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ARUNDHATI ROY'S WRITINGS: AN INFINITE VOICE FOR WORLD PEACE

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ABSTRACT

Arundhati Roy's non-fiction is not seriously considered by the people in the domain of literature because some of them think that they do not have any literary values. But there is an intellectual thread between fiction and non-fiction. As the citizen of the earth, it is the responsibility of the writer to protect the earth and humanity from the disaster of nuclear bombs, war and terrorism. Arundhati Roy has outlined the beast of cultural, economic and military hegemony which are against the greater common good. American imperialism is the backbone of all evils looming over the world. WTO, IMF and World Bank implement their agenda with a sweet cover of morality and high sounding philosophy. War and terrorism are the products of their policy all over the world. They also suffer from their policy. The image of a tiger in the Belgrade zoo is portrayed by Arundhati Roy very beautifully about the real destiny of humankind.

**Keywords:** Nuclear bombs, war, terrorism, global hegemony, right to life.

Introduction

Arundhati Roy is the Booker Prize-winning novelist in India for her novel, *The God of Small Things* in 1997 and her second novel, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* listed for the Booker Prize in 2017 after two decades of her non-fiction. Between these two novels, she has spontaneously written so many essays, which are very truthful and helpful to understand her novels because there is an intellectual thread between fiction and non-fiction. Here this article tries to understand and highlight her infinite voice for the humankind and furious intellectual stand against the warmongers, the nucleus of terrorism and worshippers of the nuclear bombs.

Arundhati Roy alerts against a new world order under the dictatorship of the pro-nuke elite. It is nonsense to believe that nuclear weapons are fatal only when they are used. However, the presence of nuclear weapons in our midst itself can cause unfathomable havoc. Therefore, she exhorts each man, woman and child to react personally because the devastation of a nuclear explosion will be indiscriminating. The nuclear war is the most egalitarian idea that man has ever made to destroy the humankind. She stresses the fact that the bomb is not in our backyard but our body. Moreover, no Government, no nation, no man has the right to subject us to radioactivity. She condemns the euphoria that was exhibited after the nuclear test in India. It was hailed as a moment of national pride by the media. Any criticism of this nuclear test was considered just

anti-national and anti-Hindu. Nevertheless, everyone forgot that if the Government can use this bomb to threaten the enemy and it can also use it against its people. She courageously declares, "If protesting against having a nuclear bomb implanted in my brain is anti-Hindu and anti-national, then I secede. I hereby declare myself an independent, mobile republic. I am a citizen of the earth. I have no flag." (**The Algebra of Infinite Justice**, p.21)

The presence of a nuclear bomb signifies certain dreadful things such as the end of the imagination and the end of freedom because freedom is Choice. Unfortunately, we are forced to live with a dreadful nuclear age waiting in the future. The Indian ruling class has failed the people and betrayed them by making a nuclear bomb, while millions required food, clothing, and shelter. India ranks 138<sup>th</sup> in UNDP's 1997 Human Development Index. Millions of people in India are illiterate and live in absolute poverty, lack of basic sanitation and without water. The elite in India put forward sloppy arguments to convince the people about the need for nuclear bombs. Arundhati Roy thinks that nuclear bombs are the most anti-democratic, anti-national, anti-human, outright evil thing that man has ever made to destroy the humans from the earth. It is man's challenge to God because man has acquired the power to destroy everything that God has created. In 'War Talk' she tells that the existence of nuclear bombs violates everything humane. They alter the meaning of life itself. Therefore, we need not tolerate but resist the men who blackmail the entire human race with nuclear bombs.

It is the beast of cultural, economic and military hegemony that is at large in the world. Arundhati Roy makes a virulent attack on the coalition of the global marketers of terrorism. She exposes their hollow arguments and skins them alive. She calls the coalition of war on terror as the international Coalition of the Bullied and the Bought. According to her, the American foreign policy of chilling indifference for non-American lives, barbarous military interventions, support for despotic and dictatorial regimes and the merciless economic agenda of swallowing poor economies cause most of the disruptions in the world. She cites the millions killed in Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, the US-backed Israeli invasion of Lebanon and Palestine, the Operation Desert Storm in Iraq, and those killed by the US-backed dictators and US-trained terrorists in various third world countries. America is responsible for the thousands killed in Afghanistan during the Soviet occupation because it was America that trained and financed the Mujahideen terrorists to overthrow the Soviet-backed government. When they finally succeeded, there was the fallout of the Taliban and Osama Bin Laden. Osama Bin Laden was America's invention. At first, he was created and when he and his Talibanism became a thorn in America's flesh, he was attacked and his name was put in the list of those 'wanted dead or alive'. He was one of the products of America's 'feed and kill' policy.

