge and practice. We are in a time when man should have had very advanced and effective form of moral and ethical standing. What the present day experience suggests is that humanity is now at lower stage in its moral and ethical progress. Moral problems are devastating the world decisively because human failure to continue the process of the humanization of ethics through philosophy. “Promoting moral sensibility requires the continued humanization of ethics – which means: rooting it securely in human needs and values. This is a task that requires reflection and continual negotiation...” (Grayling, 2004: 187) Without philosophy the humanization of ethics cannot be undertaken. Thus philosophy and its pursuers have a historic mission to bring ethics, morality and humanity back home. It is the moral and professional duty of the pursuers to make philosophy relevant and responsive to the reality of man. The weakness of philosophical inquiry has certainly made the moral system of the world pathetic.

At this time in point when the world suffers from immoral and unethical deeds and behaviours the intervention of philosophy is a matter of necessity. Let us for a moment think of other forms of consciousness in relation to the moral problems of the world. Can science solve it? No, it cannot. Can art or religion do it? No, it cannot. Thus philosophy, which is holistic, is the only legitimate candidate to appeal to. Science, art and religion may do good, but in particular situation and in specific ways. That means there are other particular situations in which they do not do well because they lack universal character and content. But philosophy is profoundly universal – it is endowed with the power of integrating and totalizing knowledge.

The formidable challenges that human kind is facing is chiefly man-caused problem. Innocently or deliberately, however, man attributes the cause of these challenges to something else. If humanity thinks that both the cause and the solution is elsewhere beyond human activities; or if it believes that they are in the hands and minds of other people than the self, then it locates them at mythical place where no one is responsible - since each one of us
thinks that it is ‘they’ not ‘we’ who caused it. Falsely attributing the cause to others never yields a solution.

Indeed there is one good opportunity for humanity to solve its riddles - both the causes and solutions are in the minds and hands of man. What lacks is morality or in precise words, good will. It is the mission of philosophy to cultivate the moral life of mankind. If there is any relevant discipline that can save humanity from this predicament, it must be philosophy. People should not run away from philosophy that which is at the very core of their life. Doing that is tantamount to running away from oneself. Being a rational being man cannot avoid making philosophy although the depth varies from person to person. The intricacies of life necessitate it. Basically philosophy is the subject that each and every citizen of this world should study or know. Moral and ethical life flourishes if philosophical reflection is made the permanent engagement of mankind. Nothing but justice that morality or ethics nurtures that straightens the course of human history.

By Way of a Conclusion

Values emerge as objectifications of social relations. As Marx put it in his Paris Manuscripts of 1844, values exist for man only when this man transforms them through actions which unleash one’s versatile abilities or essential forces. Human action in a sense involves a continuous ‘assimilation’ of lesser forms of being into the world of human relations. There is yet another and opposite tendency in this interaction with nature, namely, the objectivization of mental activities or consciousness. This objectivization of the ideal or the subjective image is a universal ability of the human spirit. From this point of view, value including moral value, is the subjective moment of the human being in each social relation; it contains in itself the unity of man with the world of other people and hence with the entire external world. Value then is the essence of man projected in other men and also in social relations.

Values are connected to the practical intellectual realization of relatively closed circuits of human interrelations with social components and processes which function in a slightly modified form in other social situations. In sum, our approach and study on the indigenous moral values of Oromo with special reference to the Gada system opened up the following possibilities for the philosophic analysis of moral values:
1. To study value as an intellectual measure of the free action of man through his orientation in the cyclical, stereotypical and reflexive social activity;

2. To study values as social relations caught in a state of personification when the impersonal social processes turn it into a unique destiny for the individual;

3. To study values as constituting the normative character of a society that is based on social experience.

Accordingly, this research attempted to philosophically reflect upon the traditional moral values of the Oromo of Ethiopia. We started the research with a lot of doubts in mind about the mentioned values. With the help of historical, sociological and anthropological data, however, we managed to come up with the modest understanding of Oromo morality. One of the objectives of the research is to philosophically test the validity or the legitimacy of this traditional morality. This is accomplished by identifying the strength and weaknesses of it, and its practical application to life-situations. The thesis has found out that the traditional moral values of the Oromo are neither totally valid nor invalid. It is composed of strong as well as weak sides. However, the findings of the thesis suggest that the rational and relevant or strong aspects of this traditional moral value outweigh the irrational and irrelevant ones. In other words, its strength by far overrides its weakness.

