

A Stealthy Freedom and Sociological Effects in Only Goodness: A work by Jhumpa Lahiri

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Abstract: The word freedom is a mixed concept that refers to the different choices. On the one hand, it refers to autonomy and the ability to do things and having the right to free choice, and on the other hand, it refers to independence. The free person tries to make his choices according to his will and no factor should stop him from doing so. If the action taken is wrong, the result will affect the small society (family) and the large one (society). Stealthy freedom is the type of freedom which is outside the custom, laws, and culture of the family and the society. In this category, a person secretly crosses the red line and enters a path that ends in a dead-end. The red line is the word we have heard forbidden from doing certain things and ordering others to do them from the same childhood from parents and in other years from teachers and school officials. In the discussion of stealthy freedom the person has operated the freedom secretly, it will have more destructive effects. Since the issue of freedom and youth is an integral part of any society, this study examines this issue based on the story which describes the events in this category. Accordingly, the forthcoming research tries to show this idea by giving an example of a short story (Only Goodness) from the short stories collection of Unaccustomed Earth (2008) by the well-known author Jhumpa Lahiri. Moreover, it attempts to challenge Philip Pettit's theory of freedom based on the choice to depict the fate of the character.

Keywords: Stealthy freedoms, Sociological Effects, Jhumpa Lahiri, Philip Pettit, Only Goodness, Youth.

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Introduction:

The present article tries to take a new look at the concept of freedom from Philip Pettit. It also seeks to challenge his views on freedom of will and choice to show how some type of freedom endangers a person's life. This research shows that freedom is an inalienable right of every person, so some freedoms will have destructive individual and social effects. In the part of the discussion, Pettit compares these concepts to freedom of choice in the theory of market. Moreover, he considers the will and choice of every person are important in the discussion of this field. According to these interpretations, this research attempts to challenge the view by quoting the events of stealthy freedoms in the short story.

With reference to, the problems related to youth and society are the main issues that are considered in every law and government. In this regard, these issues are not outside the realm of literature and most writers deal with these issues. The story entitled Only Goodness is one of the works that has dealt with the issue of freedom and youth, which is why this research has chosen this story to study the social issue of youth because this story deals with one of the main issues of youth.

Dr. Masood Golchin (Associate Professor of Sociology, Kharazmi University of Tehran) in an article entitled "Social Deviation of Youth in the Mirror of Research" (Example of application of secondary analysis technique) which Published in 2006, after researching 12 studies conducted on 965 girls and 2459 boys, he was concluded that the most important social problems of young people rooted in the socio-economic base, the extent of adolescent communication with a group of dissident friends.

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And the tendency and membership in those groups, the type, and extent of parental supervision and control over adolescent behavior and the degree of family breakdown and disorder. In almost all forms of perversion, boys are more likely than girls to engage in deviant behavior. Concerning, this research attempts to add the item of freedom to the researches based on the events of the short story to show how giving stealthy freedom to a young man by his sister not only does not create intimacy and friendship between them but also endangers the fate and social future of his brother and causes to miss some social opportunities.

The conception of freedom has always been an integral part of human life. Hence he /she has tried to maintain this concept in every age and time. In this regard, he/ she even migrated to other places to preserve this concept. Concerning, it is evident in the works of Lahiri; she is an Indian-American writer. She belongs to a generation that gets acculturated is extremely tangible. Her characters in her works depict the conception of freedom which they tried to gain and keep their freedom in other countries far from their hometown. Only Goodness is one of her stories that depict the life story of a Bengali family who travels to another country to gain a better life, but one of their children fails their goals.

The current study in Only Goodness examines a different perspective on the issue of freedom. Hence, it depicts freedom of thought, and the opinion of others is sometimes destructive. It illustrates such freedoms are not only part of that person's rights, but will somehow deprive him or her of legal freedoms. Also, it shows how this type of freedom destroys life. Furthermore, present research centers on this dictionary definition: A strong feeling of wanting something, or something you want. It is an Oxford dictionary meaning for desire, but Philip Pettit has a philosophical definition of this concept. To him, this item has certain processes in human life. Since it passes the way from motivation to action, it needs a rational desire to form our decisions due to our beliefs. Also, he centers on capacities that form our desires to reach freedom. Moreover, from Pettit's point of view, the only difference between human and animal in freedom concept is morality. Concerning, the researcher tries to show in freedom categories the concept of morality is an important that it can cover the youthhoods.

