

# Analyzing Narrative Structure of the Novel “The Afersata”

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## Abstract

The purpose of this research is to show how Sahle Sellassie Berhane Mariam, who has proven his worth as an Ethiopian novelist, represents the Ethiopian social and political environment in a thoroughly realistic way. This research has four major chapters. The first chapter is the introduction which shows the background of Ethiopian literature in English, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, methodology of the study, significance of the study, delimitation and limitation of the study as well. Previous studies are reviewed under chapter two and narrative structure analysis is treated under the third chapter. The fourth chapter is the last chapter which deals with summary and conclusion based on the findings of the study. It is found that, in *The Afersata* novel of Sahle Sellassie, the story focused on the communal and traditional court system called the Afersata to investigate the arson which was a real experience of the Gurage people in the past. The author revealed different customs and beliefs. Besides political corruption, social insecurity and economic woes are revealed. The story evolves during Emperor Haile Sellassie’s regime where Ethiopia suffered from bureaucratic government system.

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background of the Study

One among many other things by which Ethiopia is known is believed to be her literary heritage. This priceless, rare and valuable literary heritage reflects the indigenous civilization of the country. In addition to their significance in manifesting the indigenous civilization, the manuscripts written on religion, history, language, philosophy, 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, having evolved its own literary language, Ge’ez, in very early times. A vast body of literary works in Ge’ez grew up from fifth century A.D onwards. Starting with literary works in Ge’ez language, Ethiopia is known for the emergence of literary works in Amharic and other local languages: Guragegna, Tigrigna, Oromigna, etc. Ethiopian literature in English is a recent phenomenon. It has a brief history of only two decades. When we look at the amount of English writings produced in some other African countries, the output in Ethiopia is scanty, intermittent and not very encouraging. Yet, there are at least, two basic reasons that account for this lagged development and paucity of creative writing in English in Ethiopia (Debebe, 1980).

First and foremost, Ethiopian writers have a strong literary background in Amharic that disallows them to resort to or at least give undivided attention to writing in English. Amharic literature traces its history to the first half of the fourteenth century. Since then, even if it has developed through a series of lulls and intervals until nineteenth century, it has however, established a strong, consistent tradition ever after. Furthermore, a foreign language has ever been the first official language in Ethiopia; and as a result the Amharic language and its literature have developed extensively to claim strongly the attention of the native writer. Secondly, English has not been given much emphasis in Ethiopian schools. Debebe (1980) states that the first curriculum for the study of language was systematically designed in the late 50’s. Hence lack of adequate mastery or command of the language inevitably barred those who might otherwise have aspired to write in English (Debebe, 1980). Due to such reasons, Ethiopian authors have not produced many works of literature in English. Hence, their works are not reaching the international audience and not contributing to introducing the country to the world. In Ethiopia, very few writers like Dagnachew Worku, Sahle-Sellassie Berhane Mariam, Tsegaye G. Medhin and some others have published their literary works in English. This research, however, is concerned with Sahle Sellassie's novel “*The Afersata*.”

Sahle Sellassie Berhane Mariam (born in 1936) is a gifted and mature writer. There is the fact that he is imbued with culture, proud of his origins and has never given up advocating a deep-rooted literature. Sahle Sellassie is an Ethiopian novelist, and he is one of the most-read Ethiopian authors in English literature. It is known that his works have primarily focused on the depictions and the intricacies of Ethiopian culture and traditions as well as Ethiopian political systems. Moreover, his novel gives readers authentic picture of Ethiopian cultures, politics and experiences. When we come to Narrative structure, it is the events that form a significant pattern of action with a beginning, middle and an end, In line with this, Plot has been defined as the sequence of incidents or events of which a story is composed (Melakneh, 1995, :p29). From the definition above, it can be concluded that narrative structure is about two things: the content of a story and the form used to tell the story. Two common ways to

describe these two parts of narrative structure are story and plot. Story refers to the raw materials of dramatic action as they might be described in chronological order. Plot refers to how the story is told — the form of storytelling, or the structure, that the story follows. The novel by itself is full of authentic report of human experience, and is therefore under an obligation to satisfy its reader with such details of the story as the individuality of the actors concerned, the particulars of the time and places of their actions, details which are presented through a more referential use of language than is common in other literary forms. What should not be forgotten is, firstly, that the novel is not life but an artistic imitation of life; secondly, that the novel as a genre is a culturally and historically specific literary convention to which we have become immured to the point where readers are resistant to reading other forms of literature as well as other kinds of prose merely because they are unable to relate to them (Ian Watt, 1957).

