

Julius Kambarage Nyerere's Philosophical thoughts on the Aspect of Master –Servant Relationship: A Case For The Contradictory Attitudes of Today's Contemporary Political Leadership

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ABSTRACT: This Paper discusses Julius Kambarage Nyerere's philosophy of leadership which is against master slave relation as a solution to the problem of master-slave relation between leaders and the citizens they lead. Leadership is essential in the process of building a peaceful society. Based on this fact, this Paper scrutinizes the concept of leadership. The Paper highlights the kind of relationship most global leaders develop between themselves and their subordinates, the citizens they lead. From a small sample of a few leaders out of the many, it is shown that, most leaders relate with their subordinates in a master-slave relationship. This kind of relationship has its roots from the historical fact of slavery in which people were bought like ships to work for the masters. Masters considered slaves as their properties and they did whatever they wanted with them. Slaves had no rights nor human dignity in the eyes of the master. It is argued that, although slavery in contemporary society is practiced, still, this kind of relation is manifested in leadership. According to Julius Kambarage Nyerere, whenever society is divided into classes, then automatically some members of the society become masters while others, slaves. Normally, leaders have assumed the position of a master as they belong to the upper class. It can be seen that, this kind of leadership disposition does not work when it comes to people's development. In this regard, deriving from Julius Kambarage Nyerere's philosophy of leadership, it is recommended that global leaders should change their mindset by considering their position as not masters, but servants. This can be attained through respect of human dignity, as well as global citizens being treated basing on equality, in the sense that no one should be above the others. It is through equality and respect of human dignity, that leaders can lead their citizens in a proper way and bring about real development to all global citizens. This Paper comprises of four main parts: Part One of the Paper provides historical undertones of the aspect of slavery in general terms; bringing out the foundational aspect to the concept of master-slave relationship. Part two of the Paper evolves around the operational dynamics of the master-slave relationship. Part three highlights Julius Kambarage Nyerere's views on the aspect of Master-servant leadership and lessons drawn from his views. Lastly, Part four of this Paper showcases examples of some of today's contemporary leadership whose leadership style is in total contradiction of Julius Kambarage Nyerere's views on leadership. The Paper recommends that global leaders should treat their citizens as individuals with rights as equals and that there's no need for these leaders to oppress and dominate their subordinates.

KEYWORDS: *Leader/Follower, Philosophy of Leadership, Human Nature, Power and Authority.*

I. INTRODUCTION

HISTORICAL UNDERTONES OF THE ASPECT OF SLAVERY:

The Concept of master-slave relations has its roots from the problem of slavery, thus, this part of the Paper's Introductory theme provides an overview of slavery in human history, as a way to the exposition of the essential background of the topic at hand.

1.1. Slavery in Ancient Greek and Rome

In ancient Greece, slavery was common whereby some people were considered to be naturally slaves. Slavery was understood to mean as the status in which a man is, in the eyes of the law and of public opinion and with

respect to all parties, a possession or a chattel of another man. This understanding implied that, slavery is primarily a relationship of property. *Aristotle* an ancient Greek philosopher who defended slavery openly in his work "Politics" said that a slave is a living piece of property. As a property he/she belongs to another naturally [Vlassopoulos, 2011].

".....the nature of slave and his essential quality; one who is a human being[*Anthropos*] belonging by nature not to himself but to another is by nature a slave and a human being belongs to another, even though is a human being, he is a piece of property" [Mathie, Aristotle, 1254.14-18, 1979].

The above passage shows the connection between slaves as property[ies] and as natural in Greek. That being said, in ancient Greece, slaves had no legal rights. They were separated from other free members of the community. Although slaves were human beings and thus had certain moral rights, legally they were property in the absolute control of an owner even to the extent that the owner could transfer his rights to someone else by gift or sale. Both Greek and Roman slaves occupied the lowest class and were denied any moral worth of their own. They were seen as things, the possessions of which conferred status upon their owners, like other objects of material value. Ownership of slaves was primarily seen as a means of showing off ones wealth as well as a means of controlling labour. In both Greece and Rome, anyone who did not belong to Greek/Roman citizenry naturally, was regarded to be a slave [Wiedemann, 2003].