Methodology and Approach

Philip Noel Pettit (1945 -); is an Irish philosopher and political theorist. He was interested in political philosophy, so he was the professorial fellow in social and political theory for many years. Pettit defends civic republicanism. As regards, he writes *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* which focuses on moral, political theory. Moreover, he concentrates on philosophical psychology and social anthropology. From the Pettit point of view, the concept of freedom has a peculiar definition. Pettit in his article entitled *Freedom as Anti-power* which published in 1996 claims that "Fare in terms of the familiar dichotomy between negative and positive concepts of liberty? I am negatively free, Berlin says, "to the degree to which no human being interferes with my activity, "I am positively free to the extent that I achieve "self-

From Pettit point of view, freedom has three aspects. First freedom of action is performed by an agent. Then, the agent's ability to be thereby done, rather than a bystander. Third, enjoying freedom in a society that comes from his/ her actions not under pressure from others (Pettit, 1997). As Regards, Pettit centers on the concept of free actions, selves, and persons. In addition, in the essay entitled, "Freedom in the Market" he compares real freedom with the people who come to the market for buying.

"The market is traditionally hailed as the very exemplar of a system under which People enjoy freedom, in particular, the negative sort of freedom associated with Liberal and libertarian thought: freedom as noninterference. The appeal of the Market from within that viewpoint is that it represents a regime of unobstructed Consumer choice and, as a bonus, the regime in which consumer options may be expected to increase and diversify under the pressure of competition (Pettit, 2006, 131)."

Pettit compares people's freedom to the market situation. As he claims, in the market, the people are free to choose and buy, so nobody interferes with others by his/ her interference. He depicts the type of freedom in which all people are free in any situation, position, and mood. Hence, from Pettit's point of view freedom has a social aspect that leads to social liberty due to establish a republican government; the place where everyone has social freedom to convey his/ her idea of *freedom* as non-interference with others mastery. In this regard, Pettit, to prove his idea of freedom, explains that there

is some thinker before him who have the same idea in this field. As Pettit, (Pettit, 1997) states that: in his book *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government*, “

Neither, I should say, is the claim idiosyncratic. I am not alone in finding the republican tradition of thought a fruitful source of ideas “and ideas. Historians like John Pocock (1975) and Quentin Skinner (1978; 1983; 1984) have not only made the tradition visible to us in the past couple of decades; they have also shown how it can give us a new perspective on contemporary politics. Skinner, in “particular, has argued that it can give us a new understanding of freedom and my argument builds on this. (Pettit, 2006)

Pettit in his article under the title, ” *Freedom as Anti- power*”, mentioned that, “I am free to the degree that no human being has the power to interfere with me: to the extent that no one else is my master, even if I lack the will or the wisdom required for achieving self-mastery” (Pettit, 1996). Also, to Pettit in political liberty, the concept of freedom lies in non-domination. Hence, he concentrates on his idea that everyone is free and nobody can find others under the domination of others. Concerning, in freedom discussion Pettit centers on morality item. Accordingly, from Pettit’s point of view, the only difference between human and animal freedom is in morality. He categorizes this aspect in the ethical ideal of freedom and expresses “Freedom is sometimes cast as the psychological ideal that distinguishes human beings from other animals; sometimes as the ethical ideal that distinguishes some human beings from others; and sometimes as the political ideal that distinguishes some human societies from others”(Ibid). In this regard, he emphasizes the concept of the will to have freedom, because, with a strong will, no action is taken towards freedom. Besides, Pettit emphasizes the issue of will and morality in the discussion of freedom and believes that will and morality must be in the same direction. He also believes that to have freedom, one needs will and having morality, “each of those forms of freedom requires freedom in the will but neither variety requires the other. You can be ethically free and politically vulnerable or politically free and ethically lacking” (Pettit 17).

Concerning, in his view, the concept of will and morality are important in having freedom, because some actions are not worth to do, like addiction. Although Pettit centers on the concepts of non- Domination and non – interference, he also emphasizes on moral points in the discussion of freedom. To him, some freedoms cause harm to the person and those around him, as the purpose of this article, centers on Only Goodness the short story by Jhumpa Lahiri which deals with this issue.

Textual Analysis

In *Only Goodness*, the author tells the life story of a Bengali family who has a daughter and a son named Sudha and Rahul. Their children were born six years apart. When Sudha is too small, they move to England for a better life and eventually settle in the United States of America. Their eldest child is trying to get a higher education, but their young child was not interested in school and always caused the family to fail in some way.

When Sudha was twenty-four years old, her eighteen-year-old brother became acquainted with alcohol as a pastime. It became a danger to his whole life because he lost his credibility with his parents. Concerning, he becomes addicted to alcohol and causes him to lose his car (which his parent bought for him when he graduated from high school) and even his college education. The destructive effects of stealthy freedom are evident at the end of the story when Rahul endangers his sister's son because of drinking alcohol and being distracted.

