

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

A Philosophical Perspicacity into Environment-centered Ritual in Ethiopia

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Abstract

The circle-dominated Adbar Ritual unfolds in a manner where everything in its procession comes in the shape of albo (which in Amharic means zero or circle-like). The objectives of this research were meant to show the metaphysical implications of the albo-shapes dominated ritual concerning the zero-point field theory of Quantum physics and to explain the significance of environment-friendly ethos that is deeply embedded in the Adbar ritual. To this end, this study availed itself of methods that are home to philosophy. So came in handy first and foremost was a gamut of methods that are denizens of criticality and rationality. Intent on substantiating the metaphysical findings of the study within an Ethiopian context, I conducted fieldwork, wherein stood prominent the Adbar ritual, at Debeso Giorgis kebele, East Arsi zone, Oromiya regional state, Ethiopia. And that was where methods of data gathering such as unstructured interviews with key informants and focus group discussions stepped in. The study unearthed findings that hold we are inalienably connected with the rest of the cosmological energy in the plenum dubbed zero point energy. The Adbar ritual in its Albo (circle) centered ensemble is a cultural confirmation of the metaphysical reality that lies beyond the physical givens.

Keywords: infinite pool of energy, environment-friendly-ethos, zero-point-energy, adbar ritual, albo troves-of-divine energy, circle-dominated-ritual

Introduction

All metaphysical works, in the history of philosophy, that dealt one way or another with energy painted a picture in which humanity is seen to stand discreet, separate, helpless, hope-bereft, beleaguered and belligerent instances of the living conscious energy in the face of the inordinate, inanimate, and untold vastness of the cosmic energy. Our relation to the impersonal vastness of cosmic energy by Schopenhauer's light is but suffering fatally from two incurable defects which he linked to Achilles with vulnerable heel and or to the devil with the horse's hoof (Schopenhauer, 1887). In chime with this line of argument, the Stoics stance has it to say that humanity's choice in the face of the untold vastness and colossal machinations of nature is either accepting it with dignity or doing away with oneself, (Palmer, 1999). Almost a couple of millennia later the Stoic's resolve for suicide was taken up and given a fresh shot by Albert Camus who noted that the situation in

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which humans demand for meaning and significance in such an indifferent world as ours can never be met. Under such conditions, Camus writes, that there is one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide, (Camus 1942). While grappling with the same issue under discussion, Nietzsche kept Schopenhauer company in his understanding that this world is a prodigious empire of meaninglessness, suffering, and striving driven along by an irrational force. However, Nietzsche parted company with Schopenhauer in his solution to the problem at hand. For Nietzsche, humanity should not turn away from the cosmological energy in despair and suffering, in despondency and melancholy. On the contrary, he argues emphatically that we must live our lives to the fullest. And the key to do this is putting into effect the perpetual elimination of the weak by the strong, the idiot by the clever and the incompetent by the competent, (Magee, 2000, Nietzsche, 2002). Far from the bleak and pessimistic and nihilistic views as touched upon above, this study conferred upon itself the objective of examining the relationship between the cosmic and conscious energy and came up with a new view that would address the gap and overcome the shortcoming the perspectives thus far reviewed suffer from.

Contrary to the pessimistic metaphysical positions taken by philosophers touched upon above, there are metaphysical practices that are widely held and deeply embedded in some cultural and religious performances across Ethiopia which unequivocally draw an optimistic picture of the conscious energy humans represent in the face of the cosmological energy. Despite the hope-bereft and nihilistic sounding solutions Western modern science and philosophy came up with, metaphysical practices stashed deeply in a blend of traditional religious and cultural practices .3These are rituals that involve directly or opaquely taking oneself out of the mundane tempo of life, paint us a bright picture as regards the power the conscious energy has over the overwhelming vastness of cosmological energy. Western philosophy and the best part of modern science can only afford to tell us a despondent sounding story of either sheer indifference or total diffidence of humanity in the face of the overwhelming cosmological energy. Contrary to this long established and widely held metaphysical practices in Ethiopia, practices which in the eyes of the reigning towers of reason -modern science and philosophy – fall in the category of the irrational, pre-logic, pre-scientific, primitive, trickster, witchcraft you name it, however come up with a solution which is positive and bright showing the power there is in conscious energy that can master and manipulate the vast empire of cosmological energy. The *Adbar* ritual in Ethiopia, among many others, is worth a philosophical perspicuity that uncovers the thick veneers of particularity and grasps the governing metaphysical principles that help boost the potency of conscious energy in the face of cosmological energy. Hence this research delved to a degree into the depths of the centuries old ritual in Ethiopia with an eye on ferreting out the metaphysical principle that can explain the relationship between the cosmological and the conscious flips of energy.. So, instead of rejecting the said practices in Ethiopia in the name and under the cloak of reason and science we need to peer into the very practices, study them from close range and try to see the metaphysical salencies there are to them, the reality to which the

whole traditional practices subscribe, the reasons for their confidence in the capacity of humans, the conscious energy, to manipulate the inanimate, unconscious, cosmological energy at their will. In concert with this, I examined the circle-dominated ritual in Ethiopia in light of one of the most advanced natural sciences which has nowadays opened itself for cultural and religious practices.