1.2. Slavery in Antiquity Biblical Jewish Societies

Like in Greece and Rome slaves in ancient Jewish societies were considered socially dead, that is, they were seen as complete outsiders of society, alienated from all rights and the legitimate social order. All slaves experienced a total rejection in Jewish society. The basic distinction between slaves and free persons governed all areas of society. Slaves were denationalized, meaning that removed from their families, culture and country of origin, introduced and reproduced as aliens [Hezser, 2006]. Slavery laws are also included even in the Bible, for example, in the Bible, there is a distinction between Hebrew and Canaanite slaves with regard to how Israelite owners treated them and the envisioned duration of their enslavement. The biblical regulations regarding a Hebrew slave were that he was to be set free in the seventh year of his service; if he had a wife when he became enslaved, his wife would leave with him [Deut.15; 12]. This transmits a similar regulation after discussing the sabbatical year rules for fields [Deut.15; 1]. However, upon the release of Hebrew slaves, slave holders were reminded of their own liberation from slavery in Egypt as a guideline for their own behavior to their fellow Israelites.

The Exodus experience is also recalled in the Levitical slave law [Lev.25:42]. The authors of the Book of Leviticus envisioned a slave as someone who had sold himself into slavery because of extreme poverty, thus, slave owners were directed to treat them as if he were hired labor [Lev.25:40]. Although the Book of Leviticus acknowledges the sabbatical year for the fields, it does not suggest the release of Hebrew slaves in that year but in the jubilee year, together with their children [Lev.25:40b-41]. This sort of affairs clearly shows two kind of enslavement; Hebrew slaves and outsiders slave. Somehow, their treatment was different; however, they were all slaves who had to obey their masters [Hezser, 2006].

1.3. Slavery on the African Continent

On the continent of Africa, slavery was one of the businesses between Africans, Arabs, Indians and Europeans. Between the 7th and 17th centuries, there was slave trade whereby, some Africans were captured through different means and sold as slaves in Asia, Europe as well as America. This was slave trade in its raw form. However, even before slave trade, slavery existed in traditional African societies [feudal societies]. For example slavery in the form of exploiting those captured during the war between one State and another. In powerful States like ancient Kemet, enslaved or unfree citizens were found, although their status was not the same as that of poor members of society. Such kind/form of slavery could be compared to that of the serfs of medieval Europe who used to produce agricultural surplus or perform other duties for a particular ruler [Shalamal, 2019]. But when there was an external demand for slaves, which was when some African societies supplied slaves, the result was the flourishing slave trade [Shalamal, 2019]

1.4. The Analogy of Slavery Defined:

According to Thomas Wiedemann [2003] slavery as understood in human history raised a number of problems analogical to the categorization of human being as slaves or freemen. For example, there is an analogy between the ruler and ruled. The Ruler is like a master and ruled like a slave. The same analogy is extended into a family circle in a situation where there is a division between parent and children. In the family, parents

exercise their authority over children like masters while children are like slaves. In the same approach, the analogy is extended to every angle of relationship where there is a superior and the inferior either in power or in moral virtue.

- **Consequences of Master-Servant Relationship Gone Sour:**

Analogically, when one reviews revolutions that took place in history of political thoughts, especially in modern times, it is very clear that, citizens had always revolted against their rulers. In most revolutions, citizens removed traditional regimes or bad leadership from power in the name of freedom or liberty. For example, the American Revolution [1776-1783], French revolution [1788-1799], Russian revolution [1917] to mention but a few. In all these mentioned revolutions, the idea behind was the need to be free, to improve citizens' lives and the concept of human dignity, thus, analogically, political revolution is similar to some extent to the revolts of slaves against their masters. This implies that, whenever leaders treated their subordinates like slaves, the aftermath are revolts and revolutions, like what happened in the history of revolutions. It is against this background of the master-slave relation in leadership that my concern is raised. This is due to the fact that I can see a similarity between master-slave relation in comparison to some leadership practices especially on the African continent.

