



ANARCHO-PACIFISM IN URSULA K. LE GUIN'S *THE WORD FOR WORLD IS FOREST*

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Etymologically, the term anarchism is derived from the ancient Greek word *anarchos* which refers to “without rulers”. It insists freedom of an individual to act upon the evils that prevail in the society and preaches social responsibility and compassion towards fellow human beings. It opposes the hierarchal domination of the state or the institution. “Anarchism” writes Emma Goldman, “stands for the liberation of the human mind from the dominion of religion; the liberation of the human body from the dominion of property; liberation from the shackles and restraint of government” (26).

William Godwin in England, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon in France and Peter Kropotkin and Mikhail Bakunin in Russia are the exponents of anarchism. In his work, *What is Property?* (1840), Proudhon portrays anarchism as self-government or the end of oppression of man by man and stresses that social peace will be obtained only when people have started to respect the natural equality in men.

The various kinds of anarchism are social anarchism, philosophical anarchism, mutualism, black anarchism, post colonial anarchism, post-left anarchism, green anarchism, anarcho feminism, anarcho-pacifism and so on. These categories indubitably remark the liberation of an individual from the shackles of state or institutionalized organization and emphasis the unity of human being and the essence of compassion in the society.

The anarchists use literature as a vehicle to express their principles to a number of readers. They voice against the domineering authority and sketch the sufferings of the downtrodden people in their works. They condemn subjugation of people by the state that rules not only the land but also the minds of the people. They further support Free State and free will of an individual that in turn favors the welfare of the society.

Among many genres, science fiction exquisitely deals with anarchist theory and stresses the decentralized society where all are one. Both science fiction and anarchism echo the freedom of mind and body from the shackles of authority and hail the global harmony among human beings. Ursula K. Le Guin, an eminent American Science fiction writer, has dealt with anarchist theories both in her science fiction and fantasy writings. She received wide recognition for her novel *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) and *The Dispossessed* (1974).

In this paper, her science fiction work *The Word for World is Forest* (1972) has been taken up for study and it preambles anarcho-pacifism and brings out the harmony that need to exist among human beings. This novel depicts the sufferings of Athsean people under the colonist rule. Captain Davidson, the epitome of power subordinates the people and destroys nature of Athshe planet. The peculiarity of the inhabitants of Athshe is, they are tiny and greenish hair people, having a lucid dreaming at the day time. They can have just a nap at the night time and can share the dream to a number of people at the same time.

Captain Davidson, the epitome of colonial power raped the protagonist Selver's wife and killed her. Humiliated by this event, Shevek attempts to avenge Davidson and at the same time wants to get out of the shackles of the colonizers. He shares the dream of revolution among his people and stimulates them to fight against the colonizers. Le Guin uses dream as a metaphor to show the revolutionary attitude of the people. Although the inhabitants of Athshe are noted for passive resistance, they fought a war against the colonizers and at the end they were free from the colonizers.

Anarcho-pacifism critiques against violence and gives voice for passive resistance. The leading anarcho-pacifists are Henry David Thoreau, Leo Tolstoy and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. According to them, anarchism should by nature non-violent since it is against coercion and violence of state. They propose that violence is not an effective device to bring change. Anarcho-pacifism has emerged as a global movement before World War II in Holland, Great Britain, and the United States and has embarked its presence in the campaigns for nuclear disarmament.

Le Guin portrays a society that is meant for communal harmony and she favors the government that satisfies the needs of all kinds of people without any bias. The planet Athshe in *The Word for World is Forest* (WWF) is the representation of anarchist society. Through their culture, Le Guin explicates the anarchistic principles that can put an end to chaos that prevails in the existing world. Social ecology promotes a decentralized society of non-hierarchical society which has its roots on anarchistic political tradition. Clark relates,

A fundamental unit will be the commune, a closely knit, small community based on love, friendship, shared values, and commitment to a common life ... cooperative institutions in all areas of social life will be formed: mutualistic associations for child care and education, for production and distribution for cultural creation, for play and enjoyment, for reflection and spiritual renewal, Organization will be based not on the demands of power, but rather on the self-realization of persons as free social beings. (qtd. in. Gerard 9)

