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Nahida Esmail, *Karafu: A Freed Slave*. Dar es Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota Publishers Ltd.150, 2019. pp. ISBN: 978-9987-08-331-2.

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The subject of slavery is still very relevant today as it was during the past. In its embarrassingly grotesque nature, it is, however, an exposure of individuals who want to be seen as good in the moral sense. Moreover, for some stakeholders, legal abolition of the practice has not provided proper closure for those communities that had been enslaved..

Firstly, slavery raises moral questions that are still relevant today. One question is its definition - what is slavery? And together with this, there are other questions: Do we still have slavery today? In what form and why? Is there a moral basis for slavery? Can it be shown to be morally right? Some individuals have not only argued that slavery is prevalent today but they have also claimed that it is more profitable and subtler than the well-documented classical Transatlantic slavery. It is defined as forced work, trapping and controlling an employee, and by treating a person as property whereby he/she can be sold; in other words, dehumanizing the person through ill-treatment, and via imposing constraints and restriction of the individual's freedom.

This modern form of slavery is expressed in forced labour, debt bondage/bonded labour, human trafficking, descent-based slavery, child slavery, forced and child marriages. From this reviewer's perspective, there is no moral justification for slavery. It is one of the most glaring immoral types of human selfishness, even though it is sometimes expressed as a trade or business. Secondly, slavery violates the fundamental teachings of two major religions of Islam and Christianity as argued below. It is also an embarrassment to the human race, particularly in the modern era when societies, especially in the western world, pretend to be more informed and enlightened about human conditions.

Thirdly, slavery has not been properly redressed with issues of moral responsibility for the Christians, Muslims, and the western world not being taken seriously. Slavery did not only make individuals and companies rich but this institution also built countries' economies and hegemonies that have particularly dominated the continent of Africa. The question of reparations for slavery has not been dealt with since nobody seems to take responsibility and nobody is holding anybody accountable despite the accrued and continued benefit for some of those groups that participate in the perpetuation of this institution as a trade activity. It is, therefore, appropriate that a title on slavery appears in this millennium so that the debate does not die.

The main character in this novel calls himself *Samuel Karafu Wilson* and the title uses the name "Karafu" which is a corruption of "karafuu" (clove). It is not clear whether the author is making use of a literary device or just making the point that Karafu is a slave who is not a slave. Karafu is - a free man, as pointed out in the novel when Samuel argues that he was the son of a freed slave and had the legal right to be free. This is why the authorities finally gave him his freedom towards the end of the novel.

At another level, the use of "Karafu" represents the renaming of this enslaved person who has lost his identity and is in a state of pandemonium. Karafu is the re-Africanization of a

Samuel Wilson, who was not accepted in American white society even if the law said he was an American born of a white free man and a freed slave woman. The corruption of Karafuu represents the state of pandemonium that is his self-perception, for among the negative feelings that he has is listed 'blackness' he feels black, which seems to be a bad thing. The confusion of being the son of a white man and being free whilst being a black man who is descended from a wild, ferocious race similar to their animals (a slave) is a form of enslavement that makes his head pound. As such, he finds himself chained to Wilson and the United States of America, including Christianity, for he is somehow liberated through his education, freed mother, and father but he is still chained to his other past. He is a dreamer but his biggest dream is not being a scientist or teacher. Instead, he hopes:

Mr. Wilson finds the source and becomes rich and famous. I'm sure that will make me rich and famous too and then I can travel the world with him and be the greatest domestic worker of the man that found the source of the River Nile.

So the name Samuel Wilson needs to be Africanized with the inclusion of Karafu even though the latter is a corruption for the former and an obliteration of his identity similar to other slaves whose identities have been obscured by the branding irons that brought forth their owners' identities. In this regard, one may recall a few famous individuals who were descendants of slaves. Among them were

The Karafu story provides serious commentary on morally hefty matters in a very entertaining manner. It starts with the sobering reality of a slave boy who does not know his father and mother. He is on a voyage, an exciting venture in itself, in the company of privileged white men pursuing an ambitious goal of fame upon "discovery" of the Nile source. He is the favourite "domestic worker" of a very nice man. He is nice, handsome, and nominates himself "employee of the year." He is one of the most privileged slaves as he is literate in Maths, Geography, Literature, Science and History. It is unfortunate that his ancestry from his mother's side is from an enslaved race that is as wild as the animals in the African continent. This makes him wonder how his grandmother lived in such an environment. This will be a source of anxiety for him later when he contemplates facing the animals without his beloved Wilson.

