

## Analysis of Conflict in the Novel <Children of Their Parents>

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### Abstract

This study was mainly conducted on Conflict Analysis in the Novel of “Children of Their Parents” which is written by Befekadu Hailu. The researchers employed Descriptive research design and the data were analyzed qualitatively or with narration. The researchers utilized the text as the source of the data through critically repeated reading of the novel. The researchers found both internal and external conflicts in the novel. The dominant conflict in the novel “Children of Their Parents” was external conflict especially man versus man. Finally, the researchers recommended that other researchers shall conduct a study on the other elements of the novel in particular and Ethiopian English literature in general as it helps to encourage the writer(s) of Ethiopia.

**Key Terms:** Literature, Ethiopia, Novel, Conflict, Analysis

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### 1. Introduction

Literature is a form of writing which expresses the life of real world in imaginative way. It is believed that people can transmit their culture and life style from generation to generation through literature. According to Bayeleyegn Ayalew (2011), one among many other things by which Ethiopia is known as is its literary heritage. This priceless, rare and valuable literary heritage reflects the indigenous civilization of the country. It helps in manifesting the indigenous civilization. The manuscripts written on religion, history, language, philosophy, astrology, social, economic, political and other issues have got a valuable contribution for research. Ethiopia occupies a unique place among African countries south of the Sahara’s has evolved its own literary language Ge’ez in very early times. Ethiopia is known for the emergence of literary works in Amharic and other Local Languages: Guragegna, Tigrigna, Oromigna and in other languages. But, our emphasis is concerned with Ethiopian Literature in English because we need to appreciate the writers who write in English Language. Writers who write Ethiopian novel in English language played their own role in introducing Ethiopian’s experience to the world. Ethiopian literature in English presents issues, thoughts, characters, settings, themes, and experiences reflecting the Ethiopian context using English as a medium of writing. It, in short, portrays the socio-political, economic, cultural, religious and philosophical issues of the Ethiopian societies.

Ethiopian novel in English is a novel which is written by Ethiopian/other writers imaginatively reflecting the action through culture and behavior of people in Ethiopia. It includes a long parole fiction that contains every kind of plot, all style and manner of dealing with their use of subject matter from satire to related and showing a capacity to cover every imaginative work from all points of view. For instance, Berhanu Mathews (2005) stated that Ethiopian novel includes necessary elements with their existing place and written to bring the Ethiopian people’s life experience. This study was conducted on *Conflict Analysis in the Novel of “Children of Their Parents” (2013)* which is written by Befekadu Hailu.

This research basically was conducted on conflict analysis in the novel of *“Children of Their Parents”* which is written by Befekadu Hailu. This is the novel that Befekadu won the Burt Award for African literature (Ethiopia). Doing analysis and interpretation of literary works has its own merits for both the doer (who analyzes and interprets) and the writer of that literary work. For the doer, it broadens to think critically, to see things multi-dimensionally, to share the issues portrayed in it, to grasp certain sorts of knowledge and so on. On the other hand, the writer is benefited as his/her work is appreciated and this appreciation encourages him/her to keep going writing. Therefore, the researchers selected the stated novel to make a critical analysis and interpretation as it is their duty to appreciate and motivate the writer and the work of Ethiopian literature in English. This is because Ethiopian English novel writers are not many so that they and their works need to be appreciated and then motivated to do more.

### 2. Objectives of the study

The general aim of this study is to identify, analyze and interpret the conflict of the novel “Children of Their

Parents” (2013) which is written by Befekadu Hailu. Specifically, this research was intended to achieve the following specific objectives.

- ✚ To identify the types of conflicts the writer employed in the novel.
- ✚ To show the relationship between conflict and plot in the novel

### 3. Research Methodology

#### Research Design

The researchers employed descriptive research design in a qualitative way. This is because the researchers were identifying and analyzing the extracts selected from the novel by using narration. To analyze the conflict in the novel of “*Children of Their Parents*”, the researchers used the novel as their main source of data. We read and re-read critically the novel. Then, we came up with the data and analyze the conflict. Therefore, the source of the data in this research was on the novel of “*Children of Their Parents*”.

