

The Limits of Utilitarianism in Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Lathe of Heaven*

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ABSTRACT

An evolving government that was meant to benefit society ends up serving as a means for the ascent of a small group of strong individuals. Although it claims to be serving the public interest, the capitalist government actually works to limit individual liberty and collective agency by enacting onerous regulations that enrich the wealthy and powerful at the expense of the general populace. As a result, the gap between the rich and the poor widens, and the government, which is supposed to be working for the people, is instead working against them. When faced with a life-or-death situation, people often remain silent out of fear of powerful leaders. Famous American science fiction and fantasy author Ursula K. Le Guin has explored anarchist ideas in her works. Her writings lay out the principles of anarchism that free the spirit and the body from shackles of oppression. *The Lathe of Heaven*, written by Ursula K. Le Guin, depicts a dystopian future in which global warming, overpopulation, racism, poverty, and war are all major problems. Le Guin contrasts the inherent contradictions between human nature and the desire to satisfy all needs through the character of Haber, a positivist doctor. By giving Orr, the draftsman, a powerful dream that can alter reality in hindsight, he hopes to transform everything into an idealistic manner. Haber challenges Orr to envision a society free of racism, where the populace is reined in and peace prevails. Orr recognizes Haber's egotism despite Haber's utopian ideals. He hates how Haber turned the world upside down compared to nature. Dissatisfied with Orr's reluctance, Haber prepares to take a successful dream himself after recording George's brain activity during hypnosis and controlled dreaming. Orr saves the world by turning off the Augmentor when his dream starts to interfere with reality, but in doing so, he mixes together fragments of other recent realities. The anarchy has driven Haber insane. Through the lens of Dr. Haber's perspective, this paper examined the dangers and constraints of utilitarianism and presented Orr as an anarchist and embodiment of nature. Haber rejects this worldview and refuses to tamper with nature since it goes against his utilitarian ambitions, which lead him to believe that the mass of people can be defined by a quantitative measure of happiness. In this paper, we will look at how the irreconcilable mismatch between Haber's goals and the results of his acts leads to the near-annihilation of humanity.

Keywords: Utilitarianism – positivism- threats and limits – nature- global harm

INTRODUCTION

A government designed for societal welfare functions as a potent instrument to oppress marginalized individuals. The utilitarian perspective aims to enhance the living standards of the impoverished and to sustain global harmony and peace among individuals. They endeavor to mitigate the adverse elements in the world and seek to enhance the prevailing social conditions, opposing racism, classism, and social discrimination. Nevertheless, the zeal for the utopian ideal compels individuals to defy nature, and the extremity of this worldview engenders societal disarray.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Ursula K. Le Guin has written novels, poetry, children's books, essays, short-stories notable in fantasy and science fiction. Her works have evinced a lot of interest among the readers, critics and researchers. The rich

source abundant in her works resulted in extensive research in various areas such as Feminism, Utopia and Language studies yet many remarkable innovative research can be done in marxistic ideology and Taoism.

METHODOLOGY

In this paper, Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Lathe of Heaven* has been taken up for study and it analyses this miniscule source and draws attention to utilitarianism's detrimental effects when it transcends nature. In this paper, power, race, identity and ecological ethics have been used as a tool to analyze the disruption of harmony between humans and nature, addressing passive opposition to the exploitation of both and advocating for the acceptance of nature as it exists.

Haber, the doctor in this novel represents utilitarianism and rebelled against nature because he wanted to alter terrible facts. Despite his idealistic beliefs, Haber used violence as a means of controlling Orr. Haber used Orr as a catalyst to further his goals, stifles his freedom, and represents the government's autonomy. Orr came to Haber to cure his effective dream that comes to reality but his dream has become an asset of Haber later. But it is ludicrous to achieve the ends since he has used his power or mighty force on Orr to achieve the desired result. He has made Orr to undergo a forced dream at the unconscious level and thus quenches his utopic dream through Orr's dream. He threatens Orr to dream his vision and used him as his weapon to meet his ends.

