Chapter 5

ACTIVISM: ARUNDHATI ROY’S NON-FICTIONAL WORLD
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5.1 Introduction

Roy has brought out her stringent dissatisfaction with the evil-doers through her non-fictional writings. She became a noticeable figure at the international level with the publication of *The God of Small Things* in 1997. In her fictional work, there is a confrontation between big and small, have-nots, touchables and untouchables and man and woman. Roy surprised the literary world with the publication of *The End of Imagination*, the first non-fictional work of the author. Roy distinguishes between fictional and non-fictional writings in one of her interviews with Goodman and she expresses her love for fiction:

Fiction is my love. Fiction is what makes me happy. The other writings that I do, each time I write I swear that I never do it again . . . When something happens and I read about what’s happening, and then I know that there is something that hasn’t been said which I want to say. It sets up this hammering in my mind and I can’t keep quiet and I have to do it and do it and most of the time regret it immediately (Goodman 2).

In *The End of Imagination*, Roy speaks about the nuclear tests conducted by India in May 1998 at Pokhran. The literary world was expecting a new fictional work from Roy but she took the opportunity to inform the people about the terrible effects of nuclear weapons. The sudden and abrupt shift from fiction to non-fiction raised so many questions about the future Roy. She couldn’t keep her mouth shut when India conducted the nuclear tests at Pokhran. The tests in fact pierced the heart of India and sowed the seed for the total annihilation of the society. Roy was committed to challenge the Government of India for having conducted the nuclear
tests without the consent of the people. She could rise to the occasion with her timely essay *The End of Imagination* in October 1998 to unleash pressure on the Government. Roy has got a burning passion for her country and she is ready to break her idolized self of being a winner of the coveted Booker Prize for fiction. She had specific game plan in her mind as she entered into the new realm of non-fictional writing. In *The End of Imagination*, Roy makes her idea clear:

I am prepared to grovel. To humiliate myself abjectly, because in the circumstances, silence would be indefensible. So those of you who are willing: let’s pick our parts, put on these discarded costumes and speak our second-hand lines in this sad second-hand play. But let’s not forget that the stakes we’re playing for are huge. Our fatigue and our shame could mean the end of us. The end of our children and our children’s children. Of everything we love. We have to reach within ourselves and find the strength to think. To fight (10).

Roy wrote her second essay *The Greater Common Good* in support for the displaced tribal people who suffer from the construction of the Sardar Sarovar Dam on the banks of the Narmada valley. She had taken up the challenge and made it a national issue after having witnessed the sufferings of the people. The people had no other alternative except to leave their land for an unknown destination in the name of development. *The Greater Common Good* clarified the doubts of the intelligentsia with its accurate facts and figures. The book was widely accepted by the activists and it became the ‘Bible’ of Narmada Bachao Andolan. It generated a strong public opinion in favour of the displaced tribal people of the Narmada
valley. In the outset of *The Greater Common Good*, Roy describes the deplorable condition of the tribal people:

I could see their airy, fragile homes. I could see their fields and the forests behind them. I could see little children with littler goats scuttling across the landscape like motorized peanuts (1).

Roy’s *The End of Imagination* and *The Greater Common Good* have been widely received across the country with a lot of enthusiasm. People began to address Roy as ‘writer-activist’ of the new millennium. She realised the responsibility of being a collaborator with the suffering humanity. Roy doesn’t prefer to be addressed as ‘writer-activist’ mainly because the so-called professional label will confine her writings to a narrow sense of appeal. It’s not out of fame or prestige that Roy has set out to rake over the policies of the Government. But she has realised within herself a pull towards the victims of the pseudo development. When there is a crisis everyone has to contribute his/her share to the society. It is very easy to cultivate an indifferent attitude towards the happenings of the world and when someone loves or hates something, s/he takes a decision forward. The greatest curse of modern democracy is that a great majority of people remain indifferent without having an opinion of their own. In *The Algebra of Infinite Justice*, Roy speaks about the challenges of being a writer:

To be a writer – a supposedly ‘famous’ writer – in a country where millions of people are illiterate is a dubious honour. To be a writer in a country that gave the world Mahatma Gandhi, that invented the concept of nonviolent resistance, and then, half a century later, followed that up with nuclear tests is
a ferocious burden . . . To be a writer in a country where something akin to an undeclared civil war is being waged on its citizens in the name of ‘development’ is an onerous responsibility. When it comes to writers and writing, I use words like ‘onerous’ and ‘responsibility’ with a heavy heart and not a small degree of sadness (189 - 190).

After the prestigious Booker Prize for fiction for *The God of Small Things*, Roy was nominated for the ‘Sahitya Akademi Award’ for her collection of essays *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* in 2005. Roy turned down the national award from India’s academy of letters in protest against the policies of the Government of India. Roy had great respect for the jury who adjudicated her work for the ‘Sahitya Akademi Award’ but rejected the honour for one obvious reason: *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* consists of a collection of political essays that attack the policies of the then NDA Government such as the testing of nuclear bombs, the construction of big dams, increasing militarization and economic liberalisation. The present UPA Government is following the path of its predecessor in carrying out the same mission at a faster rate. The foreign policies of the Government have been vehemently questioned by Roy, especially India’s stand to extend a helping hand to the U.S in combating terrorism and at the same time refusing to admit America’s invasion of Afghanistan and the illegal occupation of Iraq for lucrative purposes.

Roy has become a speck in the eyes of many people. The role of being an activist of the modern world is actually a risky job. That’s the reason why many of the literary writers do not embrace activism wholeheartedly. Activism cannot please everyone alike as it produces uncomfortable feeling in the minds of transgressors.
Roy justifies her role as an activist for the good of the society and she is ready to face the challenges that confront her in the way of progress. \textit{In The Algebra of Infinite Justice}, Roy speaks about her approach towards many of the issues in the society:

My thesis is that I’ve been saddled with this double-barrelled appellation, this awful professional label, not because my work is political, but because in my essays, I take sides. I take a position. I have a point of view. What’s worse, I make it clear that I think it’s right and moral to take that position and what’s even worse, use everything in my power to flagrantly solicit support for that position . . . I’m all for being circumspect. I’m all for discretion, prudence, tentativeness, subtlety, ambiguity, complexity . . . I love the unanswered question, the unresolved story, the unlimited mountain, the tender shard of an incomplete dream. Most of the time (196 - 197).