As noted above, it has been something normal in human history where relations between individuals are analogical to master-slave relation. Such relationship is manifested between the haves and have-nots [wealthy/poor classes], the powerful and the weak, ruler and ruled. Such relations have made a lot of people to be victims and consequently suffer while others enjoy life. When it comes to leadership aspect, leaders seem to take control of the subordinates as masters. The result is a gap between leaders and people, Government and citizens, thus, enmity become a result of master-slave relation between leaders and people. This state of affairs constitutes a real challenge in the leadership realm. This challenges finds solace in Julius Kambarage Nyerere's philosophy of leadership as not a master but a servant. Therefore, this Paper seeks to philosophically analyze the challenge of master-slave relationship in the light of *Julius Kambarage Nyerere's* philosophy of leadership.

In this study, analytical method is employed in order to critically analyze the concept of master-slave in leadership as a way to expose the relation that exist between the two as well as showing Nyerere's thoughts as a solution to the problem.

II. OPERATIONAL DYNAMICS OF THE MASTER-SERVANT RELATIONSHIP

- **Views From Different Philosophers on the Aspect of Master-Servant Relationship:**

The relationship between slaves and their masters is characterized by exploitation and affiliation, submission under the master's authority and intimacy. Furthermore, there is mutual dependency where the master depends on slave's loyalty and the slave depends on the master's maintenance and human treatment. Slaves normally bow to their masters wishes under the constant threats of punishment. Slavery was real, it was something normal in ancient and medieval times [Hezser, 2006, 149]. However, such concept was extended to all affairs of human being where relationship and interaction existed. In politics, economy, religion etc. this kind of relation was used by different philosophers to portray specific behavior and relations as follows;

2.1. Hegel's Views on Dialectic of Self-Consciousness in the Master-Slave Conflict

In his Text, '*Phenomenology of Spirit*', Hegel presents his understanding of human relation where some are subordinate and some are superior. This is a kind of natural relation in which the person who belongs to the superior quality is the one to determine how things should be done and what should not be done. They are like the measure of all things. In such a scenario, the superior are the ones who get recognition as real humans/people while the underclass in other words slaves as understood in the traditional sense means that group of people who exist for the superior; they don't have their own independent existence. In other words, they are there to satisfy the needs of their superiors. According to Robert Solomon, he described Hegel's understanding of master slave dialectic as 'human existence as primordially a matter of mutual recognition and it is only through mutual recognition that we are self-aware and strive for the social change and meaning in our lives.. [Solomon, 1988, 68].

In Hegel's understanding, the subordinate and superior relationship, results from two independent self-consciousnesses who encounter one another and engage in a life and death struggle. The reason for the struggle of conflict is because of each self-consciousness consider itself as the objective standard of measuring all things. Due to this self-exaltation, each self-consciousness sees the other as a threat. In such struggle, one self-

consciousness becomes like the winner and subjects the other under his/her rule, thus, recognition arises from the winner as the master and the loser as a slave. Through defeat, the loser has become aware that he is not the objective standard of truth in the world; that is to say, he has achieved self-consciousness. The master has also discovered that, he/she is an objective standard to measure all things. From this, we can now understand *Hegel's* philosophy of human relations as to have started in a state of nature where each individual already possesses a sense of its own status as the measure of all things. In dialectics, this is understood as the thesis. Now, an encounter with another person, leads to a threat, as a result the other becomes the ant-thesis, a struggle begins and leads to the synthesis arrived through having the winner and the loser mutual recognition. *Hegel* argues that, in our current world, each of us has already recognized his/her position in relation to others. We are no longer in the state of nature, we are already at a synthesis of master-slave dialectic [*Feilmeier, 2019*].

2.2. *Karl Marx's Views on Master-Slave Relationship*

The master slave dialectic presented by *Hegel*, influenced the writings of *Karl Marx* who builds his ideas from Hegelian dialectic of master slave relationship. *Marx* sees capitalism as evil, entertaining master slave relationship whereby workers or proletariats are slaves of *bourgeoisies* and unfortunately, modern workers are not aware that, they have all been servants or slaves of capitalism simply because they were blinded by the idea of freedom and rule of law. According to *Karl Marx*, *Hegel's* praise of capitalism as a rise of equality under the law is misleading, because the workers are exploited and they always work to satisfy the capitalist. In *Marx's* understanding, equality cannot be found in the capitalist system. Dialectic process is essential towards equality, thus, the workers in capitalism as slaves must stop recognizing themselves as workers [slaves] and begin to eliminate capitalists so as to build communism where each and every one is equal. Once this is worked upon, it is set to lead to mutual relationship amongst human beings.