Haber uses Orr's brain pattern in a feedback-elimination-replication-augmentation routine. He has programmed the Augmenter to reproduce the EEG rhythms that is obtained during effective dreaming and has named it as 'e-state rhythms. When he superimposes them on the d-state rhythms of another brain, he can induce effective dreaming in that brain after a period of synchronization. He planned to induce the e-state in a trained and voluntary brain so that he can achieve his desired result. He condemns Orr by saying that he hates to work with an 'unwilling subject' and threatens Orr to co-operate with his work until he gets a properly trained brain.

His authoritative and aggressive attitude resembles the function of state. He hails his achievement and his desire for power raises him to be a demi-god in the earth. He thought that when Augmenter synchronizes the e-state patterns and when he had an effective dream, 'then this world will be like heaven, and men will be like gods!' (*Lathe of Heaven*, 149). His notion towards society is appreciable but the tool that he has used is highly regretful. He uses Orr's dream to achieve his ends out of force. He thought that he is creating a new world like God but he crucifies everyone's lives for his own sake.

Although his vision is an "ever longing utopia", he failed in his mission by taking violence as a tool. His aggressive and avaricious nature tends him not to hear others' words and he does not want anyone to act as an obstacle to his vision. But when he started to have an effective dream, the dream resulted in utmost failure due to chaos in the Augmenter.

RESULTS

Racism has emerged as a distinct category in the 15th century with colonialism. In this novel, Le Guin has portrayed the racial discrimination faced by a black woman *Lelache*, the beloved of Orr. She is a blend of white and black since she was born to a black man and a white lady. Love and compassion towards each other vanish the racial clash among fellow beings. *Lelache*, a breed of mixture tries to see herself as a human being than a black or a white. Despite sufferings of blacks, Orr wishes to abolish racism from society but not out of forcing or act against nature, but Haber tries to eradicate racism from the world by changing everyone into neutral color – 'gray' and he forces Orr to have a dream in which everyone is colorless including his beloved *Lelache*. His effective dream has the power to change the colour of a human being into neutral. Haber proposes an unattainable and implausible resolution to racism. His idealistic vision compels him to eradicate racial discrimination by rendering everyone uniform in appearance. He perceives himself as a demi-god and is exhilarated by his accomplishment, celebrating his triumph to Orr.

Haber tries to justify his act by saying that his solution will put an end to war and communal clash among human beings. He made an attempt to find an eternal solution to the problem by abusing his power. Instead of

curing Orr, Haber uses him as a puppet to achieve his ends and tries to induce him to support his mission. But Orr repudiates this utter change and eulogizes beauty of his beloved 'with brown skin, and wiry black hair' and cries for her natural colour that makes her unique among others.

Orr thus becomes a victim to Haber and feels guilty to act against nature. Though he hates Haber's mighty hands on him, he is unable to get out of it at the initial stage. His conscientiousness pricks him not to act against nature.

In this novel, Orr genuinely loves Heather Lelache, accepting her as she is. He adores her dark hue - the hue of the Earth. When Orr transforms individuals into grey with his potent dream, he loses his wife. Despite the brevity of their romance, it is genuine and heartfelt. He had joy while in her embrace. As life partners, they collaborate on all tasks, engage in intimacy, and relish a tranquil existence.

Orr emphasizes the equilibrium between the human realm and the non-human realm. He coexists with nature and is resolute in maintaining the status quo. His predicament and exasperation compel him to contemplate insanity. Upon conversing with the aliens he had produced, he recognizes a profound unity with nature and anticipates with enthusiasm the day he can transcend his frustrations and integrate into the natural world for the entirety of his existence.

The progression of science and technology, in conjunction with civilization, has led mankind to alienate themselves from nature. Individuals neglect their interconnectedness with environment, other creatures, and their fellow humans. They murder and exploit others for their selfish satisfaction. Orr is unwilling to alter the inherent elements that exist within society yet Haber, seeks to leverage Orr's unique characteristic to fulfill his objectives. He aspires to actualize a utopian society by employing Orr's vision; nevertheless, Orr declines to alter the inherent paradigm. He contends that the alteration they seek constitutes an injustice to nature and asserts that their proposed adjustment is not a sustainable solution to the issue.

Haber wants to control nature and tries to be a demi-God in real world. He wants to cure diseases and like to wipe away the sufferings of people but the tool that serves the cause is against the eternal pattern. When people face sufferings in their life, they should not lose their hope and they should try to overcome the problems and have to find a way to solve it. When Haber wants to violate nature, Orr insists him that he should not go on 'changing things, trying to run things' (The Lathe of Heaven, 81). He advised Haber to work towards nature yet he fails in his attempt.