Quantum physics theorizes about reality in ways and manners that comply with those worldviews which are very much interspersed with their cultural and religious views. Put differently, the conclusions of quantum physics point to the fact that reality is an essentially coherent, indivisible, interconnected web of relations, (Heisenberg, W. et al., 1961; Puthoff, 1989, 1990; Setterfield, 2007). In relation to this John Bell, the quantum physicist, writes, “At a deep and fundamental level the ‘separate parts’ of the universe are connected in an intimate and immediate way,” (“Quoted in Capra, 2000, p. 314). This idea of quantum physics which imbues with clear philosophical notes on the nature of reality is very well captured by Zukav as he writes, “the philosophical implication of quantum mechanics is that all of the things in our universe...are actually parts of one all-encompassing organic pattern and that no part of that pattern are ever really separate from it, or from each other,” (Zukav, 2001, p. 52). This tenet of quantum physics appears to be the central creed of Eastern mystics, whose worldview comes in forms that express themselves in their manifold rituals, ceremonies and cultural practices. The strongly metaphysical tone of quantum physics states that the ultimate reality is nothing but an infinite web of interconnectedness that defies the cause-and-effect, space and time bound sensory, perceptual and conceptual understanding of modern science. And this idea of quantum physics has got its parallel in the worldviews of the Eastern mystics. For Eastern mystics the ultimate reality defies sensations, perceptions, conceptions that are characteristics of classical science and modern philosophy. In line with this Capra argues, “In Eastern mysticism it has always been realized that reality transcends ordinary language and the sages of the East were not afraid to go beyond logic and common concepts. This is the main reason why their models of reality constitute a more appropriate philosophical background to the new physics than the models of Western philosophy,” (Capra, 2000, p. 46).

From the discussion above it is clear that quantum physics has the capacity and the openness to appreciate, respect and relate itself to those world views which are more religious and cultural than being strictly scientific and philosophical. And that is where my interest to conduct a research on the *Adbar* ritual in Ethiopia, which is both religious and cultural, in light of quantum physics, steps in. What is more, since the *Adbar* ritual is an event in which all present are participators, and none is allowed to be an indifferent observer, one can see that there is a strong connection between the proceedings of this ritual and the fundamental characteristics of quantum physics. In this regard John Wheeler, a quantum physicist of Princeton University, writes, “Participation is the incontrovertible new concept given by the quantum mechanics. It strikes down the term

'obsrever' of classical theory, the man who stands safely behind the thick glass wall and watches what goes on without taking part," (Quoted in Zukav. 2001, p. 31).

The *Adbar* ritual, to be presented shortly, is noted, among other things, for being a medium in which everything used, said or done unequivocally comes under the shape the locals call *Albo*, which in Amharic means zero. Being a ritual that is always performed not at home but out in the field with all the objects used for the occasion being *albo*-shaped, zero like, or circle like, one can find another reason to look into the Zero Field theory of Quantum physics which theorizes so much on the field and zero energy. According to this theory reality is a hub of all electromagnetic activities where the field is the closest matter ever gets to zero point energy. In line with this argument, Setterfield writes, "... the material world of atoms is like a ship supported by a sea of electromagnetic waves of the ZPE (Zero Point Energy)," (Setterfield, 2007, p. 1).

In sum, to examine the *Adbar* ritual for all the metaphysical implications and environmental ethos it carries with it, we should know what it is all about and how it unfolds. It is with this spirit in mind that I present the description of *Adbar* ritual shortly.

Research Method

Being a discipline whose warps and wefts are mainly conceptual rather than empirical, philosophy behooves me to rely heavily on methods that are subservient to logic, home to reasoning, congenial to abstraction, anathema to prejudice, bad soils to stereotyping, and critical to Establishment. Thus, in main I helped myself to critical method. In perfect pursuance to the aforementioned, I included in my methodology a few elements from the province of sciences, both social and natural, such that I was able to use a qualitative data gathering tools in my fieldwork.

