

# **‘Hit the iron when it is hot’**

Dagmawi Gudu Kassa

The saying I used as my title here above seems less known in our recent linguistic history. But as we are witnessing the current history of this world, people of different nations other than Ethiopians, even the Burmese, even Libyans and Syrians and Yemenis who had been immersed in untold tyranny for over three and four decades, have been waging a neck and neck struggle for their freedom and among them some have already succeeded while some others are on the way. This happens because they determinedly decided to hit the iron when it is hot; to be more seasoned and realistic, they have been hitting the iron which was made hot by the gallant Tunisian Mohammad Bouaziz, the first Yenesew Gebre of the Arab spring, who, after understanding the fact that life without liberty is meaningless, immolated himself and served as beacon of freedom fighting.

## **How about us, Ethiopians?**

Well, it is appalling to understand the fact that we are trying to heat again and again the hot iron. We all are rather busy of fabricating narratives and documentaries that never help in making use of the current power vacuum, the hot iron, in Ethiopia. Understandably, we are a people without a leader especially since the time His Totalitarian PM Meles Zenawi went up or down for good. Understandably, again, we are a people without functioning state machineries especially since the time Meles slipped away unbeknownst even among his own puppet folks. Frankly speaking, we are the only people in this physical world who are being ruled by the ghost of a dead man through his hooligan tutees whose absolute/blind obedience has astonishingly gone to the extent of ordaining him as their god of idolatry, posthumously of course. Truth be told, it is only Ethiopians who are under the leadership of none other than the spell of abracadabra conjured upon us by certain formidable force, be it terrestrial or extraterrestrial. .

That is why we are afraid of the unknown rather than challenging the known. The unknown, which could be guessed as the snowballing effect of the previous cruel regimes and the uncompromising nature of Meles’ dictatorship that hovers in our dreams, and the known, which is, in this case, the hot iron created by the passing away of this monster, have situated us in a state of dumbfounding confusion. We could not get our conscious self within the past four or five months to realize the fact that the leadership of our nation is in limbo. The thugs, in the meantime, are making use of our confusion and disbelief of the reality that the dragon is dead. They seem to have been trying to medicate their internal bleeding and defer the resultant fatalistic death in a systematic truce until they prove the dust is settled. But we are fallen apart as usual to give them the second chance of plundering the nation, mistreating citizens, muzzling free speech, eliminating any feature of democracy, and depriving us of every fabric of humanity as citizens and creatures of this planet by and large. In due course of time, we are allowing the hot iron to get even colder and thence letting it become harder and harder in such a way that nothing will ever heat it again. We are about to miss a golden chance, actually a godsend one. We seem to be agreeing with the suffering we have been through for ages. Some of us believe conferences and communiqués would wipe out our enemies, and some others believe the proliferation of political and/or civic organizations would erase our problems.

How on earth could such an amazing benumbment occur in this nation?

There is no need to refer to studies and words of the sage. In short, it is us, all of us, Ethiopians, who are responsible for the grotesque shape of our nation; honestly speaking, the lion’s share of the blame belongs to us. Whether we are members of this or that party or group, whether we are in or out of this or that group, whether we are sympathizers or opponents of this or that entity, all in all, equally or maybe at times in a differing degree, we are accountable for what have been happening in this country. And it should be clear that blame apportioning will take us nowhere either. AND do not forget also the role of **Uncle Sam!**

I shall speak the truth. I understand that truth is the bitterest of all imaginable tastes. I also know the fact that no one is able to appease all; the more you try it the more divorced with truth you will become, and by then you will be nothing other than an opportunistic liar; to try to be a friend of all is just as trying to be a friend of none, as the saying already has it. And hence, it is better to be part of the truth rather than of this or that side for the purpose of gaining dazzling fulsome that will seat you in quagmire when truth wins.