We followed some steps while conducting this study. Firstly, the researchers read critically and repeatedly the novel. Secondly, they selected extracts related to conflict employed in the novel. Then, the researchers identified and coded the extracts based on the types of conflict as internal and external conflict. Finally, the data of this research were analyzed and interpreted qualitatively.

### 4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

#### 4.1. The Synopsis of “Children of Their Parents”

*The novel “Children of Their Parents” was written by Ethiopian author Befekadu Hailu who is the winner of Burt Award for African literature (Ethiopia). The novel shows the way to be successful. It shows as we must pass several challenges that happen in our life. In addition to this, the novel shows hard working, consequence of unfaithfulness between family, illegal dealer and the effect of alcohol. In this novel, Brook was the major character and an intelligent student who has a unique talent. The story highly centers on him.*

*In Hamle 11, 1998 E.C, at the end of the year at school closing day, Brook received his award and he forwarded unexpected speech to the audiences invited in the invitation. Brook also worked as shoe shine boy after school to support his family economically. So that, Brook can't attend his education regularly. However, Brook continued his education two days in a week because he had a dream to become a great man by knowledge and wealth.*

*Brook's father Meshesha was a servant and he expected to born a daughter from his wife Maritu but, Maritu born Brook. Due to this, Meshesha started to drink alcohol, chewing chat and fornication out of his wife. Then, he had born two daughters from other woman Yeshi during his field trip in Gonder. After the birth of Brook, Meshesha had become alcohol drunker. Thus, Meshesha's liver was infected by Hepatitis A. In this reason, he passed away.*

*The same is true for Meshesha's son Samson. Samson followed his father's action but his younger brother Brook influenced him through giving advice to avoid his addiction and save money in order to help their mother. After Brook's advice, Samson became a good person and he leaves his addiction. After several challenges, Brook achieved his ambition to become a great person and being rich. Generally, the novel of “Children of Their Parents” clearly shows that directly or indirectly children seem to their parents.*

#### Analysis of Internal Conflict

Internal conflict, which is also called psychological conflict, exists inside the character. In this novel, there is internal conflict. The first internal conflict occurred because of the death of Brook's father. His father Mr Meshesha was very sick by Hepatitis A virus. Brook heard from the doctor that his father has 99% a chance to subsist from his victim. But one morning, Brook received a call from hospital informing him that his father had passed away. He didn't believe that and become confused. Below is an extract which supports this.

*“Ninety- nine percent of Hepatitis A cases are naturally curable”*

*“How came my father is among the one percent?” Brook asked him. (p 25)*

Brook had a hope that his father becomes better from his victim. But the news from hospital was opposite with his idea. He knows that his father was in regular drunker. Brook knows that, in the case of drunk, his father didn't resist the virus. But Brook never expected that the virus would lead his father to death. In Brook's mind, it created a question how his father came to death among 99% a chance to survive.

#### Analysis of External Conflict

External conflict occurs between man versus man, man versus society and man versus nature. Melakneh (2008), define external conflict as it is the struggle or a clash between characters. In this novel, there are different types of external conflicts. In this novel, the external conflict are a conflict between Samson with Brook and Maritu, a

conflict between Samson and Yeshi, a conflict between Brook and his mother with Samson, a conflict between Brook and his mother, a conflict between Brook and contrabandist, a conflict between Brook and God, and a conflict between Brook and society. Below are brief discussions about it.

### **Man versus man**

This kind of conflict occurs when a character struggles with other character. In this novel, the first physical conflict is a conflict between Samson with Brook and Maritu, a conflict between Samson and Yeshi, a conflict between Brook and his mother with Samson, a conflict between Brook and his Mother, a conflict between Brook and contrabandist, and a conflict between Brook and God. Below are brief discussions.