At this point I must emphatically make it clear that the entire study was a philosophical probe in general and a metaphysical enquiry, in particular, into the relation between the conscious and cosmic flips of energy and showed how humans stand in the face of the cosmic energy. But then, I was of the intention that in concert with the longstanding philosophical tradition dating back to the times of Plato and Aristotle, I exerted an honest effort to ground the metaphysics of energy, unto an aspect of Ethiopian context. By some coincidence the case I purposively selected turned out to be a social and religious event or a combination of the two. The reason is clear: I chose the *Adbar* ritual because, while unfolding, out in the field it seems to overflow, among other things, with symbols the people tout *Albo* (zero); and that is where their connection to the Zero Point Energy steps in. The selected ritual served as a means to substantiate my metaphysical analysis and corroborate it within an Ethiopian context. Stated otherwise, I used the *Adbar* ritual from Ethiopian context and way of life exactly the way Plato used the Allegory of the cave and

Aristotle used the huge marble boulder to corroborate their theories on Being and causes respectively. And with this spirit in mind, I conducted a field work on the selected local case.

Research site

Qualitative data on the selected case, this study used to substantiate some of its findings, was gathered first hand from the field. To this end I purposively chose to collect data on the *Adbar* ritual from the East Arsi zone, Oromiya regional state, central Ethiopia. Although the *Adbar* ritual is held all over Ethiopia, with very few exceptions, the reason I had to go for one of the central-Ethiopia zones, viz., East Arsi zone, runs on three counts. First off, I know the area very well from living there for far too long a time. And that gave me some kind of a head-start for the success of my research. Knowing very well my research site gave me a particular advantage of carving my niche with ease among the people a part of whose religio-cultural practices I was out to study. Secondly, since the majority of the rural population living in this zone is to a great extent bilingual, and my being perfectly conversant in both Amharic and Oromiffa stands to be a plus factor in my choice of the very zone. Thirdly, such is the ease and convenience I enjoyed from the selection of the Arsi zone as my research site, I was met with a classy hospitality in which I found it rather congenial to locate and thereby get acquainted with my key informants.

Sources of data

For the success of this research I used a balanced and rational blend of both primary and secondary data. Primary sources of data were obtained by conducting field and interviewing key informants, arranging focus group discussion coupled and supplemented with triangulating measures. As regards secondary data, I helped myself to books, journals, newsletters, newspapers, magazines, monographs, archives, websites that are relevant available and accessible.

Interviews

With semi-structured questions at hand I approached knowledgeable sages otherwise termed in the empirical research world as key informants and talked them into enlightening me with their wisdom in the last week of April, 2022 and the first week of May, 2022. To this end, after having at hand all the stuff requisite for the smooth beginning and flow of a given field work, I went to the purposively selected places where the sages lived and were accessible.

Focus group discussion

This class of discussion was organized in the hope and belief that depth perception on the issue under study would gather momentum as a group of carefully selected sages, as well as other groups of persons from different walks of life sit together and vent their ideas pertaining to the matter at hand, on May 2, 2022, just a day after the ritual was held at Debeso Giorgis adbar site. The focus group was composed of priests, elderly women and men who are residents of Debeso Giorgis kebele, Lode Huruta Woreda, East Arsi zone, Oromiya regional state.

Succinctly put, I approached the host community in Arsi zone, central Ethiopia fully aware of and honestly believing that it is imperative for me to respect the rights, needs, values and traditions of the informants. To this end, with a written permission from relevant authorities to carry out the research at hand I fully and honestly informed them about the objectives of my research and how its results would be used. That way I earned their informed consent and carried out the research wherein they shared their wisdom with me in the interviews I conducted and discussions made.

The Adbar Ritual

The *Adbar* ritual, also known as the *Ginbot Lideta* ritual, is held outdoor, every year on the first day of May at Debeso Giorgis, Lode Huruta Woreda, East Arsi zone Oromiya regional state, central Ethiopia. And the site for this ritual is none other than *Adbar* (a huge imposing half circle-shaped tree taken for a symbol of a protective spirit). Accordingly on the first day of *Ginbot* (May), in the afternoon, women with their share of *qitta*, (*local pizza*) which is *albo*-like (circular in shape), and toasted cereals and grains set on basket works that are also circular go to the ritual site – the *Adbar*. It is up to men to bring to the ritual site the sacrificial animal.