To borrow Mengistu’s favorite phrase, *whether you believe it or not*, the majority of us are divided. We are morally decaying from time to time. We are becoming corrupted in many aspects, be it religious or ethical and the like; we are in an absolute decadence - fear is in rife, gluttony has become the motto of the

majority, etiquette and ethical values, mores, social norms, ... are alarmingly disappearing. We are becoming people of biases and prejudices based on this or that futility. We have surrendered to the western paraphernalia of cultural and social junks and as a result of which our cherished societal values are on the wane. It seems we are in the process of disintegration as the consequence of which we are about to cease living as a societal being. We always walk following the furrows of our enemies. We tend to obey our historical adversaries than our own conscience and our own genuine people. Our love for power has become unfathomably high and to that end we liquidate each other for the sake of securing certain top position, be it governmental or organizational; we are intolerantly peevish when it comes to money and any material advantage thereof; we are out of rational thinking with regard to our carnal interests, we show no compromise, no mercy at all; we crazily bypass the fences of religion, culture, and the law in a bid to answer the insincere demands of the id. We are deaf and dumb and hence we cannot hear and speak anything out of our personal opportunities. We are governed by the rule of the 'I', not as such by the rule of the 'we'. Naturally, 'I' is less generous and gives wider room for the self. 'We' is more generous and beneficially healthier. But we have reduced ourselves to animalism and most of us have become subservient to the realm of 'I' and are opposed to anything else out of the '*I, me, and myself*' domain. In this fashion, we haven't been able to construct one communal enclosure that could bring us together and avoid the selfish motive governed by the rule of 'I'. As panacea to this chronically acute social illness, let us deconstruct the 'I' motive and reconstruct the 'we' domain. We shall rebuild a new communal identity by abandoning the one we have now, because the path we are following will inevitably bring about our peril.

Selfishness is beyond everything; you can sell your son, your daughter, your intimate friend, any relative for money if you are too selfish, leave alone your country, part of your territory, and/or your folk.[Remember Judah who sold Jesus for 30 dinars!] You become uncompromisingly greedy if you are money or power mongering individual. You see life through goggles made up of money and power. If you are tuned in such a manner that you only should get every material possession, nothing will stop you from this crave; you become out of all binding conventions whatsoever. And as a matter of fact, you never become satisfied even if you are let to own all the power and the resources this planet could possibly offer you, for you have made your body a slave of materialistic caprice. To this end, you leave no stone unturned to achieve your whims. You will then become a Woyanne, if at all you are not one already.

People of such nature explained above are devastating our homeland. They use all means to get there, to the tower of their wishes. Ethnicity and religion are just two of the means they employ toward the accomplishment of their ambitions. These people are rampantly available on both wings of the plane. But it is unfortunate for the wing in which the majority of the people are believed to be onboard. In our case, the plane consists of the TPLF/EPRDF on one hand and the oppressed mass on the other. Obviously, it is understood that TPLF/EPRDF represents the minority, the so called benefited section of the population, in any way possible and irrespective of their biological make up or ethnic group, whereas the opposition bloc, numbered in hundreds, are allegedly acclaimed to be representatives of the oppressed mass. [I wished to remind you of an Amharic saying, ብሬው ሳይገዛ ሌባው በረጅ ጥላ.]

This year is the 22<sup>nd</sup> of the Woyannes' accession to power after 17 years of all rounded crafty struggle. They are in power for 39 years altogether including the jungle. We know they are not good option to lead the country from the very beginning. But we, the accursed ordinary citizens, couldn't help stopping them from controlling the palace, for they had a blessing by the United States of America and her allies, a.k.a the 'International Community', a self-appointed mundane superpower. We are paying the consequences of our allegiance to our indifference/ignorance and absolute insensitivity and we hope those powers to which the aggravation of our suffering is attributed will get their due retribution possibly in the near future. We earnestly trust in a God; they say this so. But they are feigning. Actions speak more strongly than words. Anyhow, we have a nuclear of yielding prayer; they have a weapon of unyielding nuclear arsenals that could be dismantled and changed into nothingness when the wrath comes from any direction. Be sure, the end of secularism along with its sophisticated civilization and moral crisis is dwindling and it will be supplanted by a higher form of existence, more probably within a fraction of a decade or so.

Let's have time to come to Ethiopia. You my brother or my sister know that nations that have real children in the struggle for freedom can hit their target, the hot iron, in a reasonably short period of time. Though in many instances the victories attained through hard ways may be diverted towards the indulgence of the few and dictatorship may be reinstated in some other way, we can recall many more examples, such as

Lauren Kabila's arm struggle which took him only 11 months to topple the then government in DR Congo, to have a clear picture as to how many freedom movements take a short span of time to wind up their armed resistance. We can also observe the M23 rebel fighters, in this same nation, who have gained international recognition within 6 months of their resistance movement. We can go on farther.