Arundhati Roy thinks, "Osama Bin Laden and George Bush were both terrorists. They were both building international networks that perpetrate terror and devastate people's lives. Bush with the Pentagon, the WTO, the IMF and the World Bank. Bin Laden with Al-Qaeda. The difference is that nobody elected Bin Laden" (**The Shape of the Beast**, p.91) She blames America for the hundreds of thousands killed in Iraq and Afghanistan, either by economic sanctions or cruise missiles. American rulers find all kinds of a plausible explanation for their imperialistic ambitions. They call all wars 'just wars'. They attacked Afghanistan to topple the Taliban regime and liberate Afghan women from their burqas out of compassion for the women. In Iraq, they were making a pre-emptive strike and later, trying to bring democracy. Arundhati Roy lays bare the absurdity of the arguments, "The United States supported Saddam Hussein and made sure that he ruled with an iron fist for all those years. Then they used the sanctions to break the back of civil society. Then they made Iraq disarm. Then they attacked Iraq. And now they've taken over all its assets." (**The Shape of the Beast**, p. 126-127)

America uses arguments clothed in sweet morality and high-sounding philosophy to present its diabolical and malevolent plans before the world:

It's become clear that the War against Terror is not really about terror and the War on Iraq not only about oil. It's about super power's self-destructive impulse towards supremacy, global hegemony. The argument is being made that the people of Argentina and Iraq have both been decimated by the same process. Only the weapons used against them differ: In one case, it's an IMF cheque book, in the other, cruise missile. (**An Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire**, p. 128)

Americans were mortified to find their World Trade Centre, the highest symbol of their economic power, razed to the ground on the morning of 9/11. In her essay, 'Come September', Arundhati Roy mentions several countries Somalia, Vietnam, Korea, Indonesia, Laos and Cambodia that were devastated by American military interventions. She reminds them of several Septembers when people suffered at the hands of American leadership. She reminds them of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, the single most savage act the world has ever witnessed:

The war was nearly over. The hundreds of thousands of Japanese people who were killed, the countless others who were crippled by cancers for generations to come, were not a threat to world peace. They were *civilians*. Just as the victims of the World Trade Centre and Pentagon bombings were civilians. Just as the hundreds of thousands of people who died in Iraq because of the US-led sanctions were civilians. The bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were a cold, calculated experiment carried out to demonstrate America's power. At the same time, President Truman described it as 'the greatest thing in history'. (**An Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire**, p.58)

When Europe was in the grip of fascism and Hitler was carrying out his genocidal pogrom against Jews, before the Second World War, America refused entry to Jewish refugees fleeing Germany. After the World War II, the US has attacked many countries, Korea, Guatemala, Cuba, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Grenada, Libya, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Panama, Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, Yugoslavia and Afghanistan. In this list, Arundhati Roy includes the US Government's covert operations in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the coups it has engineered, the dictators it has armed and supported and Israel's US-backed war on Lebanon. In all these US actions, thousands were killed. In the conflict in the Middle East, where America played an active role, thousands had died fighting against Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian territory. America's role in the civil war in Afghanistan in the 1980s caused the death of more than one million people. In the list, there are the US-led embargos and sanctions that resulted directly or indirectly in the death of hundreds of thousands people, mostly in Iraq. According to her, putting all things together, it is as though there have been World War III in which the chief protagonists are the US Government. America did all these cruelties and destructions in the name of peace, freedom or democracy, all lofty ideas but intended to deceive the world.