Art has paved way for activism in Roy. She could have remained as a literary artist throughout her life but the social commitment of the author had kindled the spark of activism. She has used her celebrity status for the greater common good. The media is after her and each and every action of Roy gets more prominence in the international arena. Roy is committed to her society and with immense media support, she is able to solve many of the problems of the people. The non-fictional world of Roy is free from political interventions and all kinds of prejudices. She has become an instrument to bridge the gap between the oppressor and the oppressed. She finds ample time at her disposal to listen to the pleas of the helpless people and
wields her mighty pen over the transgressors. Reddy praises Roy for her genuine effort to blend the celebrity status with activism:

The credibility of Arundhati Roy’s activism stems from the fact that she has been proactive participant in the socio-environment issues . . . She has emerged as the messiah of popular public causes, judiciously mixing her celebrity status with her activism (2).

In 2004, Roy published the second volume of non-fictional essays entitled *An Ordinary Person’s Guide to Empire*. It consists of fourteen essays written between June 2002 and November 2004. The period is noted for its greatest turmoil in the history of the world especially after the Second World War. The suicide attack on the World Trade Centre provoked the U. S. to declare war on terror, especially on the Al-Qaeda network operating in Afghanistan. The U. S. along with the coalition forces played the ‘World Police’ on the innocent people of Afghanistan. In *An Ordinary Person’s Guide to Empire*, Roy lampoons the Americans for having installed Hamid Karzai as the “Puppet President of Afghanistan” (37). Roy’s non-fictional writing is noted for severe and stringent attack on the disrupters of normal life. Her activistic writings have taken the leading role to fight against the social menace. She will come up with her activistic writing when there is a problem in the society. A non-fictional writer has to undergo a lot of internal conflict because s/he is dealing with a social issue that requires great precision and accuracy. The non-fictional writings should be thought-provoking and capable of meeting the need of the hour. In *An Ordinary Person’s Guide to Empire*, Roy speaks about the process of writing fiction and non-fiction:
Fiction and non-fiction are only different techniques of storytelling. For reasons I do not fully understand, fiction dances out of me. Non-fiction is wrenched out by the aching, broken world I awake up to every morning. The theme of much of what I write, fiction as well as non-fiction, is the relationship between power and powerlessness and the endless, circular conflict they’re engaged in (13).

Roy’s activistic writings lend a helping hand to protect the environment and the people alike. She envisages a world without corruption and the people should be free from all kinds of tyranny. Her writings support the defenceless people of the world and Roy has become a persevering writer for the greater common good. Roy is an emissary of peace. She spreads the message of love and brotherhood. The non-fictional writings of Roy strengthen the weak, annihilate the thriving business of weapons of mass destruction, discourage privatization and reduce the growing disparity between the rich and the poor.

5.2 Arundhati Roy: An Activist for the Greater Common Good

Roy took active role in public affairs since the completion of her fictional work *The God of Small Things*. Her love for the Meenachal River in *The God of Small Things* has taken the author to the Narmada valley. She has become part of the suffering humanity with her words and deeds. In order to find out the exact picture of the Narmada valley, Roy has spent many days with the tribal people, meeting the homeless and the destitute. She decided to do something for the people of the Narmada valley who suffer in the name of development. The earnest quest for an immediate action resulted in the publication of *The Greater Common Good*. 
Roy realised the fact that the valley needed a writer who can reach out to the millions of countrymen. She took up the challenge with genuine interest and she could channelize great public support in favour of the displaced tribal people of the Narmada valley. In Gujarat, *The Greater Common Good* was not allowed to be sold and there was a strong protest against Roy for having brought out the facts and figures of the Narmada valley in black and white. The owners of the bookshops were threatened not to keep the copies of the book by the activists of the vested private interest. The artificial necessity hiked the demand for the book and Roy received many letters from the people of Gujarat, asking how to get copies of the book. In *The Greater Common Good*, Roy makes her position clear by stating that she is not against development projects. Roy visited the Narmada valley only for the sake of curiosity. Roy says:

I’m not an anti-development junkie, nor a proselytiser for the eternal upholding of custom and tradition. What I *am*, however, is curious. Curiosity took me to the Narmada Valley. Instinct told me that this was the big one. The one in which the battle lines were clearly drawn, the warring armies massed along them. The one in which it would be possible to wade through the congealed morass of hope, anger, information, discrimination, political artifice, engineering ambition, disingenuous socialism, radical activism, bureaucratic subterfuge, misinformed emotionalism and of course the pervasive unerringly dubious, politics of International Aid (*Greater Common Good* 2).
The Greater Common Good opens with a quotation from Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of the country. It reads, “If you are to suffer, you should suffer in the interest of the country . . .” (1). The occasion was in 1948 when Nehru addressed the villagers who were to be displaced by the Hirakud dam. Roy begins the essay with an ironic statement, “I stood on a hill and laughed out loud” (1). The obvious reason for her laughter is nothing but

the tender concern with which the Supreme Court judges in Delhi (before vacating the legal stay on further construction of the Sardar Sarovar dam) had enquired whether tribal children in the resettlement colonies would have children’s park to play in (Roy, Greater Common Good 2).