. The inhabitants of New Tahiti called as Athsheans are nature-lovers and are green-furred meek creatures. Their land is covered with green trees –‘A dark huddle and jumble and tangle of trees, endless, meaningless’ (WWF, 15). It is a land to live - a reservoir of natural resources. But it loses its beauty and wealth after the arrival of colonizers from Terra (Earth). After seeing the abundant natural resources inherent in Tahiti, they colonized natives and make them slaves. They want woods for earth and thought that New Tahiti ‘was literally made for men. Cleaned up and cleaned out, the dark forests cut down for open fields of grain, the primeval murk and savagery and ignorance wiped out, it would be a paradise, a real Eden. A better world than worn-out Earth’ (WWF, 12).

Athsheans are anarchists in nature and there is no government in Athsheans society. As Ynestra king says: the Athsheans are 'a static, stable, uniform society. They have no history. Perfectly integrated, and wholly unprogressive... like the forest they live in, they've attained a climax state' (74-75). They are one with nature and lead a pure life. Since they are non-aggressive practitioners, there is no rape, violent assault and murder in their society. In Lyubov's words, it is 'a human society with an effective war-barrier' (WWF, 74).

On the contrary, Captain Davidson represents the authoritative state. Colonial administration of Terra (Earth) people in the planet Athshe exhibits the exploitation of natural resource and human resource. Le Guin has depicted the brutal behavior of the colonizers over the native people in the planet New Tahiti and visualizes how the native and the inhabitants of Tahiti have been exploited by them. She explicitly demonstrates 'the failure of colonialists to comprehend other cultures, and shows how the desire to dominate and control interferes with the ability to perceive the other' (Mona 60).

Selfishness of colonizers tends them to see natives as mere creatures and uncivilized and thereby makes them to feel that they are the representatives of Almighty to civilize barbarians. Davidson ignores the sufferings of the native people thinking that 'men were here now to end the darkness, and turn the tree-jumble into clean sawn planks, more prized on Earth than gold...it was a really necessary luxury on Earth. So the alien forests became wood' (WWF, 16).

Davidson represents the capitalistic government that cuts the woods and kills the people for its materialistic needs. The capitalistic government colonizes the land and shows its empowerment over nature and human beings; consider themselves as demi-god and master the innocents. Power mongers lay rules and force the layman to obey it blindly. Their rule is the rule of the entire world. Freedom is the abominable word in the land of colonizers. They enslave individual's mind and use the native as a puppet in their hands; condemn change for the welfare of the society and want to gain more needs without any sufferings. Their avarice for wealth blinds their mind; their zeal blinds their mind to view good things and refuses to lend their ears towards truth. They suppressed the people on various causes such as religion, caste, class and creed and so on.

Lured by power, Davidson violates the law of nature and his brutal desire to destroy the colony for the sake of wood is not appreciable. Forest is the breath of Athsheans. The inhabitants of Athsheans believe that 'soil, ground, earth was not that to which the dead return and by which the living live: the substance of their world was not earth, but forest. Terran man was clay, red dust. Athsean man was branch and root. They did not carve figures of themselves in stone, only in wood' (*WWF*, 105-106).

Davidson's brutal behavior against the natives leads to a war in Athshe. Even the non-aggressive people have been forced to fight against the colonizers. When women and nature were disturbed, it provoked the animosity of the natives and led them to be revolutionaries. As Errico Malatesta remarks, "Violence, I.E. PHYSICAL FORCE (sic) used to another's hurt, which is the most brutal form the struggle between men can assume, is eminently corrupting. It lends, by its very nature, to suffocate the best sentiments of man, and to develop all the anti-social qualities ferocity, hatred, revenge, the spirit of domination and tyranny, contempt of the weak, servility towards the strong" (qtd.in. Graham 160).