Just a few hours before the actual onset of the *Adbar* ritual, the boiling or cooking of *nfro* in circular pot is underway. *Nfro* is a foodstuff made from boiled wheat, maize, lentil, bean, pea and chickpea. The reason for boiling of cereals and grains in circular pot under the *Adbar* is that boiling *nfro* has a religious significance. Ato Tirfu Wari, my key informant, describes it as follows. “It symbolizes how terrible the fate of sinners had been before the birth of Jesus Christ. It shows that the end awaiting sinners before the birth of Christ had been a mass of boiling water and raging fire”

Yoftahie Kebede writes to this effect as well. “When the devotees of St. Mary started to commemorate her birthday, they boiled *nfro* (food prepared by boiling wheat, beans and chickpeas together) and ate it outdoors. The popular belief for boiling *nfro* is that, before Christ was born to die on the Cross and save mankind from Hell, sinners were thrown into boiling water and fire. Thus the boiling of *nfro* is in remembrance of that suffering and

to show how the birth of St. Mary contributes to the redemption of our souls,” (Yoftahie, 1951, p.30).

Before the ritual is set in full gear, the officiating women see to it that the *nfro*, which has been in the making for hours now, is placed on circular plates. This woman as well makes sure that the toasted cereals are also made ready for consumption on circular plates or circular basket treys. Men who are busy with the slaughtering of the sacrificial animal and eventually grilling the meat get at last their roasted beef or mutton(which depends on the type of the sacrificial animal) ready for eating in plates that are circular. The woman tending the coffee making can start to pour the coffee from the circle-bottomed kettle into circle-rimmed cups. Now beckons is the moment of truth. With everything at the ready, the *Adbar* ritual is about to unfold. All present at the *Adbar* get to their feet.

It is time now for an elderly man to take the floor and do the blessings.

*Oh Almighty God
The One with inordinate appellations
And countless names
In whose quad
We have been born and bred
Push aside
Everything bad
And beckon to homestead
All that is good
Oh God, let peace
Be, down in the nadir
Deep in midair
Up in the azure
Let your blessings
Saunter into our locales
Settle into our minds
Surf into our granaries
Soar into our thoughts
Let good harvest
Come to us at its best
Chase thrift
And sway glut
In our earthly heart
In our mind and spirit
Let our woebegone wails
And our entreaties
Be heard in your kingdom's bliss
Via your mother's words
Through Mary the Virgin's dispatches
Of whose birthday
We make our heyday
Every year when comes the day
On the first of May.*

When the blessing comes to end, the woman who so far has been tending the coffee ceremony will take her turn and start to shoulder her duties. Making sure that everyone

after the blessing ceremony was over gets seated in lines that are circular in shape, the woman takes two cups already filled with steaming coffee and goes to the *Adbar*, circles it once before she empties the contents of the cups at a point where the lowest bark of the tree and the crest of the earth keep company. Then the lead woman goes back to her officiating stool, a tripod circular seat and picks up the *quitta* and, tears it into sizeable portion. Then she randomly selects one of the small parcels of *quitta* and drops the rest down to the circular basket work of high crown locally touted as *laemat*. With the selected parcel she has now a work to do. She tears it further into smaller and smaller pellets. Satisfied, she throws the pellets of *quitta* in every direction by taking circular turns on her feet. Subsequently she does the same to other types of food. Done deal, she goes back to her officiating seat and starts pouring coffee into the awaiting row of cups. By now the *Adbar* has the cream of everything prepared for *Ginbot Lideta*. Then follows in full gear a joyful eating that transcends all differences visited upon the laity in age, sex, color, ethnicity, and profession.

Discussion, Interpretation and Analysis of major Findings

In the ritual described above, a ritual more cultural than religious, the first thing among many others, that can arrest our attention is the shape of most of the paraphernalia that are sine qua non for the very event. The shape of the tree chosen for *Adbar* is *albo*-like (zero-like) or circular, a green umbrella centered with a hefty bark. The shape in which the butter is daubed on the *Adbar*'s bark is circular. The basket work utensils on which the boiled cereals get served is a variety on a circle. All toasted cereals are served on woven basket works that come in a variety of circle. The girdle on which the meat from the sacrificial animals is grilled is circular. The pot used to boil the cereals into *nfro* is a combination of circles. The same holds good for the kettle in which coffee is made. It has a mouth on top that is perfectly circular. It has a belly which is a globe-lookalike circle. The stones that temporarily serve as the pillars of the hearth are circular too. The *quitta* daubed with the hot blend of red pepper and melted, seasoned and purified butter is a tantalizing traditional pizza that comes however not in triangles but in circle. The coffee cups in which coffee is served are defined by a circular rim on top and a circular rear at the bottom. The turns the woman takes on her feet while scattering the *nfro* and *quitta*-pellets are typically circular. The manner in which the blessings at the ritual are given behooves all attendants to stand in shapes or lines that are circular.