India is an agrarian country and dams play vital role in irrigating the agricultural field. Jawaharlal Nehru spoke of dams as the “temples of modern India” which he himself regretted later in his life (Roy, Greater Common Good 7). The importance of dam has made its way into primary school textbooks and the children are taught only the good aspect of big dams. The dam building industry grew into such an extent that it was “equated with Nation-building” (7). According to the statistical data published by the Central Water Commission, India has 3,600 big dams and 3,300 have been completed after independence (Roy, Greater Common Good 7). The Indian Institute of Public Administration has come up with a detailed study of fifty-four large dams and the report is a matter of great concern for each and every one. It says, “The average number of people displaced by a Large Dam in India is 44,182” (Roy, Greater Common Good 9). If it is the condition of one big dam, how many people could have been displaced by 3,300 big dams in the country since
Indian independence. Roy appropriates the number to 10,000 and calculates the number of displaced tribals \((3,300 \times 10,000 = 33,000,000)\) to thirty-three million people (*Greater Common Good* 10).

In the case of the Sardar Sarovar Dam\(^2\), the victims are Adivasis who constitute 57.6 % of the total people displaced by the construction of the dam. Roy criticises the Government for not having a ‘National Rehabilitation Policy\(^3\). Though the Land Acquisition Act\(^4\) of 1894 was amended in 1984, “the Government is not legally bound to provide a displaced person anything but a cash compensation” (Roy, *Greater Common Good* 11). In *The Greater Common Good*, Roy makes fun of the existing scenario in the following words:

A cash compensation, to be paid by an Indian government official to an illiterate tribal man (the women get nothing) in a land where even the postman demands a tip for a delivery! Most tribal people have no formal title to their land and therefore cannot claim compensation anyway. Most tribal people or let’s say most small farmers – have as much use for money as a Supreme Court judge has for a bag of fertilizer (11).

The Narmada Valley Development Project\(^5\) is one of the most challenging projects in the history of mankind. When the project is completed there will be 3,200 dams, out of which 30 will be major dams, 135 medium and the rest small. The Sardar Sarovar in Gujarat and the Narmada Sagar in Madhya Pradesh come under “multi purpose mega-dams” (Roy, *Greater Common Good* 18). The Narmada Valley Development Project is undoubtedly big and it is a Herculean task for the Government to complete it without dispute. The project is estimated to “affect the
lives of twenty five million people who live in the valley” (18). The project can also “alter the ecology of the entire river basin of one of India’s biggest rivers” (18). The natural vegetation that supports the eco-system will be affected. The project is estimated to “submerge and destroy 4,000 square kilo meters of natural deciduous forest” (18). The World Bank had taken a special interest in financing the project even before the Ministry of Environment gave a green signal to it. The Ministry of Environment gave the clearance certificate only in 1987 but the World Bank was ready with the first instalment of the loan $450 million for the Sardar Sarovar Project way back in 1985. The World Bank is ready to extend its helping hand to the third world countries and to finance useless projects in the name of development aid as the bank wants interest rather than the capital. The third world countries will never be able to pay back the money that they have received from the World Bank and the officials know it very well that they finance useless projects in the name of so-called development aid. In *The Greater Common Good*, Roy speaks about the pathetic condition of the nation:

India is in a situation today where it pays back more money to The Bank in interest and repayment instalments than it receives from it. We are forced to incur new debts in order to be able to repay our old ones. According to the World Bank Annual Report (1998), after the arithmetic, India paid The Bank $478 million more than it borrowed . . . The relationship between us is exactly like the relationship between a landless labourer steeped in debt and the local Bania – it is an affectionate relationship, the poor man loves his Bania because he’s always there when he’s needed. It’s not for nothing that we call the world
a Global Village. The only difference between the landless labourer and the Government of India is that one uses the money to survive. The other just funnels it into the private coffers and agents, pushing the country into an economic bondage that it may never overcome (19).

The foundation stone for the Sardar Sarovar Dam was laid by Jawaharlal Nehru in 1961. The founding fathers had fixed the height of the dam to a moderate height of 49.8 meters. The then Government of Gujarat acquired 1,600 acres of land through a trick played on its people. In *The Greater Common Good*, Roy brings out the genesis of the Sardar Sarovar Dam. In 1961, the people of Kothie village were told by a government officer that some of their land would be needed for constructing a helipad because an important person was going to visit them. The crops that were about to be harvested were destroyed with immediate effect. The villagers were forced to sign different papers and a sum of money was given in return. The illiterate villagers thought that the money was given as compensation for their lost crops. The VIP was none other than the Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru who laid the foundation stone for the Sardar Sarovar Dam by pressing “a button and there was a an explosion on the other side of the river” (44). Roy’s question is very simple and straightforward, “Could Nehru have known when he pressed that button that he had unleashed an incubus?” (44).

The construction of the dam began in full swing and the poor villagers became victims of the project. The Government took no initiative in rehabilitating the people except the cash compensation being paid in different instalments. Roy accuses the Government of Gujarat for having the rehabilitation policy only on
paper (Greater Common Good 35). The Government carries out big projects like the Sardar Sarovar Dam for the greater common good of the people and at the same time neglects the harmful consequences of such projects upon the people and the environment. As the height of the Sardar Sarovar Dam goes up, the people and the forest become inevitable prey to mega dam:

It thinks nothing of submerging a valley that has yielded fossils, microliths and rock paintings, the only valley in India, according to archaeologists, that contains an uninterrupted record of human occupation from the Old Stone Age (Roy, Greater Common Good 47).

Through The Greater Common Good, Roy has brought out some stupefying facts about the Narmada Valley Project. The book was an open plea to the authorities to react strongly and effectively for the greater common good. She laments the facts that, “Day by day, river by river, forest by forest . . . bomb by bomb - almost without our knowing it - we are being broken” (61). It is high time that the Government did something to protect the people of the Narmada valley from cultural genocide. Roy roused the inspiration for Narmada Bachao Andolan with her non-fictional work The Greater Common Good. She encouraged them to strive towards the goal, the goal of being liberated from all kinds of invasion and achieve peace and serenity in the valley.