## 1.2 Statement of the problem

Literature perhaps started with man discovering his ability to craft. He decided that he could play with words to entertain people who would read them. It is obvious that literature is open to different interpretations. Thus, any person can give distinct meaning to a given work based on the elements of fiction or a certain theory of literature. Accordingly, to judge any work, there must be critical study of elements. So, we begin to see that narrative structure is the most basic element of novel. Besides this, there have been no researches conducted which aimed to analyze the narrative structure of any novel in this campus. Moreover, we have seen that many students in the department of English had conducted different researches on only plot structure. However, we decided to analyze the narrative structure of the novel “*The Afersata*” so that it will be a guide line for other students who need to conduct a research on the same issue in the future. Literature takes different forms or genres. One genre of literature is prose narrative: myth, short story, novel. The major kinds of novels are allegory, epistolary, feminist, gothic, ironic, realism, and romance and soon. Because of this, literary works are portrayals of the thinking patterns and social norms prevalent in society. They are a depiction of the different facets of common man's life. Furthermore, a novel centrally includes the idea of representing the real world. Novels are seen to address themselves more closely to real life than poetry or drama does. Henry James (handout3.pdf, p 37), as one of the pioneers of literary realism, “believed that characters should be created without idealization and settings and situations must be portrayed as faithfully to real life as possible.” Physical description underscores a character’s essential personality and provides the reader with clues about his or her temperament. The reader can always expect actions and responses that are understandable in terms of that character’s unique perspective. The main purpose in selecting and conducting a study on the novel “*The Afersata*” by Sahle Sellassie is first it presents the actual life of the peasants, Gurage people, and their cultures and customs realistically and second it pervades the political life of Emperor Haile Sellassie who was a king of Ethiopians and depicts the life of different people who are living around the thirty Villages of Wudma. Finally, the novel “*The Afersata*” of Sahle Sellassie,” is interesting because of its substance and literary merit. More precisely, the researchers have always been fascinated by the theme and the real experiences of Ethiopia. Ethiopian literature in English is an area that has not been explored. Up to the present time, there is no study done relating to the narrative structure aspects of Sahle Sellassie's novel *The “Afersata”* in this University.” Therefore, this research is believed to fill this gap by examining the narrative structure of the selected novel “*The Afersata*.”

## 1.3 Research Questions

In this research paper, the researchers tried to answer the following questions:

- What kind of narrative structure is used in the novel?
- How is the plot elements used to reveal the major themes?
- What event starts the story?
- How does the story develop?

## 1.4 Objectives of the Study

### 1.4.1 General objectives of the study

The general objective of the study is analyzing narrative structure of “*The Afersata*” written by Sahle Sellassie in 1962.

### 1.4.2 Specific objectives of the study

The specific objectives of the study are:

- To identify the type of narrative structure used in the novel
- To examine the plot development
- To identify the major conflicts in the story
- To examine the resolution of the major conflicts in the story

### 1.5 Significance of the Study

The study will have the following importance. First, it has great contribution to English department students and other researchers who need to conduct a research regarding narrative structure. Secondly, it will help readers to know how to extract the main idea from the story. Thirdly, it will help readers to find and know the stages of narrative structure. Most of all, it will enable the readers to solve difficult and complicated plot and also helps learners to identify plot structures in a given text.

### 1.6 Delimitation of the Study

Sahle Sellassie Berhane Mariam has a number of works that have been written in three languages: Guragegna, Amharic and English. His novels in English include *Shinega's village*, *The Afersata*, *Warrior King* and *Firebrands*. This research paper focuses on the work: *The Afersata* and the study does not intend to analyze themes and other elements of the novel exhaustively, but rather explores how the story is structured and manifested itself in the ways the setting, characters and themes are represented in the selected novel. Thus, the analysis is on the narrative structure of the novel "*The Afersata*." Cultural and political representation, characterization, setting, and theme in the novel in relation to narrative structure are also under study.

### 1.7 Limitation of the Study

The researchers of this research paper have come across with abundant problems. Firstly, it was difficult to get crucial materials which could best serve them. Everything has its own sources and examples but it was predicament to search and get from the library of our campus. Secondly, on account of this, there were abundant problems like technical role models, and shortage of computer center. These models include previously done essays and significant materials which were related to literature review. Lack of adequate reference materials like Journals, essays, different literature books and so forth made researchers face difficult problems to do deeper investigations of the subject in this research.

### 1.8 Methodology of the Study

To achieve the objectives of this research, textual analysis has been used together with relevant conceptual tools. In the textual analysis, linguistic evidence from the text informs all the judgments and conclusions arrived at. The selection of extracts from this novel was made representative of the whole novel as much as possible. As indicated above, and as the study is a qualitative research, it involves document analysis and therefore it is analytical. The novel was read and examined critically. According to Abiy Zegeye *et al* (2009), qualitative research involves and seeks to describe various aspects of behavior and other factors studied in the social sciences and humanities. In qualitative research data are often in the form of descriptions, not numbers. Document analysis, the process of using any kinds of documents, can be used as a methodology in qualitative research as a singular method of research or as a supplementary form of inquiry. The study employs primary data. The primary data and the main focus of this research were on Sahle Sellassie's novel-"*The Afersata*." The research is relied on primary source materials for developing an accurate results and discovering information related to the context within which the research questions are developed

## Review of Related Literature

### 2.1 Narrative Structure

According to general encyclopedia (1994), narrative structure is about two things: the content of a story and the form used to tell the story. Two common ways to describe these two parts of narrative structure are story and plot. Story refers to the raw materials of dramatic action as they might be described in chronological order. Plot refers to how the story is told — the form of storytelling, or the structure, that the story follows. Plot is the events that form a significant pattern of action with a beginning, middle and an end. It is also a literary term defined as the events that make up a story particularly as they are related to one another in pattern, in sequence, through cause and effect, how the reader views the study or simply by coincidence. They move from one place or event to another in order to form pattern, usually with purpose of overcoming a conflict. According to Perrine (1974,p41) plot is the sequence of incidents or events which the story is composed and it may conclude what characters say or think as well as what he/she does, but it leaves out a description and an analysis and concentrates ordinarily on major happening. Plot, as a story line made by the reader in form of row events in chronological order, and are inter connected causality in accordance with what happened to the perpetrators' story. From the definition above, it can be concluded that groove plot is an interested story in chronological order to show the intent of existing story. Plot has been defined as the sequence of incidents or events of which a story is composed (Melakneh, 1995, p29). According to Chat Man (1978) plot has been defined as an array of events some of which can be described as being as key moments in the narrative. Depending on the above concepts, plot is the sequence of incidents in the novelties.