He is gravely saddened by the death of his father, Wilson, but he is still a naïve teenager who ponders on noticing that "the sky is bright orange with a tinge of red. It must be the sun bleeding at the news of Mr Wilson's death"! Mr Smith promised to take care of the boy but he wonders "maybe he needs my company or he needs me to face the wild Africans. Or maybe he wants to hide behind me when the wild animals attack." Amid feelings of orphanage and anxiety, he is grateful for Wilson who has taught him a lot of good things. This makes him wonder why his father's body was thrown into the sea "Maybe the sharks felt that he was a nice man and left him. ... Maybe a nice dolphin can help him get back on board. Maybe I should look to see if he will be riding behind the ship on a dolphin." Several weeks after the death of his father, the boy still expects to see him riding a dolphin!

He is not only gutted when he discovers that he has been sold by his father's "best friend" but also thinks the name he is given is a silly one -Jojoba. He seriously contests his enslavement and finally succeeds in showing that he is not a slave. Evil is manifest in the institution of slavery. Karafu wonders how people can allow themselves to be enslaved and discovers from his own experience that they have been double crossed. His reading also allows him to understand how people can be evil enough to enslave others. His dead father's friend might have been responsible for his father's death in addition to the fact that he was actually the one who sold him into slavery.

The doctor on the ship, together with Smith, behaves as if Karafu does not exist. One of his "owners" mistreats him and other slaves. Zawadi, the spoiled rich girl, hates him for no apparent reason. She behaves badly and causes him to be sold, instead of praised for saving her brother who was about to be poisoned. The father fails to recognise his contribution and goes along with the spoiled daughter who was intent on selling Karafu. The young man feels betrayed by his father, who failed to tell him that he was the father.

Of course, the problem of evil does come with goodness that cannot be ignored. Wilson was a good man, as was Barwani, who was very kind to his slaves. Kadijah is not only a good teacher but a good writer as well. Related to these statements, here are a few interesting questions that pertain to the notion of metaphysics that one should think about since they are tied to this context: Why do people die rather than live forever? Did death just come like that? Nobody called it to take life? So why did it come to do so? And how does death come and get someone?; these are questions that have been asked for millennia. And the nature of existence and human mortality is such that these questions still need to be adequately answered.

The food and jovial mood in the ship on Christmas day were meant to mark the day as special for everybody, including the slaves. In the case of Islam, Fridays were work-free since they were set aside for congregational prayers. Both Christianity and Islam forbade cruelty to slaves. "In Islam a child born from a free man and a freed slave mother is considered free. ... I know that in the Quran, it is encouraged to free slaves as part of a devotion of faith." This is what Karafu used in the story to get his freedom. Barwani treated his slaves well and they probably felt happy to work for him.

The ethical question, however, is whether this provides a moral justification for slavery. In his case, one can ask whether there is moral justification for his daughter's cat to have a slave who ministers to it. The short answer is that slavery is a moral evil. The gravity of evil may differ depending on whether the slavery is intense (cruel treatment) or mild (enslaved but not treated cruelly). The author ably brings these questions to the forefront of the novel. There are not many. The technique of having a diary alongside a narrative was not very effective in the case of repetition. Whilst it gives the appearance of corroboration of sources it also disturbs the flow of the story.

At the end of the book, Karafu promises to work for the emancipation of slaves. Mr Smith promises to work for the same back in the USA. A chapter to suggest concrete actions in this direction for both characters would have been edifying. As it stands, the story ends abruptly with a lot of questions hanging. I had expected the spoiled daughter of the rich slave owner to do something more than have Karafu return as a slave in their house and a mere smile upon his emancipation.

Overall, the book is very entertaining and raises very important questions that need to be addressed. I would definitely recommend it for university level courses in among others, Literature, Liberation Theology, Education, Development Studies, Ethics and History.

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