2.3. *Nietzsche's Views on Master-Slave Morality*

A German philosopher in contemporary period *Fredrick Nietzsche* contextualized master-slave relation in morality. *Nietzsche* argues that, morality is not universal, that is to say, there is no universal standard of values that human beings must obey equally. According to him, people are different, and therefore it is unrealistic to conceive morality in universal terms. However, there is only one thing that characterized human beings, that is the drive to dominate the environment. This drive central to human nature is "will to power" essential to human nature. Whenever someone proposes a universal moral rule, he or she invariably seeks to deny the fullest expression of peoples elemental vital energies. In this respect, Christianity, along with Judaism is the worst offender. This is due to their ethics which is contrary to people's basic nature. That is natural morality debilitates humanity and produces only 'botched and bungled' lives.

How did human beings ever produce such unnatural systems of morality? There is, says *Nietzsche* a 'twofold early history of good and evil' which shows the development of two primary types of morality, that is the master morality and the slave morality. In the master morality, good has always meant 'noble' in the sense of 'with a soul of high calibre' and evil meant 'vulgar' or 'plebeian'. Noble people never look outside of themselves for any approval of their acts. Because they see themselves as creators of values [like *Hegel's* words "measure of all things"]. Their morality is that of self-glorification, these kind of people act out of a feeling of power which seeks to overflow. They honor power in all its forms and take pleasure in subjecting themselves to rigor and toughness, have reverence for all that is severe and hard [*Stumpf, 1999, 395*].

In contrast, slave morality originates with the lowest elements of society, the abused, the oppressed and those who are uncertain of themselves. According to them, "good" is the symbol for all those qualities that serve to alleviate the existence of sufferers such as "sympathy", the kind helping hand, the warm heart, patience, diligence, humility and friendliness. According to *Nietzsche*, this slave morality is beneficial to those who are weak and powerless. They use their morality as a tool to turn against the master morality. The challenge to the master morality resulted from a deep-seated resentment on the part of the 'slaves.' This resentment says *Nietzsche* is experienced by creatures deprived of proper outlet of action, thus, are forced by their internal conflict to find the compensation in an imaginary revenge. This revenge takes the form of translating the virtues of the noble aristocrat into evils.

From such analysis, *Nietzsche* protests against the dominant western morality as the one exalting the mediocre values of the "herd" which knows nothing of the fine impulses of great accumulations of strength as something high or possibly as the standard of all things. Incredibly, the 'herd morality'[slave morality] in time overcame the master morality by succeeding in making all the noble qualities appear to be vices and all the weak qualities appear to be virtues [*Stumpf, 1999*].

III. JULIUS KAMBARAGE NYERERE'S ARGUMENTS AGAINST MASTER-SLAVE LEADERSHIP: LESSONS DRAWN:

- ***Leaders Must not be Masters But Servants of the People***

In his speech to the citizens of Mafia Island in the late 1960's *Julius Kambarage Nyerere* delivered his famous leadership philosophical speech. He argued that, leaders must not be masters. First of all, *Julius Nyerere* grounded leadership in African traditional value of human dignity. According to him, in African traditional family, every member has equal rights as a human being. No one is above others in terms of rights belonging to a human being. It is for this reason that land and other properties have to be shared by all. No one has exclusive rights. As a result of this state of affairs, there is no room for anyone to use wealth for the purpose of dominating others [*Nyerere, 1969*]. *Julius Nyerere* wanted the whole nation to live like one family.

Julius Nyerere argued that, when a society is divided into classes, some members become masters and others become servants. Even though in a particular society there is no direct slave who is bought like a sheep, still, as long as citizens have the habit of being served by other people then, they become masters and those who serve them become servants. In a society where some members only give instructions to others while themselves do not work, they are already masters. *Julius Nyerere* was against this, because he saw a human being as a being who must work to earn his/her living. As long as a person is not sick or mentally ill, he/she must work. Through work, man becomes a master, not a master who exploits and oppresses others but a master who serves him or herself [*Nyerere, 1969*]. That is to say, the master of his life, not life of other people.