5.2.1 An Ardent Supporter of Narmada Bachao Andolan

Narmada Bachao Andolan (Save Narmada Movement - NBA) started its operation in 1985. The initiative for NBA came from the people and the leadership
was provided by Medha Patkar and a handful of activists. The spiritual leadership for NBA was given by Babe Amte, a venerable champion of the underdogs in India. NBA has got many supporters at national and international levels but it receives no foreign funds for its activities. It upholds the philosophy of non-violence as propounded by the father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhiji. NBA protests against the Narmada Valley Development Project (NVDP) for its lack of rehabilitation measures. The people of the Narmada valley are not against development as they are aware of the advantages of having a dam. When the Government is obsessed with the construction of a series of dams in the Narmada valley, the people cannot help themselves without protesting. The NVDP appears to be one of the disastrous wonders of the modern world. It proposes to build 30 large dams, 135 medium dams and 3000 small dams on the Narmada river and its tributaries. NBA has been reiterating from the very beginning that so many dams centred at one point will be a great threat to the eco-system. In The Greater Common Good, Roy speaks about the Narmada Valley Development Project as “India’s Greatest Planned Environmental Disaster” (25). NBA realised this fact very early in 1988 and called for all the developmental activities to be stopped in the Narmada valley. In May 1994, NBA filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court of India for an immediate stay on the Sardar Sarovar Project. NBA argued that the project violated the fundamental rights of the people and it was not feasible on social, environmental, technical and economic grounds. In January 1995, the Supreme Court of India took a decisive step in favour of NBA and ordered no further work on the Sardar Sarovar Dam without informing the court in advance.
The strenuous efforts of NBA resulted in the exit of the World Bank from the Sardar Sarovar Project in 1993. It was a major blow for the project and the decision was taken only after the strong recommendations of the Independent Review and the Pamela Cox Committee. Soon after the exit of the World Bank, the Government of Gujarat announced its decision to go ahead with the project. Roy became an ardent supporter of Narmada Bachao Andolan with the publication of *The Greater Common Good*. She extends her full support to the people of the Narmada valley especially those who are affected by the construction of the Sardar Sarovar Dam. Roy joined hands with hundreds of activists of Narmada Bachao Andolan to fight against the social nuisance. Roy’s presence gave a new morale to the activists of NBA to march ahead with confidence and to face the eventualities of the future. NBA activists welcomed *The Greater Common Good* as the dawn of a new struggle in the Narmada valley. In *An Ordinary Person’s Guide to Empire*, Roy speaks about the role of NBA:

NBA believes that Big Dams are obsolete. It believes there are more democratic, more local, more economically viable and environmentally sustainable ways of generating electricity and managing water systems. It is demanding *more* modernity, not less. It is demanding *more* democracy, not less . . . Right now NBA is not just fighting Big Dams. It’s fighting for the survival of India’s greatest gift to the world: non-violent resistance. You could call it the Ahimsa Bachao Andolan or the Save Non-violence Movement. Over the years our government has shown nothing but contempt for the people
of the Narmada Valley. Contempt for their argument. Contempt for their movement (6 - 8).

Roy had enough time at her disposal to visit the displaced tribals of the Narmada valley in their tents. She mingled freely with them and expressed solidarity with the people. Roy wholeheartedly supported Narmada *Bachao Andolan* with huge amount of money that she got from the Booker Prize. She gave wide publicity to the issue and the struggles in Narmada valley were being covered by many of the international journals. She supported the displaced tribal people of the Narmada valley as they are “nothing but refugees in an unacknowledged war” (Roy, *Greater Common Good* 12). The people who lost their land in the name of development should be given enough land for the proper rehabilitation. The Narmada Water Dispute Tribunal Award\(^8\) (NWDTA) included in its provisions on rehabilitation that ‘land for land’ as the basis of the rehabilitation as against the cash compensation under the Land Acquisition Act. The displaced tribal people of the Narmada valley did not get any cash compensation from the Government as they had no legal ownership of the land which they had been cultivating for centuries. So, officially on paper the displaced tribal people of the Narmada valley are refugees and the Government is not ready to rehabilitate them. Water borne diseases are rampant in the Narmada valley due to the constant submergence of it.

The Supreme Court of India declared its final verdict on the Public Interest Litigation filed by Narmada *Bachao Andolan* against the Union of India and the state governments of Gujarat, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh on 18\(^{th}\) October 2000. In the so-called ‘Majority Judgement’, Justice Kirpal and Justice Anand
(Chief Justice) ordered that the construction of the Sardar Sarovar Dam should be completed as ‘expeditiously’ as possible. The judgement gave a green signal to the project and the height of the dam could go up to 138.68 meters. Justice Bharucha, the only one of the three judges to have heard the case from its very beginning, wrote a dissenting judgement. In his ‘Minority Judgement’, Justice Bharucha voiced his protest against the further construction of the Sardar Sarovar Dam. Roy criticised the ‘Majority Judgement’ of the Supreme Court of India and became a victim of the Contempt of Court. The Supreme Court of India found Roy guilty of criminal Contempt of Court by “scandalizing its authorities with malafide intentions” punishable under Section 12 of the Contempt of Court Act” (Press Release 1). Justice G. B. Pattnaik and R. P. Sethi sentenced her to simple imprisonment for one day and to pay a fine of Rs. 2,000/-. Roy reacted to the judgement as:

I stand by what I said. And I am prepared to suffer the consequences. The dignity of the court will be upheld by the quality of their judgements. The quality of their judgement will be assessed by the people of the country. The message is clear. Any citizen who dares to criticize the court does so at his or her peril. The judgement only confirms what I said in my affidavit. It is a sad realization for me, because I feel the Supreme Court of India is an important institution and the citizens of India have high expectation from it (Press Release 1).