It is the flow of notions or events from the beginning up to the end of the story. According to Mc Donegal

(1961), plot refers to the actions and events in literary work: it is also a back ground of the story. The chronological order or arrangement of events with what happens first then second and until last event is related or continued.

## **2.2 Analyzing Plot**

### **2.2.1 Structure of the Plot**

Plot structure influences the story to have an order proportion and arrangement for the incidents of the story. Plot structure also keeps the flow of action, event and story so that the reader can easily understand what is going on. According to Robert (2000, p46), "*if plot is the sequence of unfolding action, structure is the design or form of the completed action.*" Gustav Freytag (19780) considered plot as a narrative structure that divides a story into five elements, like the five acts of play. These elements are: Exposition: The Beginning, Rising Action Introduction of the Problem or Conflict, Climax: The Highest Point, Falling Action: Winding Down, Resolution: The End.

#### **2.2.1.1 Exposition: The beginning**

Exposition is the beginning of the story and it is the place where the characters are introduced to the reader. Every story must have a beginning. The exposition or start is also where setting and the conflict are established. According to Hennery and Edgar (1995, p91) exposition is the layout, the patting forth of the materials in a story. This may encompass the weather condition with atmosphere by way of introducing the name, the age, the profession aspirations, the physical appearance or special qualities of the major characters and some other minor characters are in sinuate. This information will grant the reader to have a clue of the characters and to decide what is expected further in the story.

#### **2.2.1.2 Rising Action: Introduction of the Conflict (Problem)**

After the characters and main problems have been established, the main problem or conflict is dealt with some kind of action. In this part of the story, the main character is in crisis. This is the place for tension and excitement. The complication can arise through characters' conflict with society, nature, fate or a number of themes. Also, in this part of the story, the main character is aware a conflict has arisen and taken some kind of step to battle this crisis. In another way, the reader has the opportunity to see where the problem or conflict arises within the story as well as the tension that is a direct result of the conflict which incorporates the motivations and obstacles of each of the main characters in the story. According to Melknah (2008) rising action is the process that takes place as the problem or the conflict that begins in the narrative hook gets more and more complicated. In a good story, the rising actions provide series of interesting events that would put the reader in suspense. In the rising action and suspense, the curious question of what happens next should make the readers stay tuned to the story.

#### **2.2.1.3 Climax: The Highest Point**

Climax is the most exciting and turning point of the story. It is the main event or danger that character faces. This is the darkest moment, the worst challenge the character must oppose. At this point it looks as if the character will fail, and will never get what he/she wants. The turning point may be either physical or emotional. In a romance, the girl may turn the hopeful lower down. In an action story, the character may be surrounded by enemies with no chance of escape. According to (Robert and Jacobs, 1995, p91) climax is a consequence of the crisis and it is the story's highest point which may take shape of a decision and affirmation or realization. Climax is also the point of the highest conflict, the emotional peak in which the opposing forces get the advantages. Therefore, the crisis at the climax makes the reader able to guess how the story is going to an end and depending up on the two alternatives or opposing forces.

#### **2.2.1.4 Falling Action: Winding Down**

Following the climax, the story begins to slowly wind down. Falling action one of the two final story elements, shows the result of the actions or decisions the character has made. According to Melkneh, (2002, p29), falling action is the element of plot in which the hero (protagonist) moves steadily toward the inevitable conclusion. Therefore, falling action is the process in which the plot is close to an end or resolution

#### **2.2.1.5 Resolution: The End**

The resolution, also often called denouement, which is French for "to unite "or "un travelling" is the conclusion of the story. Here, the conflicts are resolved, all loose end are tied up, and the story concludes with either a happy or sad ending. According to Roberts and Join (1995, p88) resolution is the finishing of the story after the falling action. It also refers to the actual culmination of the conflict or the end of the story itself.

### **2.2.2 Plot and Conflict**

Plot is more general term than conflict. The plot defines the full course of a story told in a Novel, Short Story, and Play Film etc. whereas the conflict is specific point which the plot may center up on. According to encyclopedia, plot is generally made up of conflict and their resolution. There may be several conflicts throughout the course of plot. The conflict may come in many ways and in varying degrees so that a simple conflict may involve a character and an in animate object that in actively works against the character. For simple speaking, plot and conflict are the two sides of a coin.

### **2.2.3 Plot and Character**

Although not often noted, characters are also crucial to the plot because some characters are the driving forces

behind some plots and the plot would simply collapse or become nonexistent without them. Even more significantly, conceiving plots without character is virtually impossible. Phelam (1986) has noted that one may end up ‘mixing up the study of character with the study of plot if he/she is not careful and does not acknowledge their symbiotic relation in advance. Also, one way to classify plots is according to the character that performs the action which shapes the plot. According to encyclopedia, the character and the plot are connected. The plot of a story has a lot to do with the character (s) because in a way it involves development of a Character. Whatever you do cannot separate the plot and the character because it doesn’t matter what you try, they will still be not the same thing, but definitely inseparable.

#### **2.2.4 Plot and Theme**

In every narrative, story or literary entry, there are various elements to be considered. Among the elements, two are often regarded as the most important. According to general encyclopedia (1994), a plot is synonymous to the story line, whereas the theme is the main thought or idea being tackled. The link between the theme and plot of a novel is an element which calls plot-theme. Stories, Fictions, Entries, and the like may contain several plots even as many as there can be governing themes.