The question that can merit our attention at this hiatus is: Why is it that there is so much of shapes that are either zero-like circular or akin to circle in the very ritual? The mesmerizing glut there is to objects and utensils that are all in the shape known locally as *albo* or *zero*, and the presence of circular movements of the actors that dotted the various stages of the ritual demand a rational and critical delve into the issue by prying open the veneers of appearances and getting at the metaphysical secret lying yonder. To this end,

let me examine as to what it is that people in their long standing tradition have codified in circles.

A circle might mean lots of things to an equally lots of people. To have a good uptake of the secrets well stashed by the people, our wise ancestors, it comes handy if we begin by taking a close look at the shape named “circle” or any shapes that are varieties on the thematic of circle. Among other things, shapes that are circular represent a stark similarity with the number zero – 0. That is exactly why the people call them *albo* (zero). So why do people pay so much in terms of resources, attention, time, and care just to pull off a ritual that is inundated with shapes and activities which designate zero? What does albo or circle mean to the gatekeepers of this tradition? The focus group discussants had the following in response to these questions:

Albo (zero) means a state or a condition that is clean and free from things and values and deeds that are this-worldly. In being free from the contamination of any kind, Albo refers to a world that is divine. Accordingly, being empty of anything and everything that we mortals could name and identify with, Albo can serve as a trove of divine energy. God stashes His incomprehensible energy in a medium free from all this-worldly things. Thus when we perform the Adbar ritual in ways and manners that bespeak of Albo, we feel that we partake in the greatness of God and in the incomprehensible and the cleanliest of all troves of divine energy.

Adbar ritual involves performances of the actors, and what an assortment of objects that come in shapes implying zero reveal to us is the price finite beings meet in a bid to resonate with an infinite repertoire of energy which the actors (the gatekeepers of the Adbar ritual) call trove of divine energy. It is the harbinger which tells people that there is so much more in zero than in all other shapes and forms matter assumes. In concert with this argument what Ato Tirfu Wari, my key informant, said is worth mentioning:

The Albo represents essentially two things. The first is related to its shape and the second to its content. The shape of Albo represents something smooth, unbroken and connected from end to end. Albo doesn't allow any breaks, holes, sharp turns and twists. It is a symbol of all connectedness. The content of the Albo is apparently empty. That shows it is empty of sins, all worldly deeds of finite beings. And that is what qualifies it to be a store house of a divine energy.

And this view about the albo representing the infinite trove of divine energy has been with Ethiopians for millenia. However it was only as recently as a century or so ago the idea of energy related zero came to science. What the quantum physicist Hal Puthoff had

to say on this score can show, among other things, the huge metaphysical implications embedded for millenia in the torchbearers of the Adbar ritual. “Each cubic centimeter of apparently empty space contains an enormous amount of energy. Physicists call it the zero-point energy, because it exists even at the absolute zero of the temperature scale,”(Puthoff, 1989, p.37).

Thus the Adbar ritual, in its *albo* dominated ensemble of utensils and deeds, is a long standing belief in the infinite potential residing in zero, in the world we consider null, in a medium we refer to as empty, and in those situations we call vacuous. And this is very much in chime with one of the central tenets of quantum physics:

“Also referred to by physicists as ‘the vacuum’, the Zero Point Field was called ‘zero’ because fluctuations in the field are still detectable in temperatures of absolute zero, the lowest possible energy state, where all matter has been removed and nothing is supposedly left to make any motion. Zero-point energy was the energy present in the emptiest state of space at the lowest possible energy, out of which no more energy could be removed – the closest that motion of subatomic matter ever gets to zero,” (McTaggart, 2001, p. 20).

Arguably it follows that the zero exalting *Adbar* ritual we have been practicing for millennia and still counting, a ritual as shown earlier that teems to overflow with activities and utensils that signify zero like none other is a human version of the subatomic world lately discovered by the pioneers of quantum physics. The *adbar* ritual in its zero emphasizing ensemble is a cultural confirmation of the metaphysical reality that lies beyond the physical givens. For the Adbar ritual performers reality is not limited to the physical world we perceive; it is also something that lies yonder, beyond our sensible powers can reach. Heisenberg, one of the founding fathers of Quantum physics writes somewhat to this effect: “In the light of the Quantum theory... elementary particles are no longer real in the same sense as objects of daily life, trees or stones,” (Heisenberg, W. et al., 1961, p. 13). The *Adbar* ritual in its performance that shows unreserved subservience to anything and everything that is zero shows the infinite pool of energy there is in what finitely appeared to be a zero medium.

As mentioned earlier, the *Adbar* ritual has been with Ethiopians for millennia, to say the least and so is the deep lying metaphysical grasp as wrapped in apparels of cultural and religious makes and fabrics, although it has come to the modern world of science only as late as the late 19th century.