Having said that, *Julius Nyerere* argued that, leaders should have the mentality of not becoming masters of others. They should first become masters of their lives and this could be done through working hard just like other members of the society to earn their living. Furthermore, leaders should not inflict fear to the citizens they lead. They should let the citizens express their ideas freely, challenge them when they want. Inflicting fear to the citizens is the same as instructing them to be servants but when they are free to speak their mind, then, they can participate fully in building the nation [*Nyerere, 1969*].

In addition to that, when leaders own more properties than others, it means they aspire to be masters. For example, if a leader own 3,000 acres of land then he/she is prepared to employ workers. This is due to the fact that, he alone cannot cultivate such a big farm that is why he must employ others, as a result, he/she becomes a master. Desire for more property ownership is a desire to become a master something to be avoided by leaders. In a desire to own more than the others, this brings about inequality. Because if someone owns 3,000 acres of land, yet it is impossible for each member to own the same, then that means one counts himself or herself to have more rights than others. From this, *Julius Nyerere*'s conclusion was that, there must be equality amongst all human beings, with equality, no one should become the master of another.

- **Lessons From Julius Kambarage Nyerere's Philosophy of Master-Servant Leadership:**

From the Philosophy of leadership, we see that, contemporary leaders have something to learn in improving their leadership roles. That is, they should struggle to respect human dignity and bring equality amongst citizens they lead. By doing that, they are no longer masters of others, instead, leaders will become their own masters. Their leadership will be that of helping others become masters of their own lives like what they are.

It might sound like Utopia, but this is possible. Beside, some leaders in the world have tried to live in accordance to *Julius Nyerere*'s philosophy of Master-servant leadership. Such shining examples with everlasting legacies in this respect include for example, *Nelson Mandela* former post apartheid President of South Africa, *Kenneth Kaunda* from Zambia, *Mahatma Gandhi* from India, *Desmund Tutu* from South Africa, *Mother Theresa* from India and *Kwame Nkrumah* of Ghana to mention but a few. These listed global icons will always be remembered for their exemplary contribution in the line of *Julius Nyerere*'s Philosophy of Master-Servant relationship.

IV. SOME PROMINENT LEADERS WHOSE LEADERSHIP STYLE IS IN CONTRADICTION TO JULIUS NYERERE'S PHILOSOPHY OF LEADERSHIP

Different authors provide their understanding of leadership, Most of them relate leadership to the personality in the sense of good character. Others claim leadership to be a process, that is to say, the style a leader adopts to make sense of his or her leadership. Drawing from *Weber*'s and *Dahl*'s concept of power, some authors explain

leadership as a concept closer to that of power, thus, power [leadership] is the ability to get someone to do something they wouldn't otherwise do. This approach seems to lock leadership into mobilizing a group or community to achieve a purpose; it can be understood as a result approach [Grint, 2010]. In the context of this Paper, leadership is analyzed based on the trait of how a leader relate with people. Is he or she relating in master-slave mode of relation? Or is he/she consider leadership as servant hood grounded on equality and equity? From this, let us expose some leaders whose leadership style demonstrate master-slave relationship.

- **Vivid Examples of Master-Slave Mode of Leadership:**

4.1. Russia's Vladimir Putin's Master Slave Leadership Approach

When I analyze *Putin's* leadership style, I see a current example of a leader whose perception of leadership is understood to be grounded on master-slave relation. Let me articulate what some analysts say about *Putin's* leadership. According to *Holly Ellyatt* [2022] in her article titled '*Putin's Strength Now Looks Like His Main Weakness With People Too Loyal –Or-Scared-To Challenge Him*'. She said that '*Putin systematically got rid of people who could have challenged him, leaving only the most loyal and fearful ones, no one wants to deliver bad news and every agency that works for him wants to be the one that proves its value before him*' [Holly Ellyatt, 2022]. This statement shows how President *Putin* treats his people. This statement came out due to his decision to invade Ukraine after Ukraine wanted to join European Union [EU] and North Atlantic Treaty Organization [NATO]. That is to say, he wants to make decisions for Ukraine even though Ukraine is an independent country. In fact, this is what we call master-slave relationship, this character is that of a master who wants or likes to dominate others as his slaves.