The relevant or the strong sides of this traditional morality are the universal ingredients that can stand the test of time, and hence are parts and parcels of the whole ideal system of humanity. Although the way it had been managed and transmitted makes it ‘traditional’ the quality of its content is largely modern. It is more of a living system than a dying entity. From this, the study has come up with a conclusive remark that nothing is more relevant to make the social transformation of the indigenous people possible than their own indigenous value systems, of which moral value is the core component. In societies which are tradition-dominated, it is indispensably important to critically examine value systems in order to identify what good or bad they entail. Not to destroy the good with the bad and not to retain the bad with the good humanity unceasingly should critically evaluate its value systems.
Added to the general indifference developed towards traditional values, there have been bias and prejudice against these values. Our orientation of the western world has made us to dishonour whatever indigenous values we have, and honour whatever value of the west. The issue that faces us in the emerging post-enlightenment period, then, is this: The Western culture of moral consciousness, after being interpreted for three hundred years in terms of the universalist metaphysical value system for the entire human race, may be reinterpreted today as defining merely one particularistic cultural way of life with a moral consciousness among others, a way of life whose norms are valid only for citizens of North Atlantic liberal democracies. Accordingly, this research was intended to adequately emphasize on the traditional moral values of one African society and culture. Towards that end, we have critically analyzed and appropriated the traditional moral values of the Oromo of Ethiopia to arrive at a conception of the Oromo view of life which is capable of affirming both its moral validity and its culturally particular status.

Indeed the thesis shows that tradition is not a collection of meaningless and absurd jargons as some scholars say. It is not also that which contains all the positive of the past as traditionalists argue. In view of ‘modernity’ it may be considered as outdated, irrelevant or useless. But to arrive at this conclusion before critically checking its substance is a folly. Of course we may think of ‘tradition’ as entirely valid when in fact it is full of irrational, superstitious, dogmatic and unchecked assertions and beliefs. In this sense, it hurts more than helps. It is equally possible to think that it is entirely useless when it actually contains dynamic elements that can serve the good purposes of the present day man. In this light it can help more than hurt. This study recommends that it is unadvisable to think that anything that is indigenous is un-modern, unscientific, irrational or superstitious, and whatever of the western is modern, scientific, rational and advanced before making critical reflection on both. In sum, it sounds to argue that no indigenous as well as exotic value should be considered useless or useful before it is critically evaluated. “Human beings must be studied in their cultural milieu, if we are to attain a realistic and same view of their activities and goals.” (Paurline, V. x) If value does not positively help, it negatively hurts. It is by undertaking a thorough study of it that we can disentangle the relevant from the irrelevant, the positive from the negative aspects of the traditional moral values.

References

349


Paurline, V. *Scientific Research*


**Notes**

1. It is not to underestimate the importance of emotion. It is rather to say that emotions must themselves be enlightened by reason. The emotion that is controlled by reason does not end up with undesirable consequences, whereas those which override reason engender vices.

2. There are repressive and fair laws. Laws that promote the interest of people are fair. Such laws aim at the maintenance and promotion of peace and order for the society. And other laws made to protect the interest and the power of the rulers in the name of people, nation, peace, etc. The law that Oromo appreciate is that which promotes peace and security of people.

3. It was read in one of Karl Marx’s book long before. But the researcher is unable to identify the exact book - probably the topic is “Theses on Feuerbach”.