Late in the 19th century, it was realized that the vacuum could still contain heat or thermal radiation. If our container with the vacuum is then perfectly insulated so no heat can get in or out, and if it is cooled

to absolute *zero*, or -273.15 C, all thermal radiation has been removed. It might be expected that a complete vacuum now exists within the container. However, both theory and experiment show this vacuum still contains measurable energy. This energy is called the Zero-Point Energy (ZPE) because it exists even at absolute zero. The ZPE was discovered to be a universal phenomenon, uniform, all-pervasive, and penetrating every atomic structure throughout the cosmos. The existence of the ZPE was not suspected until the early 20th century for the same reason that we are unaware of the atmospheric pressure of 15 pounds per square inch that is imposed upon our bodies. There is a perfect balance within us and without. Similarly, the radiation pressures of the ZPE are everywhere balanced in our bodies and measuring devices. But the material world of atoms is like a ship supported by a sea of electromagnetic waves of the ZPE, (Setterfield, 2007, p. 1).

The other impression one can't dispense with where the *Adbar* ritual is concerned has a lot to do with the selection of the site that hosts the very event. As could be gathered from the description of the very event, the *Adbar* ritual is carried out as it has been done so for millennia not at home but out in the field where the live tree symbolically representing the protective spirit is. Stated otherwise, the *Adbar* ritual is carried out only in the field. And the theory that traces its roots back to Max Planck, a theory that pivots with superlative degree of concentration on Zero Point energy is all about the field.

Speaking of the field, which stands centre-stage in the millennia long *adbar* ritual, Hal Puthoff one of the quantum physicists and philosophers of our time takes it as a concept standing in good stead for a leviathan big reservoir of energy.

There is one giant reservoir of energy we haven't talked about. Every quantum physicist... is well aware of the Zero Point Field. Quantum mechanics had demonstrated that there is no such thing as a vacuum, or nothingness. What we tend to think of as a sheer void if all of space were emptied of matter and energy and you examined even the space between the stars is, in subatomic terms, a hive of activity, (Puthoff, 1990, p. 55).

As regards their choice of the field instead of their homes for a site to hold the *Adbar* ritual the focus group discussants offered their explanation as follows:

Home is limited to the household members. The field is open to all. The field can accommodate not only people in the neighbourhood but also those from lands far off. So we leave the narrow confines of our homes and go for the all-accommodating field centered with *Adbar*. In so doing we feel

the freedom from the ties of our individual daily affairs. We leave all our problems, sour feelings, bad encounters, sadnesses, mishaps, grudges, what not, back at home and try to be as empty of these individual feelings as the alho, and make it to the Adbar. Because, there we are to deal not with matters pertaining to individual things that we encounter daily; on the contrary, we are there to deal with, to entreat with, the divine trove of incomprehensible energy.

Leaving their houses back and jolting for the field so that they could carry out the ritual clearly shows that we have to free ourselves from the confines, the limitations, the impositions you name it our wonted mode of life has had on us and go for the field which is a cosmological pool of all potentialities, opportunities, resources etc. Going to the field unequivocally insinuates that we have got to pull ourselves off the stifling existential jackets of our life, and divest ourselves of the limited and twice as limiting scientific and philosophic teguments of modernity so that we can help ourselves to the repertoire of infinite energy, the metaphysical trove of ubiquitous energy, which the field represents. Going out to the field implies that we have to say: leave behind the aloof, lonely, separate, disjointed and divided state of matter that modern science and philosophy have been preaching about, and head for the world of all possibilities where we meet our real selves, where we get and come to be at one with our common thread of life, meaning and existence, where we get and come to be at one with our real and dominant quality, and that is our being interconnected in an overarching web of infinite potency in a twice as infinite ocean of energy.

The third most impressive finding of my research is about what people should do when they know that they are not alone in this world. To make this finding very clear, let me restate just an aspect of what people do as the ritual unfolds. At some point in the procession of the very ritual, the person tending the coffee making will take a couple of cups full of steaming coffee to the tree and empties their contents at the base of the very tree. Besides, at another point in the procession of the *Adbar* ritual, the person in charge of dispensing the pellets of bread into which the hotly daubed circular bread is shredded throws them, in circular turns she takes on her heels, in every direction. What does this actually imply? Ato Asrat Achahmanew, my key informant shared his wisdom with me on this point as follows:

Like you know coffee here in Ethiopia is served in three rounds: Abol, tona and bareka. The first round is where you can get the best coffee taste. The second and the third rounds namely tona and bareka will give you the second and third best coffee taste, respectively. As you personally observe while the Adbar ritual unfolds, the woman in charge of the coffee

making will at some point in the event take two cups of coffee from the Abol round, or the first round and spill them underneath the Adbar. This is to show that in this world we live together with multitudes of other things. We recognize their right to existence by showing our respect for them. One way of expressing our respect for them is sharing with them not just what we have but the best that we have. Spilling a couple or so of cups of coffee underneath the Adbar is therefore our way of recognizing the existence of others both visible and invisible. And we treat them with the best we can afford, for which stand the Abol coffee, the butter daubed pellets of qitta etc.