### **3. Analyzing plot in the novel of Sahle Sellassie “*The Afersata*.”**

#### **3.1 Synopsis**

The Novel follows the life of the Gurage people, such as Namaga the tenant, the sub tenant Aga, the land Lord, the Cheka Shum, the governor of the sub district and the village folks who are living around the thirty villages of Wudma. Namaga lives in a group of thirty villages. The villages are ruled by the governor of the sub district. Namaga is one of the respected tenants of his village. He has his own property and wife within him there is a sub-tenant with his wife. When Namaga’s hut burnt down all the inhabitants of the thirty villages of Wudma woke up from sleep at the responding shout of ‘help,’ and rushed out of his shelter and ran to the blazing fire. The villagers who did not come at night to help put out the fire, that is, elders who lacked strength to run for help, and others like the Cheka Shum (a miner official of, whose position relieved them of the obligation to take an active part in such unhappy events.

After the Cheka Shum saw Namaga’s burnt hut, he informed that he writes him a report for the governor of the sub district and left him. After some time Namaga went to the Cheka Shum compound for the report. The Cheka Shum wrote the report properly for Namaga and two days later the sub district governor ordered the Cheka Shum to convince the people for the *Afersata*, a meeting of the villagers, to investigate the crime. The inhabitants of the thirty villages of Wudma selected seven elders among themselves to lead *the Afersata* and *the Afersata* took place three times repeatedly but they can’t expose the criminal and give compensation for Namaga. Finally, the elders advised the villagers to expose the criminal and the case of the burnt hut was irrevocably closed.

#### **3.2 Type of narrative structure in “*The Afersata*”**

The novel “*The Afersata*” used a linear narrative structure because it is the most common form of narration, where events are largely portrayed in a chronological order, which is, telling the event in order, in which they occurred. Linear narrative presents stories in a logical manner by telling what happens from one point in time to the next without using flash back or flash-for-forwards and then returning to the present. Linear narrative live up to their name, meaning you could draw a straight line from the beginning to the end of story. These narratives start the story at the beginning and tell consecutive events until the end. In contrast, non-linear narrative might skip around to different point in time. Most linear narrative follow a similar: the exposition sets the tone and theme of the story, followed by the rising action, which leads to the story’s climaxes, followed the falling action and the denouement, or the finale

As it is known, plot has different elements which are used to explain and show different themes and concepts that existing in the novels and other genres of literature. In the novel “*The Afersata*”, the elements of the plot have tried to show different themes. Plot has some elements which are always showing the themes of different genres of literature. Among those elements of plot, the most important are exposition, rising action, climax, falling action and resolution or denouement.

In the novel “*The Afersata*”, the elements of plot have tried to reveal the major themes as follows. In the exposition part of the plot, we have seen the novel *Afersata* took place in the Gurage region and the setting of the story. The elements also showed that the novel stated the life of different people who are living around the thirty villages of Wudma and the government of the sub- district led the inhabitants of the villages by ordering his Cheka Shum in order to collect tax and tribute from every tenants and sub tenants by the helping of the head man or the assistant of the Cheka Shum. In addition to that, the exposition part showed Namaga the protagonist is one of the respected tenants among the thirty villages of Wudma and also the sub- tenant Aga and his wife.

The second element of plot is the rising action. It showed that the Cheka Shum wrote a report for Namaga in order to apply to the governor and the bring this story in complication and after the application the report the district governor ordered the Cheka Shum that the people of the village to ready for *Afersata* and explained the

purpose of the gathering and told the villagers to elect seven elders to conduct the *Afersata* meeting.

The third element or the climax part revealed that the seven elders had examined the villagers two times in the *Afersata* but the *Afersata* was still to come for third times. And there was still fear in the heart of the bad men as well as in the heart of the innocents. Anyone could give wrong information at the expense of the person one disliked, and have him condemned for a crime he had never committed. The crowd was interested in the exchange of words between the sub- district governor and Namaga. And those who were sitting away back came forward. Those who were near cleaned their ears with their little fingers in order to follow better the questions and answers. Finally, the hot argument between the protagonist Namaga and Beshir Safo was the most typical example of the climax part that had been expressed in this part.

The fourth element is the falling action that expressed themes like the village head man called out Mela. Mela was asked by the seven elders all the questions and answered them properly. In addition, this part also showed that Mela is Namaga's friend and neighbor who suspected that Beshir is the criminal. His reason was that Beshir stole and killed two goats but it was not enough evidence for the elders and the governor. Finally, because of this they left him and went to the last decision.

The last element of the plot is the resolution (denouement). In this part, the elders mentioned that they started the investigation a few months before and their villages have become hiding place for thieves and for other criminals. Moreover, many huts will be burnt; more animals and more money will be stolen in the future, if they don't co-operate in indicating the criminals with their forefingers, without fear and finally underlined the uselessness of the *Afersata*.

The story began with hut of a villager Namaga burning down due to arson. In order to discover who the culprit is, Namaga demands an *Afersata*. An *Afersata* (an Amharic word) is a tradition form of court proceeding aimed at getting at the truth of a matter. Every male member of a village is required to participate, no matter what their social status, and is asked if he is the culprit, if he knows who the culprit is, or if he has any knowledge related to the crime. He must swear an oath on the lives of his offspring, the most valued possession of a peasant farmer. But the novel is really a reflection on the current state of tenant farming in Southern Ethiopia among the Gurage people, an ethnic minority which the author of the novel, Sahle Sellassie belongs originally written in English, the novel spends a lot of times explaining cultural customs and seeming aimed at both an international audience and city dwellers from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital, who do not know very much about the situation rural farming communities in general, and of ethnic minority farming communities in particular.