Only Goodness, which is the title of the story, shows itself in two ways during the plot of the story. First, when Sudha thought if she secretly gave his brother freedom, he would make him happy. Then, when she realizes pure and unconditional love with her son is the *Only Goodness*. Concerning, Sudha thought by *Only Goodness* and giving secretly freedom to her brother, she would make his brother happy, but she led him to fall.

Since their actions were against the custom and rules of their home, their way of drinking depends on their parents’ sleep. When they were slept Sudha takes the cans to the walk-in closet. Accordingly, “they filled the cups with ice and drank one after another. Soda thought that by sharing his freedom with his brother, he would open the way to friendship and intimacy with him, but in reality, it would open the way for many future limitations and sufferings for him (Lahiri, 2010, 112). Rahul did not succeed in her studies, and this worried her parents. He was heavily addicted to alcohol . Her parents were worried about her education and asked Sudha to talk to him. As Lahiri indicates that, “

“So, what’s going on at school?” she asked.

He looked up at her. His eyes were reddish. “I’m on vacation.”

“Your grades weren’t good, Rahul. You need to work a little harder.”

“I did work hard,” he said.

“I know the first-year can be tough.”

“I did work hard,” he repeated. “My professors hate me. Is that my fault?”

“I’m sure they don’t hate you,” she said. She considered crossing the room

And sitting on the edge of the bed but remained where she was.

“What the fuck do you know?” he said, giving her a start (Lahiri, 2010, 122).

Sudha wanted to help his brother, but his help was different from the freedom he had given him which led to his downfall, so his brother did not need his help. The writer describes, “

“Look, I’m just trying to help.”

“I’m not asking you to help. You don’t need to fix anything. Has it ever

Occurred to you that my life might be fine the way it is?”

His words silenced her, cut to the bone. She’d always had a heavy hand in his life, it was true, striving not to control it but to improve it somehow. She had always considered this her responsibility to him. She had not known how to be a sister any other way” (Lahiri, 2010, 122).

Sudha introduced her brother to sneaky freedom at a time when it was out of the family’s rights but she had obtained good academic degrees and was also getting ready for marriage. Sudha thought that her brother had chosen the path of the life of his own free will and did not know that one day this wrong path would be dangerous for her as well. Rahul did not succeed in his education and was forced to leave home and find work in a restaurant. He did not have a relationship with his sister after Sudha’s marriage, because, at Sudha’s wedding, he ruined his sister’s wedding due to his poor condition.

Sudha and Roger were getting ready for their wedding ceremony, but Sudha’s mother was worried that Rahul would drink too much at the ceremony and lose control.

“It’s too late for that. And it’s not fair,” Sudha said. Sudha and Roger expected to be able to drink at their wedding reception, she maintained. Why should everyone be punished because of Rahul?

“Can’t you ask him not to drink too much that day?” her mother asked.

“No,” Sudha said, pushing back her chair and standing up. She had been fiddling all this time with her teaspoon, and she flung it now, ineffectually, on the carpeted floor of the dining room, where it fell without a sound. “I can’t talk to him anymore. I can’t fix him. I can’t keep fixing what’s wrong with this family,” she said, and like her brother only a little while earlier, she stormed out of the room (Lahiri, 2010, 135).

Sudha and her Parents did not want Rahul to narrate anything from the past because they knew he did not have control over himself because of alcohol. It also tarnished the family image among the audience due to excessive drinking and lack of concentration and ideal behavior. According to Lahiri's narration, Rahul began telling a story about Sudha's childhood, dredging up an anecdote about going on a vacation long ago in Bar Harbor, Sudha needing to use the bathroom, and they're not being a gas station for miles. Then their father got up, stood next to Rahul, and whispered something in his ear, motioning for him to sit down. "Excuse me, I'm not finished." People laughed, not realizing Rahul had not meant to be funny, that it wasn't some sort of comic routine. The microphone made a screeching sound (Lahiri, 2010, 136).

Sudha could not forget Rahul’s behavior on her wedding night and she was upset with him. Rahul's behavior depends on the freedom that she had given to him in the past by her own will, but it gripping herself now. “But Sudha could not forgive Rahul for what had happened, those dreadful minutes he stood at the microphone the only thing she remembered when she looked at the photographs of her reception, all the posed portraits on the grass in which they were smiling, Leading up to that” (Lahiri, 2010, 137). After a while, Rahul left home without leaving a note but stealing his mother’s jewelry bag.

A week later, he sent a letter to his family, telling them that he did not want to be in contact with any of them and did not want to hear from them. Also, he asked his family to leave him alone. “After a week a letter came, with a postmark from Columbus, Ohio. It was not addressed to anyone; he had not

even put their family surname on the envelope. "Don't bother looking for me here," he'd written, "I'm only spending the night. I don't want to hear from any of you. Please leave me alone" (*ibid*).