According to Arundhati Roy, the policies of the US Government are dangerous not only for its citizens but for the world also. The US government's atrocities elsewhere are revenged on its innocent citizens. For the death of its innocent citizens, the US government, its policies and its violent actions at other places are only responsible. That is why the government must be blamed. The US can bomb where they want to or buy out anybody as their minion. However, it cannot control the rage that is building in the world, which will express itself somewhere or the other. America has no right to condemn violence when a section of its economy is based on selling weapons, making bombs and piling up chemical and biological weapons. In her view, the soul of American culture worships violence. If America can justify all the wars that it has fought, all the murders it has committed, all the countries it has bombed and all the ecologies it has destroyed, then Osama Bin Laden can use the same logic to justify the September 11 attack on World Trade Centre. The US Government has been pouring in so much energy and money into manipulating the media because the establishment fears public opinion.

The ordinary Americans are not as ruthless, as cold, as calculating, as powerful as the American elite are. They have a conscience and they act in their self-interest. If all the horrendous things that have been carried out in their name were to be spilt out, it would be very bad for the American establishment. She tells that it is America's poor, its student, it is unemployed, its single mothers, its hospital and home-care patients its teachers and health workers who are paying for the American wars. Again, America's poor are fighting these wars. According to her, the soldiers who are risking their lives in Iraq's desert are not the children of the rich:

America's poor are being exploited and put on the frontlines to ensure further profits for America's rich. It's for this reason that it's ridiculous and self-defeating to be 'anti-American'. America is not one homogenous mass of brutality. One-fifth of the armed forces are African-American. I don't imagine anywhere close to one-fifth of the profits of this war go to African-American people. Asians, Latinos are

in the army hoping to get citizenship. What a great system. Get the blacks, Asians, Latinos and poor whites to fight your boardroom battles for you... (**The Shape of the Beast**, p.168)

She finds this ironic as well as the fact that thirteen per cent of the Black people in the voting age has been disenfranchised. According to her, those who benefit from the Iraqi war, from the reconstruction contracts of a hundred billion dollars are not America's poor, Blacks or Latinos but Corporate Multinationals like Bechtel, Chevron or Halliburton. "Apart from paying the actual economic costs of war, American people are paying for these wars of 'liberation' with their freedom. For ordinary Americans, the price of 'New Democracy' in other countries is the death of real democracy at home." (**An Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire**, p.163-64)

Arundhati Roy is speaking for the ordinary Americans here and exposes the fraud and the misinformation of the US Government. She is not anti-American or anti-British but only anti-Elite. She is anti-Elite because the elite are anti-human. According to Arundhati Roy, nationalism, religious bigotry, fascism and terrorism are the subsidiary heads and dangerous by-products of the Empire. All these destructive forces walk arms in arm with the project of corporate globalization. It is easy to lament that the world is being caught up in an escalating spiral of terrorism and war. In her view, "terrorism is only the privatization of war. Those terrorists are the free marketers of war. They believe that the legitimate use of violence is not the sole prerogative of the state." (**An Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire**, p. 350) The choice, thrown out before the world by the American President, "You're either with us or with the terrorists". (**An Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire**, p.349) It is a counterfeit argument. She believes that the real tragedy for the people of the world is that they are trapped between the horror of a putative peace and the terror of war. 'The War on Terror', unleashed by the American rulers is a war that never ends and so the oil fields in Iraq shall never dry up for America. It was not a reaction against terrorism but an action for the gigantic multinational American corporations such as Bechtel, Halliburton, Shell, Mobil, Nestle, and Pepsi and so on. After the invasion, occupied Iraq was made to pay out 200 million dollars in 'reparations for lost profits' to these corporations, apart from the millions of contracts they bagged. For the new imperialists, profit is their mission and this mission is not keeping the interest of the whole humankind. They don't think about the consequences of their policy. Therefore, Arundhati Roy said in an interview:

I said that when the developed countries were industrializing, most of them had colonies which they cannibalized on their way up. We, on the other hand, have no colonies, so we turn upon ourselves and begin to gnaw at the edges of our own societies. I said it reminded me of the tiger in the Belgrade zoo which, driven insane with fear by the NATO bombing, began to eat its own limbs. (**The Shape of the Beast**, p.9)

Arundhati Roy draws a clear picture of the modern society of ours through this image that exploits the displaced, the dispossessed and the powerless who have no godfather to protect them. The central theme of all her non-fiction is life and the right to live. At the same time, she reminds us of the terrible consequences of humanity turning against itself like the tiger in the Belgrade zoo. That is why she shrills against nuclear weapons and other destructive forces of imperialism and its agents all over the world.

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