Roy turned her jail experience into a fruitful one. It was one of the rare opportunities that Roy got in her life to mingle freely with the inmates of the Thihar
Jail. One day imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 2,000/- were nothing when compared to the punishment of appearing in person before the court at the demand. The Supreme Court of India took more than one year to decide the fate of Roy. She has realised the fact that the delay and the procedure of the case are two different parts of the punishment. The media focussed its attention on Roy when she was sentenced to one day imprisonment in the Thihar Jail. The media was curious whether Roy would pay the fine of Rs. 2,000/- or stay in jail for three more months as a default in the payment of fine. Roy’s decision came very late keeping the media vigil over her sleep. Roy sums up the jail experience in the following words:

I spent a night in prison, trying to decide whether to pay the fine or serve out a 3-month sentence instead. Paying the fine does not in any way mean that I have apologised or accepted the judgement. I decided that paying the fine was the correct thing to do, because I have made the point I was trying to make. To take it further would be to make myself into a martyr for a cause that is not mine alone. It is for India’s free Press to fight to patrol the boundaries of its freedom which the law of Contempt, as it stands today, severely restricts and threatens. I hope that battle will be joined (Roy’s Statement 1).

Narmada Bachao Andolan needs activists like Roy to fight against the social menace. She continues to extend her support for all the activities of NBA. In her open appeal, she requests the participation of all the people to come forward and share the atrocities of the displaced tribal people of the Narmada valley.
5.2.2 A Vehement Critic of Pseudo Developments

Roy prefers to go after details and excavate the truth. It is actually the duty of the media but they are interested only in sensationalising events. The media has the responsibility to go after truth but very often media forgets it as it hunts for human interest stories. The World Bank and Multinational Companies invest a lot of money in the third world countries. The third world countries are very often lured by the big offers of Multinational Companies. The World Bank and Multinational Companies invest their capital only from a lucrative point of view. They make customers for their products and services in the third world countries. In The Greater Common Good, Roy speaks about the earnestness of the World Bank and Multinational Companies in carrying out the developmental activities in India:

The dam-building industry in the first world is in trouble and out of work. So it’s exported to the third world in the name of Development Aid, along with their other waste, like old weapons, superannuated aircraft carriers and banned pesticides (58).

Privatization is the withdrawal of the Government from responsibilities and it is the status symbol of a powerless Government. Roy has taken the role of a spokesperson to unleash pressure on any type of privatization and corporate globalisation. The so-called developmental activities that the World Bank and Multinational Companies carry out in the third world countries are in fact pseudo developments. The politicians and bureaucrats allow such developmental activities in their state because they know very well that they will be in their office only for a short time and such projects will definitely fetch a lot of bribes in their account. The World
Bank and Multinational Companies will force governments to sign the bond without any loopholes. The politicians and bureaucrats may not even read the conditions prescribed in the bond before signing the papers or sometimes they may not understand the hidden agendas in the bond. The people will come to know about the terms and conditions of the developmental activities only when there is a dispute between the people and the agencies of development. Roy defines privatization in *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* as:

> It is the transfer of productive public assets from the state to private companies. Productive assets include natural resources. Earth, forest, water, air. These are assets that the state holds in trust for the people. In a country like India, seventy percent of the population lives in rural areas. That’s seven hundred million people. Their lives depend directly on access to natural resources. To snatch these away and sell them as stock to private companies is a process of barbaric dispossession on a scale that has no parallel in history (153).

In “Power Politics”, Roy speaks about the first private power project in India and how it has become a pseudo development for the people of Maharashtra. In 1993, the Enron signed the power purchase agreement with the State Government of Maharashtra, led by the Congress Party, for 695 megawatt power. The then opposition parties, the BJP and the Shiv Sena, protested against the privatization of power and they “filed legal proceedings against the Enron and the State Government” (Roy, *Power Politics* 162). When Maharashtra faced the general assembly election in February 1995, the BJP and the Shiv Sena alliance could
convince the people that the Multinational Company the Enron would be a national threat. The privatisation of the power sector was the major accusation against the Congress Party throughout the election campaign. When the result was declared, the BJP and the Shiv Sena alliance came back to power in Maharashtra and they just forgot the past and appointed a re-negotiation committee with the Enron. In 1996, the Government of Maharashtra signed the historic agreement with the Enron. Roy criticises the Government of Maharashtra for having signed the historic blunder with the Enron. Roy says:

Experts who have studied the project have called it the most massive fraud in the Country’s history. The power that the Enron plant produces is twice as expensive as its nearest competitor and seven times as expensive as the cheapest electricity available in Maharashtra (Power Politics 164 - 165).

The Maharashtra State Electricity Board had gone through a severe period of crisis and turmoil when they had to set aside seventy percent of its revenue for the Enron. The people suffered as they had to pay exorbitant electricity bill and many of the industrialists in Maharashtra began to generate their own power with the help of generators. In May 2000, the Maharashtra Electricity Regulatory Committee (MERC) stopped purchasing power from the Enron. The decision was taken on the basis of the calculation worked out by MERC as:

It would be cheaper to just pay the Enron the mandatory fixed charges for maintenance and administration of the plant that it is contractually obliged to pay, than to actually buy and utilize any of its exorbitant power. The fixed
charges alone work out to Rs. 1,000 crore a year for Phase I of the Project. Phase II will be nearly twice the size (Roy, *Power Politics* 165).

As a result of the power purchase deal, the small scale industries suffered great loss because they couldn’t pay the expensive electricity bill. In January 2001, there was a turnover in the Government and the Congress Party came back to power in Maharashtra. The newly elected Government refused payments to the Enron. A gruesome face of privatization was witnessed by the people when the Enron threatened the Government by stating that “If the Government did not come with the cash it would have to auction the Government properties pledged as collateral security” (Roy, *Power Politics* 166 - 167). Privatization of the essential infrastructure goes against the principles of Democracy and “Creating a good investment climate is the new euphemism for the third world repression” (Roy, *Algebra of Infinite Justice* 203). The corporate globalization could be dismantled “if we refuse to buy what they are selling – their ideas, their version of history, their wars, their weapons, their notion of inevitability” (Roy, *Ordinary Person’s Guide to Empire* 86)

Roy loves her country and its indigenous products. She accuses the Government for not taking the initiative to protect the Indian public sector companies like Bharat Heavy Electricals (BHEL) with more provisions for research and development. BHEL has lost its past glory and now it has got a mediocre existence. The deterioration of the Indian public sector company paves way for multinational companies to firm their foot in India. The people of the third world countries have become the ultimate customers of the first world’s unwanted goods and services. In
India, Call Centres are flourishing in every nook and cranny of the country and so many Call Centre Training Colleges have come up so as to equip students to speak in American and British accents. Roy questions such types of pseudo developments taking place in the country:

Call Centre workers are paid exactly one-tenth of the salaries of their counterparts abroad. From all accounts, Call Centres in India are billed to become a multi-million dollar industry. Imagine that – a multi-million dollar industry built on a bedrock of lies, false identities and racism (Power Politics 182).