How about ours? Are we lucky enough even to hear the freeing of one small district within 22 years? Have we been able to hear from our 'freedom fighters' that such and such provinces are freed from the Woyanne grip? Have we been able to get out of the tradition of rhetoric and at some convenient times firing a bullet here and a mortar there just to pretend the 'fight' is alive, and thereby collecting some 'alms'? Where are our heroes and heroines? Till when should we expect some victory? Shame on the current history of Ethiopia! Shame on every one of us! I shall respect the efforts of those who claim to fight the Woyanne regime, I am not belittling the courageous endeavors, I am narrating the general trend, not the specific case of this or that group. And I understand that it is 'better said than done'. [ለተቀማጭ ሰማይ ቅርብ ነው] On the other side of the coin, the Woyannes are perfectly doing the assignment given to them. Nothing is wrong in their part, for they haven't been off the arch plan they are in favor since the beginning up until now and even beyond.

Yes, according to the stats quo, we are too far from the day of freedom, and it doesn't seem we will reach there either, I will be offering some concession though. I know the media wing is better than the otherwise. Media people in the opposition are much better and are sleeplessly fighting in a more dedicated manner than the people who claim to be in the jungle to fight this rotten regime. Whatever the case, we have to bear in mind that curses never eliminate enemies; the production of articles, making tantalizing promises, demonstrations, badmouthing each other, and press releases do neither. We have learnt much especially in the past 22 years. If we go on this way, believe me, I will die writing indignant articles, you will die doing what you wish to do. Nothing will be changed. NOTHING!

The opposition bloc is divided in not less a degree than we the people are so. We all are implementing the strategy of the enemy. The enemy, considered by some to be less knowledgeable and less erudite than the opposition, is tirelessly doing its level best to remain in power even though it has lost its ringleader, PM Meles, who is enigmatically alive in the minds of his gullible stooges. We have a saying “የናቁት ወንድ ያስረግዛል” and surprisingly we are getting degenerated into lifelessness to the extent of not becoming aware of the fact that there is comprehensive power vacuum in the country that abruptly needs the togetherness and readiness of the opposition to fill it sooner rather than later. Instead, we are busy of talking, slinging and smearing mud to one another, and formulating scenarios after scenarios as to what will happen when puppet 'parties' of the Woyanne may stand against each other now or in the future[የት ይደርሳል የተባለ ጥጃ ለካንዳ ቤት አጠገብ ሲጨቃጨቅ ታዩ]. We should be able to see certain progress among the opposition especially after the death of the vampire, sorry for my poor diction. We couldn't clean our houses to make them spotless; rather, we are infested by either infiltrators or selfish members who prioritize their personal motives than to stand firm for the common cause. I hope even if Woyannes leave the palace today or tomorrow, just by their own will, which is unthinkably impossible, no one will come to Addis Ababa for fear of the Ghost of Meles or lack of conviction and if at all there are courageous people to come ahead, they will slaughter each other at the gate of the Menelik Palace before they happen to seize an iota of power; surprising people with surprising level of consciousness; age, time, and current world affairs are never heeded in Ethiopia, in many countries in fact, such as Egypt, for that matter. [You may remember the shameful act of president Mursi or Morsy; could it be the soil of Africa which is cursed or it is the same everywhere else? Am confused.]

In this murky situation, it is quite embarrassing to predict what has to come in the near future. As a matter of fact, any political power[ሥልጣን] cannot be emailed via the net or mailed through the post office. It needs physical appearance and bodily presence. If we keep on shouting in the Diaspora, or in cities and towns, nothing will change. It seems many of us do not want to engage in the freedom fighting, rather, we want to join liberators after the victory is realized. Some would like to have other people of other countries to fight for their liberty. We should know that this time around is not the time of Che Guevara and Ho Chi Minh. To think it is is bloody foolishness. No country has ever been freed by proxy fighters or by cyberwar. Freedom needs, in the main, physical involvement, and unreserved financial as well as material contribution up until the day of liberation. It needs fulltime committed fighters along with its fulltime devoted leadership. Part time politicians can never liberate a country seized by the iron fist of such as the late Dragon's hand. You can instigate a combat from where you are through the media but you cannot enable it to be fruitful unless you are

personally there in the field. Though he was said to be too coward and combat-phobic, nonetheless, Meles was in the jungle in a nearby command post when fighting took place during the rebellion. Historically, no freedom movement has ever become successful in a remote controlling system of warfare; neither will be ours too. I understand I am touching the untouchable. I can't help it; and I guess I miss nothing; I never lose what I never had. Websites? Well, I am used to it as well. I know crude facts are not as pleasing as crude oil!