The novel "*The Afersata*" has different stages such "Fire in a village, Son of tenant, the Meskel festival and the end of the *Afersata*." The story of the novel passed in the four stages of the book step by step and followed its order.

The first part of the story presents the beginning of the story. And it started from the burning down of Namaga's hut that became the exposition part of the plot and also other issues that existed in the novel. In addition to this, in the first part of the story, we get different kinds of themes which have different concepts. Among them, the background history of Argaw who was the Cheka Shum or the minor official, the sub-tenant Aga and his wife, the age-old institution known as *dedjetenat* or asking for favor, the *Afersata* itself which was a meeting of the villagers that investigated the criminals, '*Boje*' the spirit of the sky that appear in the form of a golden axe, the process of writing a report for the district governor by the Cheka Shum in order to explain Namaga's burnt down hut because paved the way of starting the *Afersatsa*, the "*Irbo*" system special tax or tribute on the tenants, the servant led life and the aristocratic society and the male- female classification of work in the society all these concepts existed in the first part of the story.

When we come to the second part of the story, we get childhood time in the country side in Ethiopia, rural children are amazed and curious when they see city man, the hand working habit of Gurage people, about '*Kitfo*' which is one of the Gurage's best food, perception of Gurage people forward children anecdote. We read these issues in the second part of the story which narrates all the Gurage tradition and custom.

The third stage narrated about the beginning of the second *Afersata* and that Namaga decided not reveal how he lost his money. Apart from that, it explained the bad outlook of people towards hand craft man, the required of skinning skills around the people and custom of Gurage people, too. The last part of the story is the climax and the denouement of the novel or story because there was different suspense that made eager the people who participated in the *Afersata*. There was also fear in the heart of the bad men as well as in the heart of the innocent, and also the protagonist Namaga made hot argument with Beshir Safo so it was the sign of climax. At the end, the denouement part of the story came to end by the last explanation of the seven elders, for it was all about the process of how the story was developed.

### 3.3 Narrative structure in the novel

#### 3.3.1 Exposition: The beginning

The story in the novel "*The Afersata*" took place in the Gurage region during the regime of Emperor Haile Sellassie. The novel depicts the life of different people who are living around the thirty villages of Wudma. The governor of

the sub district led the inhabitants of the villages by their Cheka Shum who collected tax and tribute from every tenant and subtenant by using their headmen or their assistants to go from hearth to hearth. Namaga is one of the respected tenants among the thirty villages of Wudma. The Aga and his wife served to Namaga's family even if their life was worst. The exposition runs from the time the novel begins to the point where Namaga's hut burnt down. The point of the long exposition is to get the reader used to the Gurage culture, the way of life in Gurage region, about their best food 'Kitfo' the history of Gurage, the hand working, the economic shock of the people, the servants life in the aristocratic society and the all-round life of the inhabitants.

### **3.3.2 Rising Action: Introduction of the conflict**

The Cheka Shum wrote a report for Namaga that he applied to the governor brings this story into complication. In addition to that, the district governor ordered the Cheka Shum that the people of the village to be ready for *Afersata* and explained the purpose of the gathering and told the villagers to elect seven elders to conduct the *Afersata* Ceremony

### **3.3.3 Climax: The highest Point**

The seven elders had examined the villagers two times in the *Afersata* but the *Afersata* was still to come for the third times. There was still fear in the heart of the bad men as well as in the heart of the innocent. Anyone could give wrong information at the expense of the person one disliked, and have him condemned for a crime he had never committed. The crowd was interested in the exchange of words between the sub-district governor and Namaga. "Those who were sitting away back came forward. Those who were nearby cleaned their ears with their little fingers in order to follow better the questions and answers" (page 85). Namaga tried to persuade his ideas for the crowd, the sub district governor by making hot argument, suddenly the Cheka Shum intervened and asked Namaga that anybody knows about his stolen money or not but instead of giving clear explanation about the questions he talked about his respect in the villages without any evidence. Finally, Namaga made hot argument with Beshir and expressed that he suspected Beshir had stolen his money but Beshir resisted him from different directions and the elders and the sub district leaders not accepted Namaga's ideas.

### **3.3.4 Falling Action: Winding down**

The villages' headmen called out Mela because it was his turn and the elders asked him all the questions and he answered them properly. As we have read on page 87 'Did you set a light Namaga's hut?' asked the elder. 'No. I didn't,' answered Mela. 'Have you seen the man who set it a light?' 'No, I haven't,' 'Have you heard of the man who did it?' 'Yes,' he said 'people said Beshir did it.' 'Who are the people who said it?' 'Well, everybody suspects Beshir. And even Namaga is having a hot argument with him this very moment.' 'But do you suspect him of the crime?' 'Yes, like everyone else.' 'Why do you suspect him?' 'Well, he previously killed two goats that he had stolen from his uncle. And he has been suspected of such crime for a long time.' 'Do you have any evidence to suspect him of burning Namaga's hut?' 'Nothing more than what I just told you.' This was the conversation or questions that Mela had met with the seven elders. Mela is Namaga's friend and neighbor he suspected that Beshir is the criminal. His reason was that Beshir had stolen and killed two goats but it was not enough evidence for the elders and the governor and the left it and went to the last decision

### **3.3.5 Resolution: The End (Denouement)**

After the last *Afersata* took place, the elders expressed many things and problems that had existed around the thirty villages of Wudma. In addition to this, the elders mentioned that it is already a few months since they started the investigation. And their villages have become a hiding place for thieves, and for other criminals. Also more huts will be burned; more animals and more money will be stolen in the future if they don't cooperate in indicating the criminal with their fingers, without fear. In that particular case, that is in the affairs of Namaga's hut the elders regret to inform to the villagers that they have totally failed. After the seven elders had told and advised the people of the thirty villages of Wudma, they met parting with the villagers. Even if many problems had taken place in the thirty villages of Wudma, the villagers started to live their living as usual they did because the *Afersata* was useless and the drama was over. Life is just like this and the ball round just like it.