In “Power Politics”, Roy rakes over the harmful consequences of Shri Maheshwar Hydel Project, first privately constructed dam in India. The Maheshwar Dam⁹ is part of the Narmada Valley Development Project. The responsibility of building the dam was conferred on the Madhya Pradesh Electricity Board (MPEB) in 1989. But the S. Kumars won the concession to build the first privately constructed hydroelectric dam in the country in 1993. Due to the constant intimidation from the part of Narmada Bachao Andolan, the foreign companies of the U. S and Germany withdrew their support to the Maheshwar dam. NBA accuses the authorities for hiking the cost of electricity to Rs. 6.55 per unit which is “twenty-six times more expensive than existing hydel power in the State, five-and-a-half times more expensive than thermal power, and four times more expensive than power from the central grid” (Roy, Power Politics 172). The estimated cost of the dam was Rs. 465 crore and in 1996 when the S. Kumars entered into the deal, it suddenly rose to Rs. 1,569 crore. According to the latest report, the cost of the dam
is 2, 200 crore. It was a joint venture project and eighty percent of money was raised from foreign investors like Pacgen and Ogden of the U. S, Bayernwerk, VEW, Siemens and the Hypovereinsbank of Germany. The reservoir of the Maheswar Dam will submerge 5,697 hectares of land, displacing 35,000 people from 61 villages. Apart from the submergence and constant trouble to the people, the Government has to pay Rs. 600 crore a year to the S. Kumars for the next thirty-five years (Roy, Power Politics 173). The Government of Madhya Pradesh is in deep trouble due to the privatization of the hydro-electric power project. Roy blames the helplessness of the Government in paying Rs. 600 crore a year to the S. Kumars “even before the employers of the bankrupt State Electricity Board get their salaries” (173). In An Ordinary Person’s Guide to Empire, Roy speaks about the lucrative motive of privatization as:

‘Privatization’ is presented as being the only alternative to an inefficient, corrupt state. In fact, it’s not a choice at all. It’s only made to look like one. Essentially, privatization is a mutually profitable business contract between the private (preferably foreign) company or financial institution and the ruling elite of the third world. (One of the fallouts is that even corruption becomes an elitist affair. Your average small-fry government official is in grave danger of losing his or her bit on the side) (168 - 169).

The development projects carried out by the private companies will not be useful for the people in the long run. The history has shown that almost all the private undertakings have turned out to be pseudo developments. The people will have to suffer by paying extra taxes to compensate for the loss that the Government has
suffered. In the name of development, the private companies are trying to fulfil their vested interest by completely negating the fundamental rights of the people. In a country like India, the rights of its citizens have got paramount importance. Their views and aspirations should be respected by the Government. The people of this country are not against development but when the Government undertakes marathon projects, there needs to be more consensus among the people and social organizations. The Government should have alternative arrangements to rehabilitate the people when they lose their land in the name of development. Now-a-days almost all developmental activities are carried out in the rural areas because of the cheap availability of land and comparatively minimum resistance to such projects there. So, it is the poor people who ultimately become victims of development and they will have to wage war against the authorities for securing their basic needs.

5.3 Arundhati Roy: An Emissary of Peace with Justice

Roy came up with *The End of Imagination* in 1998 as an immediate reaction against India’s testing of nuclear weapons in Pokhran. Roy, with an ardent passion, charges the Government for having conducted the nuclear tests. In *The End of Imagination*, Roy laments the fact that “my world has died. And I write to mourn its passing” (30). When the Pokhran test was conducted by the Government of India, the supporters of the then Government wanted to “distribute radioactive sand from the Pokhran Desert as ‘prasad’ all across the country” (17). Roy calls it “a Cancer Yatra” to eliminate humanity from the world (17). The newspapers gave wide publicity to the nuclear tests and many of the papers praised the government for having conducted the nuclear tests as “Explosion of Self-esteem”, “Road to
Resurgence” and “A Moment of Pride” (26). The Shiv Sena supremo Mr. Bal Thackery reacted to the nuclear tests by stating that “We have proved that we are not eunuchs anymore.” The serious issue was treated with much ease and pride; therefore, Roy was forced to come to a contention that “Everybody loves the bomb. (Therefore the bomb is good)” (50). Both India and Pakistan build up nuclear weapons as they believe in the Theory of Nuclear Deterrence10. Each and every country in the world is busy in building up its nuclear weapons for the protection and well being of its territory. Roy prophesies that there will come a time when the ordinary man can afford to buy weapons as the prices fall and s/he can use it against his/her enemies:

When nuclear technology goes on the market, when it goes truly competitive and prices fall, not just governments, but anybody who can afford it can have their own private arsenal – businessmen, terrorists, perhaps even the occasional rich writer (like myself) (End of Imagination 18).

The Government of India is keen on building up its nuclear weapons. Roy satirizes the Bhaba Atomic Research Centre’s idea of giving safety measures to tackle the bad effects of nuclear weapons in case of a nuclear war. It advises the people to

- take iodine pills . . . remaining indoors, consuming only stored water and food and avoiding milk. Infants should be given powdered milk. People in the danger zone should immediately go to the ground floor and if possible to the basement (Roy, End of Imagination 13).
The Government of India cheated the people without making them aware of the harmful consequences of nuclear weapons. The Government had enough time and money to build up arms and ammunitions for safeguarding its territory. At the same time, the Government neglects the poor people’s battle for survival. In the name of developments, the Government of India has denied justice to its people especially the poor Adivasis and tribal people. They live in forests, eat fruits, roots and leaves and make their own medicine from herbal plants. Though special Constitutional Rights have been guaranteed to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, the existence of these people is really in trouble:

Tribal people don’t really matter. Their stories, their customs, their deities are dispensable. They must learn to sacrifice these things for the Greater Common Good of the Nation (that has snatched from them everything they ever had) (Roy, *End of Imagination* 46).