As could be learned from the wisdom of my key informant and the millenia-old practice of the *Adbar* ritual, this is a tradition which is richly embedded with metaphysical implications. It implies something that chimes with the metaphysics of energy, as touched upon earlier. Put otherwise, people know that the coffee spilled at the foot of the tree and the pellets of bread thrown randomly almost in every direction cannot be consumed either by the tree or the ground where they eventually landed. Instead, this act which comes as one of the parts and parcels of the very ritual implies that we are not alone. Therefore, we have to respect the environment, the world at large etc., with the best in us, and with the cream of what we have. Respect and concern matter the most in the world that is essentially interconnected.

The fourth major finding of my research would take us into a comparative stance where we can learn and appreciate the difference there is between Ethiopians and the best part of the western world in the ways and manners we relate ourselves to the environment.

As shown in the descriptive sections of the *Adbar* ritual earlier, seen from a common place view the very ritual is a cultural performance people undertake in token of the respect and high values they have for the birth of Saint Mary. So the ritual at first glance can be taken as a birthday celebration. Celebrating birthdays is nowadays one of the widely held events across the globe. Like I touched upon it before the best part of the Western world has also got one birthday they celebrate emphatically every year. And that birthday is the birthday of Jesus Christ. So, we Ethiopians, as per the tradition still held alive and active as ever in some of our rural settings, celebrate every year the birthday of the Mother and, most of the Western world celebrates the birthday of the Son. This however doesn't mean that Ethiopians don't celebrate the birthday of Jesus Christ. Ethiopians celebrate it in one of the most colorful and nationwide held religious rite known in gee'z, a liturgical language of Ethiopia, *as Beza kulu alem yom tewelde* (which in Amharic means the savior of the entire world is born). But as far as the center stage of this research, the *Adbar* ritual, is concerned I am obliged to compare the celebrations meted out by us, the birthday of Saint Mary and by the Westerners, the birthday of Jesus Christ where in both cases a

tree of some kind is given a huge emphasis. That being said, let me toggle over to the ways and manners in which we relate ourselves to the environment and they do so to the environment.

Much of the Western world up until recently, used to cut trees which stand center-most in the celebration of the birthday of Jesus Christ. Ethiopians celebrate the birthday of Saint Mary without cutting any tree whatsoever. The western world brings the tree into their homes, whereas Ethiopians take themselves out to the field that is home to the ritual tree. In the western tradition, they force the tree to come home after killing it. Ethiopians force themselves to go to the home of the tree – the field. The Western world couldn't celebrate the very birthday without killing a tree. Ethiopians do celebrate it by keeping the tree alive.

Zraick writes about Christmas tree very much to this effect.

It's the centerpiece of the biggest holiday of the year for many American families: the Christmas tree, the focal point for parties and presents, replete with favorite ornaments and lights. Some cherish the scent of a real tree and the tradition of bringing it home, while others prefer the tidier and easier option of the plastic variety, (Zraick, 20018, p. 13).

Such is the impact of cutting trees for Christmas on the environment it gave rise to a host of ongoing debates among scholars of whom some seemed to go a long way rationalizing about cutting trees for rituals observed nationwide, not to mention worldwide. Zraick gives us a very succinct account of the feeble attempt at rationalizing the cutting down of trees for Christmas. "Don't feel bad about cutting down a tree for the holiday. Christmas trees are crops grown on farms, like lettuce or corn. They are not cut down from wild forests on a large scale, said Bert Cregg, an expert in Christmas tree production and forestry at Michigan State University," (Zraick, 2018, p.14).

Later on and amid the debates for and against the cutting down of trees for holiday the western world at large came to learn the havoc any act of cutting a tree can wreak on their lives, on the environment, and somehow made a change of plan as regards the ritual tree. Ethiopians made no change of plans where the ritual tree is concerned. The western world, thus replaced the use of actual trees by synthetic trees. In fact this new, apparently well thought out seeming change of plan about the use of ritual tree is highly appreciated by Ethiopian folks in towns. In fact the best part of the town-based Christmas celebration in Ethiopia helps itself to the use of the synthetic tree, courtesy of the western tradition. So the western world started to pride itself on the new mechanism it has put in place such that a synthetic tree has become the icon of the very ritual. In rural Ethiopia the *Adbar* ritual is still held as it has been held for millennia by making the live tree stand central in the matrix of the *Adbar* ritual.