### **A Conflict between Samson with Brook and Maritu**

Samson had a strong relationship with his father Meshesha than his mother Maritu. He had taken his father's behavior completely even the drinking habit of his father. Before his death, Meshesha told a secret to Samson that Samson's mother cheated on Meshesha as she born Brook from other man. That is a reason why Brook hasn't a good relation with his mother and brother. Samson believes that his mother and Brook were the reason for his father to become a drunker and then his death. Three days later, after his father's death, Samson drunk much and came to home and start to shout on his mother and brother.

*"You are.....the one who killed my father" said Samson pointing towards Brook" you too" he pointed towards Maritu.*

*People in the house murmured. Brook felt very angry."*

In the above extract, Samson gets into a conflict with his brother and mother. Samson thinks that his mother and brother were accountable for his father's death. Because he believes that his mother and brother were a reason for his father's become a drunker. He thinks that because of his mother's cheating and giving a birth of Brook from another person is a reason for his father to become addicted with alcohol and then came to death by losing his immunity system with alcohol.

### **A Conflict between Samson and Yeshi**

The first time that Yeshi met Meshesha's family was at Meshesha's death. Yeshi narrated the whole story to Maritu and her sons about her relationship with Meshesha. She has born two daughters from him at his working time in Gondar. Yeshi hoped that to see a positive reaction from Samson and his family. However, she didn't get a good response.

*"You are a liar. My father is not a cheat.*

*He was faithful to his family" shouted Samson.*

*"What I have told you is the truth. It was your father who had been lying to all of us for more than a decade," she said ( 33)*

From the above extract, the researchers understood that Samson didn't accept the story narrated by Yeshi about his father's unfaithfulness. In Samson's intention, he believed that his father was innocent from this kind of action. Because Samson has a strong relation with his father but his father didn't tell about his secret and Samson also didn't heard anything wrong about his father from any one before. So, Samson did not believe what he heard from Yeshi. She told the truth but Samson didn't understand her.

### **A Conflict between Brook and his Mother with Samson**

In Brook's family, there is no enough income. The only income to fulfill the families' problem is Brook's income of shoe shining. After school, Brook has no rest. He works hard to support his family. One day, Brook and his mother Maritu heard the truth about Samson's work. He had a good income but he didn't help his family. When they knew the truth about Samson's job, both Brook and Maritu become angry with him.

*".....why didn't you tell us you have a very good in come? Why didn't you care when I quit school to sustain our life and pay bills? Why? Brook said he has his reason. "What more reasons than getting drunk could you have?" asked Maritu.*

*"I am saving some to....." She didn't let him finish" saving?*

*Aren't you ashamed when you even think about saving while your family's survival is at risk?"*

*"I don't care" shouted Samson. It seems her comment created a pain in his head he holds his head in both his hands and said,*

*"Have you ever cared for me like a mother? Then, why did you care about my money?" (71-72).*

From the above extract, the researchers understood that Brook and Maritu found Samson's secret. Both Maritu and Brook believed that Samson was jobless but now the secret that they found opposite with the reality of they knew before. Samson has a good income by working *Tera Askebari* but he didn't say anything about his

job. He makes it secret from his family. Samson's mother and brother count him like his father Meshesha. Brook remembered to Samson that their father was hidden about his two daughters whose born out of their mother then Brook try to told for Samson that his action also the same to his father's activity. Both Brook and Maritu became angry and they asked Samson why he hidden about his income from them. At the first, he was not willing to tell the truth for Brook and Maritu but Samson didn't resist his brother's and mother's strange words. They remembered to Samson about his father's unfaithfulness through their speech at that time. When Samson heard about his father's unfaithfulness, he decided to tell the truth to his mother and brother about his secret why he hidden about his job and income. The first reason why he lied was he needed to go to Dubai. In this case, he needed to save his money for transportation and the other one. He had a daughter so he had a responsibility to support his child as a father. Samson explained everything in this way for his mother and his brother. Then, after listening the whole story, both Maritu and Brook understood very well and they came in to peaceful discussion in order to made smooth relation between them.