India is a country known for its ancient culture and heritage from the time immemorial. The people in the country protest against the Western “music, their food, their clothes, their cinema and their literature” (Roy, *End of Imagination* 45). But the same people celebrate nuclear bombs and condemn “Western culture by emptying crates of Coke and Pepsi into the public drains” (44). People reject Coke and Pepsi as they belong to the Western culture and they accept nuclear bombs as if they belonged to “an old Indian tradition” (45). India wants to project to the world communities that the country is in its way of progress, trying to be self-sufficient and self-reliant. But the country has to go a long way for the eradication of poverty.
The metro cities of the nation have developed but not the rural poor. In *The End of Imagination*, Roy illustrates the deplorable condition of the nation:

> For India to demand the status of a Superpower is as ridiculous as demanding to play in the World Cup finals simply because we have a ball. Never mind that we haven’t qualified, or that we don’t play much soccer and haven’t got a team . . . We are a nation of nearly a billion people. In development terms we rank No.138 out of the 175 countries listed in the UNDP’s Human Development Index. More than 400 million of our people are illiterate and live in absolute poverty, over 600 million lack even basic sanitation and over 200 million have no drinking water (36).

Roy is an emissary of peace with justice. She wants to spread the message of love, brotherhood and fraternity. The nuclear tests conducted in India wounded the feelings of Roy. The Government is answerable for carrying out the nuclear tests secretly and the authorities should be punished for sowing the seeds of hatred. Mr. Adal Bihari Vajpayee, the then the Prime Minister of the country when India conducted the nuclear tests, justified India’s action on the basis of “deteriorating security environment” (Roy, *End of Imagination* 33). India considers Pakistan as the deadly poisonous neighbour and the nuclear tests were being carried out so as to give a shock treatment to Pakistan. Soon after India’s nuclear tests in May 1998 at Pokhran, the Government of Pakistan retaliated in the same manner by conducting the nuclear tests. They have also proved that they are not ‘eunuchs’ any more. India and Pakistan build up nuclear weapons for the protection of their country. But all their aspiration go in vain when one country attacks the other:
Though we are separate countries, we share skies, we share winds, we share water. Where radioactive fallout will land on any given day depends on the direction of the wind and rain. Lahore and Amritsar are thirty miles apart. If we bomb Lahore, Punjab will burn. If we bomb Karachi – then Gujarat and Rajasthan, perhaps even Bombay, will burn. Any nuclear war with Pakistan will be a war against ourselves (Roy, *End of Imagination* 34).

In *The End of Imagination*, Roy has brought out the perilous effects of nuclear weapons and the drastic extent to which they can lead the people into trouble. Bombs can’t satisfy the thirst and hunger of the poor. They can be used only for destructive purposes and finally they lead to the total annihilation of the society. Roy incites the people to act against the policies of the Government especially the nuclear proliferation policy. Roy corrects the mistaken notion that the nuclear weapons are harmful only when they are used. In *The End of Imagination*, Roy speaks about the bad influence of nuclear weapons on the lives of the people:

> It is such supreme folly to believe that nuclear weapons are deadly only if they’re used. The fact that they exist at all, their very presence in our lives, will wreck more havoc than we can begin to fathom. Nuclear weapons pervade our thinking. Control our behaviour. Administer our societies. Inform our dreams. They bury themselves like meat hooks deep in the base of our dreams. They are purveyors of madness. They are the ultimate coloniser. Whiter than any white man that ever lived. The very heart of whiteness (19 - 20).
Roy projects herself as an ambassador of peace with justice through her non-fictional writings. She criticised both the Congress Party and the BJP for their keen enthusiasm in pursuing nuclear weapons. The Government taught its people how to wage immortal war against the very elements of nature. Weapons of mass destruction aim at the culmination of human society. Atom bombs have no feelings, they don’t have any space and time:

Making bombs will only destroy us. It doesn’t matter whether we use them or not. They will destroy us either way. India’s nuclear bomb is the final act of betrayal by a ruling class that has failed its people (Roy, *End of Imagination* 49 - 50).

Roy’s *The End of Imagination* has achieved the intended meaning. It could spread the message wide and clear that the nuclear weapons are harmful and they should be eradicated at any cost. Roy laments the death of her imaginative world in *The End of Imagination* and considers bomb as “Man’s challenge to God” (53). Kapadia sums up the stunning achievement of Roy’s *The End of Imagination* in the following words:

The article is an ideological statement, lucidly presented with an abundance of parody, irony and at times biting sarcasm. It is a vehement protest at the nuclear tests carried out at Pokharan in May 1998 and the subsequent attempt by the BJP Government to politicise the issue and present it as a national cause. The fearlessness of the author considered an icon, a success story of the middle classes and a symbol of India’s progress, in championing an anti-
establishment cause which she fervently believes irrespective of the consequences or her status is praiseworthy. The most fascinating part of this article is her beguiling, captivating prose (406).

5.3.1 A Dissuader of War and Vengeance

War and vengeance have been the obsessions of man from the time immemorial. The twenty-first century has witnessed the real horror of war and vengeance. Terrorism, a by-product of war, has taken the role of an ultimate colonizer. India has been facing cross-border terrorism for the last so many years. Terrorism suddenly got international attention with the suicide attack on the Pentagon and the World Trade Centre in the U. S. on 11 September 2001. America, the most powerful country in the world, couldn’t afford to rest without declaring war against terror especially on the Al-Qaeda network operating in Afghanistan. Roy, a dissuader of war and vengeance, came up with her timely essay, “The Algebra of Infinite Justice” in October 2001. She expressed concern over America’s new venture of attacking Afghanistan:

A Coalition of the world’s superpowers is closing in on Afghanistan, one of the poorest, most ravaged, war-torn countries in the world, whose ruling Taliban government is sheltering Osama bin Laden, the man being held responsible for the 11 September attack (Roy, Algebra of Infinite Justice 225 - 226).