The much talked about synthetic tree has then become a buzz word by which the western

world has set a mammoth store for its being environment friendly, in which they take the most unfathomable pride for their being intelligent and wise to do things in manners that run in perfect concert with the health and wealth of the environment. Sad for them, the synthetic tree much exalted for its being the right means to put a stop to the degradation and impoverishment of the environment turns out to be the worst dint that exacerbates environmental problems to an unheard of new level. The synthetic tree is an anathema to the health of the environment. Why? Because, belatedly as usual, it is found out to be the worse pollutant of the environment than anything else. A synthetic tree doesn't decompose that easily, hence adds to the pile of other environment pollutants at work even in deep waters, large oceans and cities, to cite just a few.

The synthetic tree which is in some literature referred to as a fake tree is efficiently and threateningly detrimental to the health of both humans and their natural environment. Wright gets it right when he writes:

The Christmas tree that we take home from the store looks like a real tree, but it is fake. It is made up of chemicals. So much so that some places such as the State of California are required by law to have a warning label about the chemical content of artificial Christmas trees before they reach the retail floors. The central plastic component of a fake Christmas tree over the past few decades has been cut from compressed sheets of PVC; which stands for Polyvinyl Chloride. PVC is a known human carcinogen. To make the Christmas tree branches soft and flexible, a considerable class of chemicals called phthalates is used. These are tied to a wide range of health issues. Lead is a big concern in artificial Christmas trees because it is often used as a stabilizer in PVC plastic. Scientists are increasingly convinced there are no "safe" levels of lead, especially for young children. The report mentions "when an artificial Christmas tree reaches nine years old, dangerous lead exposure can occur, (Wright, 2017, p. 23).

The synthetic tree proves to be a fast spreading environment pollutant for the simple reason that it is produced in such a way that you can easily dismantle it and reassemble it. Because of this, kids, youngsters and even some pet animals can easily avail themselves to it and tear it to tatters. That way it can easily get itself into the line of trashes that ends up in badly designed roads, sewers, rivers, ponds, pools, oceans, you name it.

The other reason for the ease there is with it for its quick spread as one of the most dangerous pollutant of the environment is its being portable. A synthetic tree that is a meter or two long can easily be hauled by a child of four or five, to say the least. It is light and that provides for its being easily carried around. Hence the reason for it to get moving fast from place to place. Particularly during rainy season a stray synthetic tree or its part can easily be washed away by a minor gully. That is how it gets into the larger

water bodies and exacerbates the pollution problem that has already been at work in the aquatic environment.

Last but not least, the synthetic tree comes as a major threat to the environment because it comes in huge aggregate amounts. Why the aggregate amount of synthetic trees comes huge that easily is due to its relatively lower price. The industrial world has made it so easy to access with a reasonably low amount of money. So everyone in towns, in Ethiopian setting, and the best part of the westerners who celebrate Christmas can afford the synthetic tree. The lower the price the higher the number of the potential customers. The higher the number of the buyers of the synthetic tree, the larger the aggregate amount of the very pollutant.

Conclusion

The *Adbar* ritual on closer probing points to a metaphysical stance that there are others even in places and medium we consider zero, we think are empty of content, and bare of meaning. It is a metaphysical notice served to everyone such that our being, our very existence, imbue with meaning providing we realize that others are as much our parts as we are our parts in a world that is infinitely interconnected. So the best you do for others, the cream of your best which you offer others is the quintessential of your being. In a world whose defining quality is the infinite web of interconnections that are ubiquitous and that defy space and time what you offer others is the best you offer yourself. In so doing you transcend greed, crime, parochialism, racism, nepotism and look your nose down on everything whose creed is greed, whose essence is malevolence, whose best is malice aforethought, whose tenet is theft, and whose volition is corruption.

Moreover, the comparative analysis conducted thus far could be wrapped in such a way that while the western world, where even a single- once in a year- celebration is concerned, runs into manners and deeds that are detrimental to the environment. In their millennia old *Adbar* ritual, Ethiopians in rural settings run things in manners and deeds that are astoundingly more environment friendly than the rest of the world is ready to acknowledge. So we do our rituals in ways and manners that treat the environment in terms that honor and preserve the inherent value there is to it. This, in fine, is a way of approaching the environment that perfectly subscribes to environment-friendly ethos that are metaphysically far reaching and environmentally healthy.

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