#### **A Conflict between Brook and Shewit**

Brook tries to express his feeling of love to Shewit but she didn't give attention for his saying because of their class difference. Shewit come from rich family but Brook was come from poor family. By this reason she didn't willing to start this kind of relation with Brook.

*"...Shewit gave surprise look and said, "What! Are you asking? Me out?"*

*"Hmm....yeah, you see? The connection between you and more meaningful than we may...."*

*"Wait Brook. No! No! I guess you've misunderstood our friendship. I am only nice to you, and I'm trying to be a friend because I feel sorry for you. It's not because I have feelings for you or wanted you in any other way. You are a smart boy, but that will not change the fact that you are still a shoeshine boy, and I can't involve myself with such people," said Shewit sarcastically. "What?! But, shhh....." (128-129)*

In the above external, Brook need to start love relation with Shewit but she didn't accept this kind of question from Brook because Shewit believed that Brook was not a person of her choice by the reason of wealth difference. Shewit's mother was create a bad image inside Shewit's that her child made a relation individuals who have the same status of wealth them. By this reason Shewit didn't accept Brook's question because Shewit knew that Brook's income shoe shining only. So, that was a big challenge between Shewit's and Brook's relation. Brook becomes sad by the negative feedback of Shewit.

#### **A Conflict between Brook and his Mother**

Samson told the secret to brook what he heard from his father Meshesha about Brook's father. Samson still believes the secret that his father told when he was alive. He thinks up to now his mother born his brother Brook from other man. So Samson told this truth to Brook but Brook couldn't believe what his brother saying and he became the maximum level of anger by what he heard from his brother Brook call his mother from kitchen and he asked the truth about who his real father is.

*"... Do you have a secret? May be, equal to my age?"*

*Maritu looked confused "what are you saying?"*

*"I'm asking you, mom. Do you have a secret?"*

*Brook stressed each word.*

*Maritu smiled in confusion and said "Thanks to the virgin I don't have a secret."*

*"Mom!" shouted Brook.*

*"Don't yell at me; what's wrong with you today?"*

*Tell me the secret you have*

*I said I don't have" Maritu was still puzzled.*

*"Who's my father?"*

*Maritu was obviously shocked..." (148- 149)*

From the given extract, Brook can't control his emotion when he heard the secret from his brother his brother told that Brooks and his father wasn't the same person. As Samson's saying, their mother was cheating on her husband. Samson got the information from his father Meshesha. Then Brook become angry with his mother and eager to ask his mother to know the truth and he raised a cross checking to his mother to know about his real father. But his mother didn't understand what her child was asking about. And she gives her word of evidence that she never saw a single man other than their father in her life time. From her words, both Brook and Samson understand that their mother was telling the truth to them. Then, Samson and Brook asked Maritu for an apology for their unnecessary reaction.

#### **A Conflict between Brook and contrabandist**

Brook has a strong feeling become a great person with in his job in this cause he leave his shoe shining work and

open a shop in *merkato* at the beginning Brook get many customers but a few days number of customers were decreased by unknown reason. Then Brook try to find out the case why he lose his customers after searching Brook was got an information that his neighbor merchants were sold goods in low price for customer. Brook understood that was a reason for losing his customers after trying Brook get evidence those merchants who sold goods in low price were illegal merchants or contrabandists by this reason Brook start fighting with those contrabandists.