I presume some opposition leaders and members do not want the end of the Woyanne regime. When I 'telepathically' read their mind, my sixth sense, you may call it intuition or instinct, tells me that they are better off now. Maybe they are afraid of the competition in time of elections or they are inconfident in the would-be political setting, nevertheless, some among the opposition seem to be reluctant to see our freedom, I may be wrong. Some of them do not seem to feel the plight of 'their' people as long as their coffers are filled by donations and contributions. Few of them are victims of jealousy and envy; they are of a crooked nature with, perhaps, perverted DNA and RNA setup which would create social havoc and political instability if given the chance to be at the front. There are shallowly showy people whose prime interest is seeking attention. There are depraved people whose sole purpose and major mission is creating chaos and intrigue amongst the group they are purportedly part. There are psychic people who get pleased, like the Woyannes, when they see people suffer. There are bottomless pits that plunder the scant resources their party receives from members or donors. There are moles that siphon secrets to the Woyanne and fill their belly with Judaic blood money. There are people who are goddamned to the extent of being oblivious of why they are there in the struggle and careless of what they ought to do. These and similar phenomena in the opposition are best bonanzas to the crooked Woyanne at home. Concomitantly, it is possible to surmise that such people along with their party are responsible for the reign of silence and indifference amidst the people. Apparently, we have to realize how repeatedly broken promises could change the mentality of people and feed hopelessness to occur in its fullest grace and majesty. When options become faint and survival pressurizes people, it is not uncommon to see bizarre moves in any society. You may support the unsupportable, love the unlovable; you may cry in time of laughing or vice versa. This is what is happening in Ethiopia, thanks to the tutors and mentors of TPLF. Believe me, they will be rewarded accordingly! And that time of justice is approaching.

In this fashion, the hitherto efforts incline to remain shackled before or as soon as they are begun. Where can we go then? Who can take us there, to the desired 'there'? How can we go there? We've numerous questions the answers of which are in the hands of the Almighty. I am coming to the concession now.

Irreligious or atheist or agnostic people shall not read this paragraph; I will not be responsible for their puff. Anyways, my sixth sense, once again, tells me that we are advancing toward the plateau after wading up the grimy and fiery hill built by the Woyannes and galvanized by us so that it stays for so long until it eats up all what we consider earthen redemption. We know God punishes His own people; the punishment may last as short as 40 years or as long as 2500 years. Needless to detour to explaining the fact that we deserve this punishment, it would suffice to express the inevitability of the coming of the dawn, the happiest day ever seen in our history. It is also logical to assume the burgeoning of a bright day after one darkest night. But it is after a bloody scenario that that day of reckoning comes into being to ferret out the grain from the chaff. Therefore, it is of a dual facet; one ugly and the other delightful, this is a sort of bad news to be followed by good news. We need to adjust our natural satellite dish towards the delightful if we wish to be one among those who will transcend to the happiest day. It is not impossible if we want to be a man of tomorrow. Quit or abandon the evil and join the good. The good is known. *A sweet fruit is known even while it is on the tree*, once said the wisest Man of both the earth and the sky. We are humans with free choices: to kill or be killed; to give or be given; to accumulate or distribute, to be or not to be as Shakespeare had put it. There is an end with differing means. But we should take care of those means, because some are impious and risky while some others are respectably worthy. *If we control the world and lose our eternity, what remains to be our profit*, asks the aforesaid wisest Man. Let's not be overwhelmingly surprised with what is happening in or out of our nation currently; but let's be happy in what will have to happen after the cataclysmic disasters here and here or there and there. Nothing is new as nothing is old. ...

God bless Ethiopia. God bless Humanity.

### **Bonus**

**“The problems that we face cannot be solved by the same level of thinking that created them.”**

Albert Einstein