Two months after her marriage, Sudha found out she was pregnant, and that was good news for her parents. Sudha thought about her brother throughout her pregnancy and she was worried about his condition. Until one day after her pregnancy, she received a letter from Rahul; he apologizing to Sudha in the letter, saying that she had found a job in a restaurant. Sudha answered quickly and told him that she had a ten-month-old son named Neel. As Lahiri narrates,

"Dear Didi,

I hope this is you. First, I want to say that I'm sorry. For everything. I know I screwed up, but things are better now. I have a job at a restaurant, as a line cook"... (Lahiri, 2010, 139) Sudha answered, "

Dear Rahul,

Yes, it's me. I've had a baby, a boy named Neel. He's ten months old, and I want you to meet him'" (Lahiri, 2010, 140).

Rahul goes to see Sudha. He told his sister that he could not believe that she had a child. Sudha showed him all parts of the house from the rooms to the washroom and asked him to rest, but Rahul preferred to be with Neel. Rahul was comfortable at his sister's house and played with Neel regularly. He did not drink while eating and assured his sister that he had given up alcohol, but Sudha was worried about him, "she wondered what her brother was doing, wondered if one of the hundreds of pubs on the streets of London would tempt him. Part of her worried that something would set him off and that he would disappear again'" (Lahiri, 2010, 145).

To Pettit, Social freedom is a sort of freedom in which every person is free among the social barrier. On the other hand, this type of freedom covers every person's individuality. From the Pettit point of view, this sort of freedom is much enjoyable, because everyone can choose his/her desires freely. That is why he compares this sort of freedom to a marketing situation. Besides, he focuses on morality concept in freedom issue.

Sudha was worried about the freedom that she had provided for her brother in the past. Since every family is a small community, the actions and desires of each person are not only related to his/ her and the family, but also involve other people from the large society. Therefore, Rahul cannot easily fulfill his desires for freedom, because this destructive freedom can endanger the lives of others, as happened to (Neel) his nephew.

One Saturday morning, Rahul made a skillful omelet for breakfast in the style of a TV chef. He suggested to Roger and Sudha to go to the zoo and assured them that he would take care of the Neel. When they returned from the zoo, he offered to go to the cinema again, and they accepted, although Sudha told Rahul that he was tired; but Rahul told him that he was leaving tomorrow and that it was you who needed to rest. They agreed, but during watching, the movie Sudha paid attention to his phone because of Rahul's call. When Roger and Sudha returned, there was no sign of Neel or Rahul anywhere in the house where they were expecting. Toys were lying on the floor, the TV was on and the sound of water could be heard from the bathroom.

Neel was left alone in the bathtub without a baby protection ring, and water rose to his neck, endangering his life. When Roger saw him, he panicked and asked, where is your uncle? But a ten-month-old baby who is unable to speak. They found Rahul in the study room in a state of confusion over drinking. Roger shouted at Soda that your brother should leave our house and stop approaching our child. Sudha was responsible. She prepared a type of freedom based on her thought and will which lead her brother to destruction. According to the last pages of the story,"

She was sobbing now, too hard for any words to come out, Neel beginning to cry again in reaction. Roger went up to her, holding her by the shoulders, his arms outstretched. "Told me what?" And somehow, despite how hard she was crying, she told him, about the very first time Rahul had come to visit her at Penn, and how he hadn't even liked beer, and then about all the cans they'd hidden over the years and how eventually it was no longer a game for him but a way of life, a way of life that had removed him from her family and ruined him. *Unaccustomed Earth* 149).

The next morning, she did only well to her son when she forced Rahul to leave her house as soon as possible. Although Rahul claimed that his ticket was in the afternoon, Sudha ignored him and told him that he wanted to kill his child because he left him alone in the bathtub. Sudha did not allow her brother to stay at home; In fact, a long years before she had to restrict his stealthy freedoms to not lead him to disaster.

Conclusion

Pettit believes that will and desire can achieve freedom. In Only Goodness, stealthy freedom, which is achieved voluntarily and consciously, ends in a fall. In this category of freedom, from Pettit's point of view, the concept of freedom corresponds to responsibility. Hence, this type of freedom categorizes as free will. Concerning, everyone is responsible for their duties, decisions, and actions. Moreover, the freedom in marking situations cannot be personal. As Pettit believes, in this place, people can feel a sense of freedom especially the conception of noninterference. Regarding, Rahul cannot feel free for his drinking in the private personal situation, because this type of freedom not only endanger his fate and social status, but it can endanger others' life as happened to Neel. Ultimately, it leads to a person entering society with a lack of concentration and inappropriate appearance, in which these situations are outside the norm and law of each society. As a result, the person is excluded from both the smaller community (family) and the larger community (society); because nowhere in the world, such a person is not trusted in society and cannot get a proper social status.

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