*".....I know you're thinking of revenge or something...but don't waste your time. We have our own way out. We could have left you safe, had you had been willing to do what we told you to do."*

*Brook's heart started beating fast. The man saying, "It's not enough to get the picture; you and your brother must also be eliminated. Otherwise, we know you can't keep quiet."*

*Brook's eyes were filled with clouds of tears. "You don't have to be mad at me," said the man. "Be mad at yourself. You know how many businessmen, how many of us are involved in this Contraband business..... (220)*

From the above extract, the researchers understood that Brook was in trouble with contraband businessmen. By the case of well business computation Brook needs to find evidence on those businessmen and wants to give them to the police but he is not lucky before he got the needed information he was caught by those contrabandists and then they gave a warning to him. Let him live in quite without telling the truth to the police. One of the members from the contrabandists said to Brook that his trial was meaningless because they were supported by different government official to import goods without paying tax. But Brook never gave up to them.

**A conflict between Brook and God**

When Shewit rejected Brooks love proposes by the reason of wealth difference at that time, Brook feels emptiness in this reason he occur a conflict with God.

*".....Is it really because we're of a different class? Gosh! Why Don't you make me rich for a day, and make me see how it feels?"*

In this extract, the conflict occurred between Brook and his God. Brook asked his God made him too rich and test the feelings of riches people. And also he believed that lack of wealth is reason he disappointed by Shewit.

### **A Conflict between Brook and Society**

Man versus society is conflict in which one person or group may argue with the culture, beliefs, norms and life style of the society.

Brook was in the way of trying to change his family life by working at shoe shining. But none of his customers understand about his problem. They only give their advice to him in order to save money from his shoe shining; otherwise, his life will remain unchanged.

*"Brook heard such advice many times during his conversation with customer.*

*Customers, for him are people who want to give their "precious" advice on how to change his life. What thinks is that all of them hate his life because they talk about changing it. He tries to explain that he works to support his family, but none could understand in the way he wants them to."(15-16).*

From the above extract, the researchers understood that Brook heard repeated advice from his customers but their advice didn't make a sense to Brook. This is because everything had a step for him. The first step was supporting his family by income as his families were at risk to survive their life. But people talk about saving rather than how he spends the money, and they didn't try to separate which part of his life. He needs to change by this reason. Brook was in conflict with people who gave him an advice without knowing the reason of others.

### **The Relationship between Conflict and Plot in the Novel of "Children of Their Parents"**

In the novel of "Children of their Parents", the rising action began when Brook was struggle against his customers or the society in his working place. Following this, many conflicts occurred by different ambitions of the characters like Brook and Maritu with Samson, Brook with himself that we can be called internal conflict and also Brook with his mother and so on. Those conflicts played their own role in order to catch the reader's attention and lead the story to the climax. The climax part of this novel was occurred when Brook was caught by the contrabandists. This conflict is the turning point of the story. After lots of ups and downs, Brook started to live peacefully and succeeded his dream. As we tried to show, the relationships between plot and conflict are inseparable elements. Without conflict, there is no plot at all.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

### Conclusion

In the analysis of the novel “Children of their Parents”, the researchers have come with the following findings. In our analysis, the dominant conflict is external conflict though both internal and external conflicts exist in the novel. The external conflict especially *man versus man* conflict is dominant. As for the internal conflict, it is not much in comparison to the external conflict. We find the character Brook fighting with himself by the reason of his father’s unexpected death. On the other hand, external conflict was seen highly at three ways: man versus man, man versus society and man versus God. In addition, Brook was in conflict with the society and God. Finally, the researchers believe that there is a great relationship between the conflict and the plot. The plot cannot have soul if there is no conflict. Therefore, the conflicts in the novel played a key role in the arrangement of the events in the story to move forward.

### Recommendation

The researchers recommended the following points: English language and literature students should conduct their studies on different literary genres in order to appreciate Ethiopian literature in English language. They should know the difference between internal and external types of conflicts. We highly recommend researchers to conduct on other elements of the novel “Children of Their Parents” as we conducted on its conflict. In addition, literature teachers should motivate and encourage their students to know the role of literature and to conduct studies on its genres.

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