## **3.4 Plot and Conflict in the Novel**

The main conflict which built this story is the burning of Namaga's hut. At the beginning of the story through the topic of fire in the village on page 1, the plot as well as the conflict part started as it is "The night Namaga's hut burnt down when all the inhabitants of the thirty villages of Wudma were sound asleep so were their cows, their zebus, their donkey, their goats and their chicken" (page 1). This happened a little before cock crow at the time of the night when the field cockroaches were silently resting under the dry branches of fallen trees; when the country frogs and toads were hiding....." The burning of the hut became the cause of many things, the starting of the *Afersata*, the seven elders who were selected by the inhabitants. Because of the *Afersata*, the governor sub-leader, the Cheka Shum, the land Lord, the assistance of the Cheka Shum or the head men, the tenants, the sub tenants and all the inhabitants of the villages spent their golden time without any valuable work because the burnt down of the hut was fake. The inhabitants were always complaining about the *Afersata* that is a social conflict. Namaga himself burnt down his hut, and his miser behavior in order to get compensation and become profitable

is bad and it is psychological conflict or man vs. himself conflict. The consequence of Namaga became the cause of conflict for himself, especially during the last *Afersata* and Namaga told to the elders and the inhabitants that how his money was disappeared. During that time Beshir suddenly said something to him and they made hot argument that contains insults. This is man to man conflict or man vs. man conflict and finally the small agent made a conflict with Beshir by the cause of the red cow. As we read on page 35 ‘*Where is my cow?*’ Asked Beshir on his arrival, breathless and sweating. ‘*Where is the tribute?*’ asked the small agent in response. ‘*Where is my cow that you have stolen away in my absence?*’ ‘*I could have you imprisoned for what you have just said. I did not steal your cow; I just took it away as surety.*’ ‘*Perhaps you don’t know me well enough; otherwise you would not dear take away the animal.*’ So this is also another man vs. man conflict in the novel.

### 3.5 Plot and Character in the Novel

Namaga is a protagonist or main character in the novel. He is a respected person and tenant among the thirty villagers of Wudma. He is married and has his own properties and under him there are a sub tenant Aga and his wife who are served for Namaga’s family. Namaga stood from his miser behavior; he tried to cheating the governor of the sub-district and all the villagers of the thirty villages of Wudma. But unfortunately he was not successful in order to get the compensation but he was successful by spending the villagers golden time without work and participated in *Afersata* three times.

*Argaw*, the Cheka Shum of thirty villages of wudma, had acquired his office by dynamic personality and not by heredity.

He was not even a native of any of the thirty villages of Wudma. In twenty years the mystery surrounding the origin of Argaw has never been solved. According to his own version of the story, he was the grandson of a high government official who served his country as a governor of a certain region in Shoa during the reign of Menelik II. His father, again according to his own version, had been a major in the imperial army and had died in action during the Italian invasion. The villagers, however, accepted the story only as a half-truth. The inhabitants of the thirty villages of Wudma, however, strongly held the opinion that he was renegaded who had sold the freedom of his country for Italian spaghetti. Whichever was the true story what matters to us now is Argaw’s position as a Cheka Shum.

*Beshir*, the one who was absentees on *the Afersata* and always disturbed the Cheka Shum, lived in Namaga’s village and formerly had a dispute with him over a plot of land. Besides, his neighbors suspected him of having his hands in any underhand business that brought him a few cents. The villagers believed that Beshir stole two goats from his uncle and killed them and the end of *the Afersata* Beshir made hot argument with Namaga.

*Melesse*, *Beshir*’s uncle was a government employee in one of the ministries. He got four hundred dollars per a month. His native place was rivers away from the thirty villages of Wudma. Melesse had under stood the land policy of the period and he believed that the land will be given to the peasant farmers because it is important for development. Also he knew that the land lords were not producer, rather they are bloodletting of the sub-tenants and the tenants and he advocated the slogan of ‘land to tiller’.

*Tekle*, *Melesse*’s friend was from one of the Northern provinces who had the idea of visiting the Gurage land when he had been with his ever since he was a student of social science at the university college of Addis Ababa and finally he visited the Gurage villages with melesse and appreciated their culture, food style and their cultivation.

*Mela* is Namaga’s close friend and neighbor who always helping Namaga by different work. He was the man who participated actively to build Namaga’s new hut and to kill the Zebu when the Meskel festival with other neighbors of Namaga and he was so skilled in skinning the Zebu and finally he gave his words to the elders during the last *Afersata* that he suspected the criminal was Beshir Safo. *The sub-tenant* was a hard working guy. He had the ability to do anything without rest but he was stupid and fool in his mind. He was always asking son or child to God but he was not successful. *The sub-tenant’s wife* was clever and hard working woman. She was always advised her husband. She ashamed of him by his ideas and thoughts and she was a relative of Namaga’s wife. As it has been stated above, there were some characters which are the backbone of the plot elements. If we start from the protagonist Namaga, he is the source of the plot and the means or the narration of the story from the beginning up to the end. Aga, the Cheka Shum also played a significant role by prolonging the story and connecting Namaga with the sub-district leader. That event made the plot vast and complex. Beshir, who was absentee, on the *Afersata* and always disturbed the Cheka Shum and also suspected by Namaga’s close friend as a criminal became a salt for the plot development in the novel. Beshir’s uncle Melese and his friend Tekele have contributed their own contribution in order to relate the plot starting from Wudma to the capital city Addis Ababa, which made the plot so complex. Mela, who is a friend of Namaga suspected Beshir Safo as a criminal, so he suspects created hot argument in the *Afersta*. So it made the plot story so sweet and listened eagerly by the participants. The sub-tenant Aga had his own contribution by telling his wife’s secret to Namaga that the criminal is Namaga himself. The wife of the sub-tenant is clever by making clear and knowing the truth from its source. All those events made great contribution to the plot. Besides that, the relation between characters in the story tells the reader that male and female roles societal constructs and tells male and female should behave accordance to their nature.