Among Selver becomes a living God to Athsheans. Compassion is the principle of their life, 'Human touch is the main channel of communication. Terrans, touch is always likely to imply threat, aggression, and so for them there is often nothing between the formal handshake and the sexual caress... Caress as signal and reassurance was as essential to them as it is to mother and child or to lover and lover, but its significance was social, not only maternal and sexual. It was part of their language, it was therefore patterned, codified, yet infinitely, modifiable' (*WWF*, 111). The Athsheans lead a harmonious life with nature. Nature is an inseparable part of their life. Their peace is shattered by the arrival of the brutal colonizers.

Le Guin exhibits the harmony existing between life partners. The bond between husband and wife in Athshe is true and genuine. After marriage, the husband name will be followed by the wife name. Selver's name is Selver Thele. In the colonial period, husband and wife are strictly segregated by pens and they will meet only in rare occasions. When Thele came to meet Selver, she is raped and killed by the brutal womanizer Davidson. Depressed by her loss, Selver avenges the colonizers and thereby her loss leads to revolution in Athshe. Selver's love towards her kindles him to put an end to slavery and the oppression of the natives.

Le Guin has visualized sexual harassment of women in the patriarchal society. The colonizers brutally raped native women and considered them as a mere object than a human being. Davidson, the captain from Terra planet symbolizes the patriarch in the earth. The Athshe women were doubly victimized by means of sex and slave. In Davidson's eyes, they are mere 'creatures' without any emotions. They are ridiculed by Davidson that during copulation, the native females 'don't seem to feel anything, no pleasure, no pain, they just lay there like mattresses no matter what you do. They're all like that... Like fish" (*WWF*, 19).

When Davidson raped Selver's wife, it enraged Selver to fight against the tyrannical rule of colonizers and thereby Selver turns into a leader of an anarchic community that has no any hierarchy. 'Wrongs done could not be righted; but at least they were not still being done'. They could start over: the natives without that painful, unanswerable wonder as to why the 'yumens' treated men like animals; and he without the burden of explanation and the gnawing of irremediable guilt' (*WWF*, 106-107). Natives cannot endure the colonizers brutal behavior and thereby they fight against colonizers and ultimately triumphs in their attempt.

Le Guin portrays Athshe women as brave warriors. From Lyubov, Selver learns the condition of women in the earth and wonders why Terra men never bring their women to Aka. Lyubov told him that though their half of the race is women, they would bring women to this planet only after it is ready for them. Terran men consider women as weaker one and thought that they are masters of their own women.

Selver and his native people ridicule inequality that exists in Terra. Ebor Dendep remarks, "They should have sent the women first. Maybe with them the women do the Great Dreaming" (*WWF*, 54). In Athshe, women participated in politics – "The Athsheans are governed by ... old women. Intellect to the men, politics to the women, and ethics to the interaction of both; that's their arrangement. It has charm, and it works – for them" (*WWF*, 115). Women too involve in war to fight against Terra. Their strong dream of war intends them to get freedom from entire humanity.

Even after they wipe away the colonizers through war, they did not kill Davidson. They leave him in an isolated island to regret for his past deeds. Through Selver Thele, the native of Athshe planet, Le Guin has put forth the pacifist anarchist principles to be followed by the individual and the society. Selver's speech to Lyubov is the ultimate core of anarchism,

We're both gods, you and I. You're an insane one, and I'm not sure whether I'm sane or not. But we are gods. There will never be another meeting in the forest like this meeting now between us. We bring each other such gifts as gods bring. You gave me a gift, the killing of one's kind, murder. Now, as well as I can. I give you my people's gift, which is not killing. I think we each find each other's gift heavy to carry. However, you must carry it alone. (WWF, 180)

Murray Bookchin has an Aristotelean preference for balanced communities, for 'the well rounded individual' and for politics as a domain of ethics and participation. He argues, "direct democracy, rather than representative democracy, would be central to the functioning of an ecological society. Such a society would see every individual as capable of participating directly in the formulation of social policy which would 'instantly invalidate social hierarchy and social domination', This political culture, Bookchin argues, would create the conditions for decisively undercutting the idea that humanity needs to 'dominate nature' and invite the widest possible participation, permitting the recovery of human beings not as 'taxpayers', 'constituents' or 'consumers' but as citizens" (qtd. in. White 61).

