

CALL ME BY MY NAME: A Commentary, XVIII
Wolde Tewolde alias Obo Arada Shawl

November 1, 2007

As Ethiopians we had dignity. We used to embolden ourselves with pride and self-respect. But these days, no matter how dignified an Ethiopian may look, whether he is an ethnos, a nationalist or an internationalist, whether he is rich, or homeless, he/she needs to restore a sense of dignity and pride. Actually dignity and pride are the qualities that each member of our society must recognize, in himself/herself and in others. If we do not recognize our own dignity and that of others, then respect is lost.

In fact, dignity is the reverse side of the quality of respect. Dignity is something we have and that which we do not want to be damaged. Respect is something we give to others. Even children have dignity. When we don't show children any respect, it threatens their dignity.

Our current political crises have also brought our true dignity to the surface.

- Soldiers and guerrilla fighters who fought to the end for their respective goals
- The Revolutionaries who refused to be put down by an unfair leaders
- A small nation that refuses to be disregarded
- Priests who want to delve into serious theological matters and
- The Exiles who refuse to give up their motherland or fatherland's rights

All these reflect in our human dignity brought to the surface by these crises? A geographer, an economist, an engineer, a journalist and an artist have betrayed our causes. I am a glad politician – political scientists and revolutionary politicians have not betrayed us.

The leader who forgets his own dignity and behaves in ways that cause others to lose regard for him compromises his ability to lead. Such is the case of many current Ethiopian leaders from the government, congress or some political party leaders.

Dignity however is not to be confused with pomposity, a puffed-up self-importance. It is not an illusion, delusion or grandeur. It is a quality that shines through at all times, but especially in trying times. EPRP collective leadership has been a shining example in this regard. In order to be qualified as collective leadership, the PAC (Party-Army-Community) must be provided (packed). EPRP has a long history of making this a reality. What and how is the component parts of this organization should be indicated in the following manners?

EPRP's PARTY (Integrity)

In a sense, integrity means that intellectual, spiritual, psychological, ethical and social parts are congruent parts with one another. Despite EPRP's clandestine activities, its integrated operations must let the right hand know what the left is doing. An integrated leadership doesn't speak out of both sides of its mouth. EPRP doesn't espouse always

being honest and aboveboard, and then suggest that in order to do business with others, it has to be dishonest. If being dishonesty is ok by EPRP, then being honest and aboveboard is not. Lying or asking one's members to lie, undermines the belief that others live in integrity.

Beating the other fellow by any means sends the message that EPRP has neither core nor center values. Integrity doesn't mean rigidity, but it does mean holding dear in every way the various parts of its personality and its life must be a reflection of its entire societies. With due respect to other religions, inasmuch as for the Catholics has a center in Vatican city, for the Jews, Jerusalem and for Muslims Mecca, Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox Christians have Axum as their center. How many of us know this? Most of us think that Axum was center for politics or trade. How about the Protestants? Where is their center? Can anyone tell me, please?

EPRP's ARMY (Trust)

When we put trust in an organization, we generally have confidence in that organization's honesty, dependability, and integrity. EPRP has exhibited stellar qualities that help Ethiopians and Eritreans decide to trust it, but so far, the Party did not earn peoples trust. It is not enough to be convinced that one's idea is creative; the message must be heard, too. Trust can only be given as a gift. Once given, trust must be constantly nurtured, for it is a fragile quality and can only be undermined through one misstep. All it takes for trust to be broken is one big lie, one wrong affair. That is why, first, the Haile Sellasie regime, later on, the DERG, last, the EPLF, and now the TPLF has constantly been attempting to sow mistrust among Ethiopians and Eritreans. The army of EPRA had a secondary role to play while in Tigray, Gondar and Godjam. The party of EPRP has been guiding the army unlike all other liberation movements in the country. This is the right and proper way to lead. Many people including EPRA members think that the EPRP army is a fighting army. It is and was a revolutionary army. What this means that unless and otherwise, the Peasants knew their enemy, they are not supposed to bear arms. First and foremost, they have to be liberated themselves before they liberated others. In other words, the recruitment was very crucial. Threats and cheating was not allowed in recruiting peasants. (More on this on later issues.)

EPRP's COMMUNITY (*dignity*)

Dignity is an internal self-respect that members do not allow to be compromised by the disrespectful actions of others. It is the result of commanding and demanding the respect of others. EPRP derives its dignity from taking responsibilities for its *choices* and *actions*. Our task or vocation in life has little to do with dignity. Whether they clean toilets, heal plants or people, manage the mailroom or the ministries, EPRP members have dignity, for dignity is embedded in the personality of EPRP, not in the job or profession. Too many members and associates of EPRP had career professions and government positions, and still thousands are serving national and international organizations. It is also true that some are abandoned the ultimate objective of EPRP programs and policies. Nevertheless, EPRP was and is the single political voluntary

organization that had/is sacrificed its own lives and resources for the simple reason that Ethiopia and its people should deserve social and individual justice, albeit with dignity.

Trust can never be taken for granted. It must be constantly renewed. If trust is broken, it is possible to reconcile and restore, depending, of course, on the severity of the break. There are some elements that perpetually try to destroy or undermine any positive happenings. That is one way of explaining Third world mentality. If one is not a third world mentality, she/he should understand that knowledge and wealth should always be cumulative phenomenon. In our case, the Haile Sellasie government had undermined the struggle of the Ethiopian/Eritrean Patriots' struggle against Fascist Italy. The DERG has destroyed the hardware and software of Haile Sellasie's cumulative of knowledge and wealth. The TPLF is destroying what the entire generation of Ethiopian cultural icons and natural resources. EPRP on the other hand, has preserved all cultural, religious, historical and social values. The main contention for EPRP was the political governance of the country. It demanded that the entire Ethiopian political system should be changed for good. The demand of EPRP was correct then and is correct now. It is positive step. The right to vote is central to DEMOCRACIA. It is a matter of time before everyone is on the same page with EPRP.

CONCLUSION

All we can do is to study closely, EPRP's history in terms of Arts, Education, Revolution and Democracy (READ).

Lessons have to be learned from EPRP's political experience, organizational and voluntary sacrifice. The hallmark of EPRP has been in the areas of principle, trust and dignity and to a lesser extent of respect for others. The class struggle has somewhat definitely blurred its members and associates to disrespect others. EPRP leaders and members will respect their opponents, inasmuch as they expect respect from others, given an atmosphere conducive to debate and discussion.

For comments and questions
woldetewolde@yahoo.com