4.2. North Korea's Kim Jong- Master-Slave Style of Rule

The Leadership in North Korea is typical master-slave relation. For a long time, leaders have been coming from one family 'The Kim family' is very brutal and severe to people. People have no right to say anything or to oppose the command of their leader. Currently, *Kim Jong-Un* is the President of North Korea and according to analyst in North Korea, all authority flows from *Kim Jong-Un*. He has restricted the party as the central hub to consolidate his power and bring elites to heel [Albert, 2020]. This kind of leadership has made North Korea to be amongst the world's poorest nations while *Kim Jong-Un* consolidates his power and continues to invest in nuclear weapons [Albert, 2020]. In a master-slave relationship, slaves are always poor and undermined, while the masters are always rich. This is the same scenario in North Korea whereby *Kim's* family is very rich while most of the citizens are very poor. Therefore, his leadership is seen to be based on master-slave relationship

4.3. Syria's Bashar Al Assad and His Master-Slave Attitude

Under President *Bashar Al Assad*, a civil war in Syria raised between his regime and people who are against *Bashar* and his Government. The citizens were complaining about high unemployment, corruption and lack of political freedom. In response, the Syrian Government under *Bashar* used deadly force to crush the protest. Many citizens lost their lives in the fight and this war still continues. This kind of leadership is also a sign that, *Bashar's* mentality is that of a master whose say must be listened to, which is why he does not bother to find ways of ending the war. What he wants is the citizens to do what he tells them to do. The outcome of this style of leadership is that of master-slave relationship [BBC, 2022].

4.4. Uganda's Yoweri Museveni and His Master/slave Mode of Rule

In Uganda, the incumbent President, *Yoweri Kaguta Museveni* the leader of the National Resistance Movement [NRM] in power since 1986 to date for several years banned political parties in the country. Under the leadership of *Yoweri Museveni*, corruption and mistreatment of members of the opposition political in Uganda is widespread and seen as one of the greatest obstacles to the country's democracy, economic development as well as to the provision of quality public services. Corruption accelerates in Uganda due to the weak law enforcement mechanisms which fuels a culture of impunity, particularly by high-ranking officials involved in corruption schemes [Martin, 2013].

President *Yoweri Museveni's* style of leadership can be seen to be based on master-slave relationship because of the way he treats those opposed to his Government, runaway corruption and poverty amongst his citizens, while he and his family continuously live a lavish life. In this way, he is the master while the citizens are his slaves. At his swearing in ceremony for the sixth term of office at Kololo Independence grounds in Kampala, President *Yoweri Museveni* boldly told all the Guests that:

'He's not anybody's servant, he is just a freedom fighter who is working for himself and family.

This Statement infuriated the general public. The public really wondered whether the President really has Ugandans at heart.

When it comes to African countries, It is not only *Yoweri Museveni* style of leadership that is of master-slave mode towards the citizenry. Almost all other countries on the African continent have leaders that behave in a similar same manner. Very few leaders on the continent behave exceptionally in this regard. The list of leaders whose leadership is inclined towards the master-slave relations towards the citizenry is long enough to write volumes of books.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This Paper focused on the concept of leadership as not a tool to dominate and oppress subordinates. Because domination and oppression is a kind of leadership based on master-slave relationship thus, the author made a trace of how slaves were treated in human history to contextualize what it meant for someone to be a slave. Furthermore, there is a discussion on how different philosophers used the concept of mater-slave relationship to illustrate some treatment of human beings in society. Then, some few leaders from different parts of the globe were exposed, their leadership is based on master-slave relation. From this, Julius Nyerere's philosophy of leadership as not master but a servant to the citizens is fronted in this regard as a solution towards those specific global leaders who seek to govern their citizens in the master-slave mode.

It is therefore high time that global leaders treated their citizens as individuals who possess human rights and treat them as equals. There's no need for leaders to oppress and practice domination over their citizens especially in the 21st century. Further studies can be conducted on the influence of human nature to the master – slave relation in leadership.

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