### 3.6 Plot and Theme in the Novel

There are several significant themes in *Afersata* such as 'Boje' the spirit of the sky that appeared in the form of a golden axe, Ibo the special tax or tribute on the tenants that is still practiced, the educated man is respected and valued, the so called civil servant didn't solve the problem of the people or villagers, folk people considered any one lived in Addis has much money, economic shock of the people, the servants led life in the aristocratic society, restless of tenants and up to forget their life, too poor tenants even unable to feed themselves, male-female classification of working the society, child hood time in country side in Ethiopia, rural children are amazed and curious when they see a city man, the hand working habit of Gurage people, the history of Gurage people, one of the Gurage's best Food of 'Kitfo', perception of Gurage people forwards children, bad out looks of people towards craft man those had been analyzed in the novel properly. In addition to that, Sahle Sellassie stated *the Afersata* or the title of the novel clearly and deeply: "*Afersata* is a meeting of the villagers that led by the seven elders who are elected by the villagers and co-operated by the sub-district leader and the Chek Shum to investigate the criminal and the institution of *Afersata* is based on the philosophy of collective responsibility. Finally, the author underlined the harsh life of the sub-tenants and the tenants. He wished that the policy of the land must be changed and the land must be given to the peasant farmers or he advocated the slogan of 'land to tiller. Many themes have stated in the novel, which had different contribution for the plot elements. But when we see the major theme in the novel, were rose in different elements of the plot is the need for the *Afersata* and the investigation of the criminal. Starting from the exposition up to the denouement, the investigation of the criminal rose and called repeatedly. Finally, the investigation of the criminal had been made deeply different times in different *Afersata* even if it was not successful.

### 4. Summary and Conclusion

In this research, an attempt has been made to discuss the representations of real life of Gurage in Sahle Sellassie's novel-*The Afersata*. The main focus has been on analyzing narrative structure of novel *the Afersata*. It has been found out that Sahle Sellassie's novel, *The Afersata* portrays and employs the real events of Ethiopian cultures and the actual practices and customs of Gurage people are also examined in advance. In addition to this, it has been found out that, in writing his novel, the author employs and portrays real accounts, experiences and situations and also based on prior historical evidences. As discussed so far in the subsequent sections, Realistic fiction is often opposed to Romantic fiction: the romance is said to present life as we would have it to be, more picturesque, more adventurous, and more heroic than the actual; Realism, to present an accurate imitation of life as it is. The typical realist sets out to write fiction which will give the illusion that it reflects life and the social world as it seems to the common reader. To achieve these effects, the author prefers as protagonist an ordinary citizen. The realist, in other words, is deliberately selective in material and prefers the average, the commonplace, and the everyday over the rarer aspects of the social scene. The characters, therefore, are usually of the middle class or (less frequently) the working class-people without highly exceptional endowments. In Sahle Sellassie's novel *The Afersata*, we can recognize that the characters are ordinary persons including Namaga himself. In realist fiction characters find life rather dull and are often unhappy as in the case of *The Afersata*. Characters are unhappy with a repeated and scheme like gatherings of the investigation processes. Moreover, they were distressed by different social evils and corruptions of the officials, the Cheka Shum, as well as the *Afersata* itself. In "*The Afersata*," novel of Sahle Sellassie, the story focused on the communal and traditional court system called the *Afersata* to investigate the arson which was a real experience of the Gurage people in the past. After the burnt down of Namaga's hut, a series of *Afersata* ceremony were held. Through such a scheme like meeting and life of the innocent peasants in the thirty villages of Wudma, the author discloses different customs and beliefs. Besides political corruption, social insecurity and economic woes are revealed. The story evolves during Emperor Haile Sellassie's regime where Ethiopia suffered from bureaucratic government system. There were landlord-tenant, tenant-subtenant relationships and different old and evil social institutions such as irbo-one fourth principle and deje tenat-in favor of the landlord.

In conclusion, according to general encyclopedia, narrative structure is about two things: the content of a story and the form used to tell the story. Two common ways to describe these two parts of narrative structure are story and plot. Story refers to the raw materials of dramatic action as they might be described in chronological order. Plot refers to how the story is told — the form of storytelling, or the structure, that the story follows. Plot is the events that form a significant pattern of action with a beginning, middle and an end. It is also a literary term defined as the events that make up a story particularly as they are related to one another in pattern, in sequence, through cause and effect, how the reader views the study or simply by coincidence.