In the event of ending war among human beings, Haber allows Orr to dream of the battle between humans and aliens. He has propelled Orr by saying that man was born on earth 'to do things, change things, run things, make a better world' (The Lathe of Heaven, 81). They become masters of the planet and start to live like a normal human being but in a global harmony without provoking war. 'Hate eats the hater' (The Telling, 205). Man's avarice to rule the world and people is the root cause of all evils and destruction. Peace cannot be maintained in greediness. It will survive only when love and compassion breeds in the heart of every being towards each other.

DISCUSSION

The protagonist Orr stands for nature and anarchistic ideals. Global harmony is the core principle of his life. He fights against domination and tries to live for society. He strives to live for society and opposes dominance and his life's central tenet is world harmony. His only goal as a public servant is to bring people's divided hearts together. The ultimate goal of his sermon is compassion. He advocates nonviolent resistance to violent hierarchical structures through his life and actions.

Survival of the fittest has become an essential trait for the human beings. Everyone is struggling hard to have their own identity in this chaotic world and they will attain fulfillment only when they realize their interdependence with nature and lives a harmonious life with it.

In spite of varied culture, race, color, language and religion, people are same by their universal idea and feelings. They are virtuous if their acts and deeds are towards the progress of mankind. But if their mind is colonized by Power and Superiority, they cannot succeed in their attempt to free themselves from this bondage easily. They try to search for a prey and victimize them for their own sake which leads to their ultimate destruction.

Only when one is able to defeat one's own inner temptation, hunger for power, one is able to serve the humanity. Throughout their life, people give importance to other's commentaries and remarks devoid of their own. They never mind their own inner self and go behind the temporal external force. Their brutal mind captivates them and makes them to whirl around their selfish deeds. Self-realization is barred in the gateway of their mind. If they give priority to Self, definitely they will hear the voice of the inner being and cultivates their mind on the progressive side.

The people's selfishness narrows down their mind to locate themselves to a particular boundary. Since they are afraid of fellow human beings, they need an external and emotional security. Their fear makes them timid and attempts to label them with identity. Their search for identity and crave for identity lays the foundation for their suffering and supremacy over one another. It plays an inevitable role in philosophical, political and sociological perspective. While the weaker one strives hard to search one's own identity, the mighty ones try to sustain their identity by ruling over the weaker ones.

Everyone is virtuous when they are born in this world, but when the mind undergoes temptation, lust for power, crave for identity, they try to dominate one over the other. The brutality in human mind is the most dangerous enemy in this world rather than the other fellow being. The mind has to be channelized towards right path. If it is not towards the right destination, poverty, discrimination and destruction will prevail among people forever. Only state that rules people in a just way are able to endure forever.

CONCLUSION

If people love and respect fellow human beings equally, they won't have any physical borders. Even if they supposed to have certain borders, they won't have emotional borders. Once they crave for identity among each other for security but now they close their mind and crave for identity to show their mighty power by colonization. Harassing fellow human beings under any discrimination does not seem to these so-called powerful people as a shameful act. They thought that they are equal to God and become the Almighty in this temporal world. But they cannot survive for a long time as a powerful enigma as their means are cruel and cheap.

Haber speaks against sufferings faced by people. Although, he struggles hard to achieve his utopic vision, the path he takes to achieve his end is not good. He compels Orr to obey his orders and influences him to dream of a utopic place. He kills thousands and thousands of people through Orr's dreams in the name of reducing over-population and turns the natural complexion of people into a neutral colour- grey. Instead, he can ask Orr to bring of a nobler race out of his dream but he does not do it. His mind is preoccupied with power.

Haber's destruction shows the end result of capitalism. When Haber has started to have an effective dream, the Augmentor collapsed and he becomes insane after having a dream. His greediness leads to utter destruction of his own life.

Élisée Reclus, a renowned geographer and an anarchist postulate that a "secret harmony exists between the earth and the people whom it nourishes, and when imprudent societies let themselves violate this harmony, they always end up regretting it". He says, "The truly civilized man [and women] understands that his [or her] nature is bound up with the interest of all and with that of nature" (qtd. in. Woodcock, 15).

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