'Real wealth consists in things of utility and beauty, in things that help to create strong, beautiful bodies and surroundings inspiring to live in' (Goldman 24). Selver in *The Word for World is Forest* provokes the native people to dream of war against the colonizers. Although he feels guilty to kill people, he has to do it until he frees his native people from the slavery chain.

A realist is a man who knows both the world and his own dreams. You're not sane: there's not one man in a thousand of you who knows how to dream. You sleep, you wake, and forget your dreams, you sleep again and wake again, and so you spend your lives, and you think that is being, life, reality! You are not children, you are grown men, but insane. And that's why we had to kill you, before you

drove us mad. Now go back and talk about reality with the other insane men. Talk long and well!

(WWF143)

Selver suffers for his fellow beings – ‘to do it was to rebel: to risk the self for the sake of society’ (*The Dispossessed* 225). Slavery prevails among people and their mind is chained by laws and regulations. In order to lead a luxurious life, they sell their freedom to the powerful authority. Bakunin points out that “the anarchists submit themselves to the authority of natural laws besides accepting voluntarily the authority of experts in specific fields as valuable recommendations”. According to Mikhail Bakunin, “there is no fixed and constant authority, but a continual exchange of mutual, temporary, and, above all, voluntary authority and subordination”. He remarks Authority, “constitute the basis and the fundamental conditions of our existence; they envelop us, penetrate us, regulate all our movements, thoughts and acts; even when we believe that we disobey them, we only show their omnipotence.

He adds, “The Liberty of man consists solely in this: that he obeys natural laws because he has himself recognized them as such, and not because they have been externally imposed upon him by any extrinsic will whatsoever, divine or human, collective or individual” (*What is Authority?*).

Nature has provided prosperity and peaceful life to society but power mongers destroy nature and bring fatal end to nature and people in the name of hierarchical institutions. Though these institutions are initiated with a noble cause, they fail and become a nightmare to commoners.

An ecological society needs, therefore, to be populated by libertarian political institutions, that is, institutions structured around direct, face-to-face relationships and based on participation, involvement, ‘and a sense of citizenship that stresses activity’, not based on ‘the delegation of power and spectatorial politics’ (Bookchin 336). It would be committed to the cardinal principle that ‘all mature individuals can be expected to manage social affairs directly –just as we expect them to manage their private affairs’ (qtd.in. White 61).

Élisée Reclus, a renowned geographer and an anarchist postulates 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).

The major concern of anarchists is liberation of human mind and equality among fellow beings against domineering authority such as state, religion and patriarchy. One can achieve this desire for freedom by submission of oneself towards nature against violence. “The social anarchist critique of the state and authoritarian clearly informs the preference for loosely knit network forms of organization and loose social movements structures that can be found amongst many radical environmental and ecological groups and attempts by various Green Parties in the 1980s to experiment with various ‘anti-party, party’ structures” (White 55).

Anarchists emphasize the interdependence of Nature and Human beings and fight against the exploitation and strongly believe that the state is responsible for the disintegration between nature and men. Nature symbolizes purity and peace but selfish power-mongers colonize land and exploit natural resources and try to rule both the adopted land and the minds of the colonized. In her novels, Le Guin brings out oneness of human beings with nature and stresses the essence of mutual aid and cooperation among human beings and other species.

Anarchism has engaged the minds of great men down the lane of time. An apostle of non-violence, Mahatma Gandhi has imprinted his views on anarchism. Gandhi’s ‘ideal State was a non-violent state of enlightened anarchy where social life would remain self-regulated. In that State there is no ruler, no subject, no government or no governed. It is a perfect State consisting of enlightened persons, self-regulated and self-controlled following the principles of non-violence’ (Shiya). Anarchists stress this ideal notion and advocate everyone to follow this principle in their lives. “Given a common need, a collection of people will, by trial and error, by improvisation and experiment, evolve order out of chaos –this order being more durable than any kind of externally imposed order” (Shantz, 10). Anarchism envisages ‘organized living society’. It is ‘the highest degree of liberty and order to which humanity can aspire’ (Guérin 25).

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