The novel "*The Afersata*" used a linear narrative structure because it is the most common form of narration, where events are largely portrayed in a chronological order, which is, telling the event in order in which they occurred. Linear narrative presents stories in a logical manner by telling what happens from one point in time to the next without using flash back or flash-for-forwards and then returning to the present. Linear narrative live up to their name, meaning you could draw a straight line from the beginning to the end of story. These narratives start the story at the beginning and tell consecutive events until the finale. In contrast, non-linear narrative might skip

around to different point in time. Most linear narrative follow a similar: the exposition sets the tone and theme of the story, followed by the rising action, which leads to the story's climaxes, followed the falling action and the denouement, or the finale. As it is known, plot has different elements which are used to explain and show different themes and concepts that existing in the novels and other genres of literature. In the novel of *Afersata*, the elements of the plot have tried to show different themes. Plot has some elements which are always showing the themes of different genres of literature. Among those elements of plot, the most importance is exposition, rising action, climax, falling action and resolution or denouement.

In the novel "*The Afersata*," the elements of plot have tried to reveal the major themes as follows. In the exposition part of the plot, we have seen the novel *Afersata* took place in the Gurage region and the setting of the story. The elements also showed that the novel stated the life of different people who are living around the thirty villages of Wudma and the government of the sub- district led the inhabitants of the villages by ordering his Cheka Shum in order to collect tax and tribute from every tenants and sub tenants by the helping of the head man or the assistant of the Cheka Shum. In addition to that, the exposition part showed Namaga the protagonist is one of the respected tenants among the thirty villages of Wudma and also the sub- tenant Aga and his wife.

The second element of plot is the rising action. It showed that the Cheka Shum wrote a report for Namaga in order to apply to the governor and the bring this story in complication and after the application the report the district governor ordered the Cheka Shum that the people of the village to ready for *Afersata* and explained the purpose of the gathering and told the villagers to elect seven elders to conduct the *Afersata* meeting. The third element or the climax part revealed that the seven elders had examined the villagers two times in the *Afersata* but the *Afersata* was still to come for third times. And there was still fear in the heart of the bad men as well as in the heart of the innocents. Anyone could give wrong information at the expense of the person one disliked, and have him condemned for a crime he had never committed. The crowd was interested in the exchange of words between the sub- district governor and Namaga. And those who were sitting away back came forward. Those who were near cleaned their ears with their little fingers in order to follow better the questions and answers. Finally, the hot argument between the protagonist Namaga and Beshir Safo was the most typical example of the climax part that had been expressed in this part. The fourth element is the falling action that expressed themes like the village head man called out Mela. Mela was asked by the seven elders all the questions and answered them properly. In addition, this part also showed that Mela is Namaga's friend and neighbor who suspected that Beshir is the criminal. His reason was that Beshir stole and killed two goats but it was not enough evidence for the elders and the governor. Finally, because of this they left him and went to the last decision.

The last element of the plot is the resolution (denouement). In this part, the elders mentioned that they started the investigation a few months before and their villages have become hiding place for thieves and for other criminals. Moreover, many huts will be burnt; more animals and more money will be stolen in the future, if they don't co-operate in indicating the criminals with their forefingers, without fear and finally underlined the useless of the *Aferasata*. The story began with hut of a villager Namaga burning down due to arson. In order to discover who the culprit is, Namaga demands an *Afersata*. An *Afersata* (an Amharic word) is a tradition form of court proceeding aimed at getting at the truth of a matter. Every male member of a village is required to participate, no matter what their social status, and is asked if he is the culprit, if he knows who the culprit is, or if he has any knowledge related to the crime. He must swear an oath on the lives of his offspring, the most valued possession of a peasant farmer. But the novel is really a reflection on the current state of tenant farming in Southern Ethiopia among the Gurage people, an ethnic minority which the author of the novel, Sahle Sellassie belongs originally written in English, the novel spends a lot of times explaining cultural customs and seeming aimed at both an international audience and city dwellers from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital, who do not know very much about the situation rural farming communities in general, and of ethnic minority farming communities in particular. The novel of *Afersata* has different stages such "Fire in a village, Son of tenant, the Meskel festival and the end of the *Afersata*." The story of the novel passed in the four stages of the book step by step and followed its order. The first part of the story talked about the beginning of the story. And it started from the burning down of Namaga's hut that became the exposition part of the plot and also other issues that existed in the novel. In addition to this, the first part of the story, we get different kinds of themes which have different concepts. Among them, the background history of Argaw who was the Cheka Shum or the minor official, the sub-tenant Aga and his wife, the age-old institution known as *dedjetenat* or asking for favor, the *Afersata* itself which was a meeting of the villagers that investigated the criminals, '*Boje*' the spirit of the sky that appear in the form of a golden axe, the process of writing a report for the district governor by the Cheka Shum in order to explain Namaga's burnt down hut because paved the way of starting the *Afersatsa*, the "*Irbo*" system special tax or tribute on the tenants, the servant led life and the aristocratic society and the male- female classification of work in the society all this concepts existed in the first part of the story. When we come to the second part of the story, we could get childhood time in the country side in Ethiopia, rural children are amazed and curious when they see city man, the hand working habit of Gurage people, about '*Kitfo*' which is one of the Gurage's best food, perception of Gurage people forward children anecdote. We have got these issues in the second part of the story and narrated all the Gurage tradition and custom.

The third stage narrated about the beginning of the second *Afersata* and that Namaga decided not reveal how he lost his money. Apart from that, it explained the bad outlook of people towards hand craft man, the required of skinning skills around the people and custom of Gurage people, too. The last part of the story is the climax and the denouement of the novel or story because there was different suspense that made eager the people who participated in the *Afersata*. There was also fear in the heart of the bad men as well as in the heart of the innocent, and also the protagonist Namaga made hot argument with Beshir Safo so it was the sign of climax. At the end, the denouement part of the story came to end by the last explanation of the seven elders, for it was all about the process of how the story was developed.

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