The world witnessed the brutal face of terrorism when the international coalition against terror turned towards Afghanistan. The coalition mobilized its army in and
around Afghanistan and started torrential airstrikes against the civilians and terrorists of Afghanistan. In *An Ordinary Person’s Guide to Empire*, Roy makes a valid statement about war: “Now wars are manufactured in order to sell weapons” (342). Roy’s statement is absolutely correct and there is no permanent enemy in the case of war. The U. S. had its close affinity with Afghanistan and Iraq. They were old friends of the United States of America. In 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan and the U. S. came to rescue them. At that time the U. S. and the Soviet Union were deadly opposed to each other. After the suicide attack on the Pentagon and the World Trade Centre in the U. S. on 11 September 2001, Russia joined hands with the U. S. as an ally in the international coalition against terror so as to re-destroy Afghanistan. Wars have now become an artificial necessity for the U. S. to sell its second hand weapons to the third world countries. Roy cautions the third world countries not to depend upon the U. S. for any kind of help and support:

Any Third World Country with a fragile economy and a complex social base should know by now that to invite a Superpower like America in (whether it says it’s saying or just passing through) would be like inviting a brick to drop through your windscreen (*Algebra of Infinite Justice* 231).

The international coalition against terror, triggered off by the U. S., launched air strikes against Afghanistan from 7 October 2001. The Coalition couldn’t even wait for one month to start off the proceedings since the suicide attack on the World Trade Centre and on the Pentagon. Roy criticises the U. N. for its helplessness to control the regime of terror and feels pity for having reduced itself into “an ineffective acronym” (*Algebra of Infinite Justice* 241). The U. N. was a silent
observer of all the events and concentrated on relief and rescue operations in Afghanistan. America is committed to combat terrorism at any cost and the same country has become the greatest perpetrator of terrorism in the world. Roy says:

> The bombing of Afghanistan is not revenge for New York and Washington. It is yet another act of terror against the people of the world. Each innocent person that is killed must be added to, not set off against, the grisly toll of civilians who died in New York and Washington (*Algebra of Infinite Justice* 242).

The former President of America, Mr. George W. Bush, declared to the world, “We’re a peaceful nation” (243) and the enemies of America are in fact “Enemies of Freedom” (*Algebra of Infinite Justice* 221). Roy, a dissuader of war and vengeance, has taken the words of the former American President very seriously in the wake of the last sixty years of war in the world. Roy could come to a conclusion that the most peaceful country in the world had been waging war with many of the countries:

Roy wrote the essay “War is Peace” in October 2001 as an immediate reply to America’s war on terror in Afghanistan. Due to incessant war, Afghanistan has been reduced to rubble and now even the rubble is being pounded into finer dust (247). The innocent people of Afghanistan suffered for an unknown cause and the civilian casualties rose to an indefinite number. Nobody has an account of how many people died in the unacknowledged war against Afghanistan. The international coalition never subdued before the incompetent Afghanistan. It could destroy everything in the name of terrorism by following the principles animosity and brutalism. Roy, with child-like innocence, urges the United States of America to put an end to the war in Afghanistan:

Put your ear to the ground in this part of the world, and you can hear the thrumming, the deadly drumbeat of burgeoning anger. Please. Please, stop the war now. Enough people have died. The smart missiles are just not smart enough. They’re blowing up whole warehouses of suppressed fury (Algebra of Infinite Justice 256).

The world has witnessed yet another type of colonialism in Iraq with the hanging of Saddam Hussein. The U. S. has got a tremendous influence on the rise and fall of Saddam Hussein. When he turned against the Kurdish people in 1988, the U. S. protected Saddam Hussein and “They financed him, equipped him, armed him and provided him with dual-use materials to manufacture Weapons of Mass Destruction. They supported his worst excesses financially, materially and morally” (Roy, Ordinary Person’s Guide to Empire 142). He could create chemical and biological weapons against his own people with the help of the U. S. Saddam
Hussein became an enemy of the U. S. when Iraq attacked Kuwait in 1990 and “His sin was not so much that he had committed an act of war, but that he acted independently, without orders from his masters” (33). Though the U. S. came out in flying colours in the first Iraq War, America couldn’t stop Saddam Hussein from manufacturing the weapons of mass destruction. The income from oil was the source of inspiration for Saddam Hussein and the U. S. wanted to destroy the major source of Iraq’s economy. In order to work out the plan, the U. S. pressed the U. N. to send weapon inspectors to Iraq. Roy criticises the U. S by stating that they have no right to send the U. N. weapon inspectors to Iraq. If the U. N. is so adamant they should go to the U. S. in order to find out the weapons of mass destruction as “The United States has the largest arsenal of nuclear weapons in the world. It’s the only country in the world to have actually used them on civilian population” (Roy, *Ordinary Person’s Guide to Empire* 36).

In *An Ordinary Person’s Guide to Empire*, Roy breaks into the lucrative game played by the U. S. in Iraq. The war against Iraq is being carried out by the U. S. and the allies in the name of combating global terrorism. After having visited Iraq, the U. N. weapon inspectors reiterated the fact that they could hardly find any weapon of mass destruction. Yet, the U. S. and the close-knit allies went ahead to destroy Iraq and more particularly the Saddam Hussein regime. The rescue and relief operations were being carried out by the U. N. on the basis of Oil for Food Programme. So, the ultimate aim of the second Gulf War was to gain control over the Iraqi oil. The second Gulf War was the most shameful war ever committed by the U. S. in the history of the world:
After using the ‘good offices’ of U. N. diplomacy (economic sanctions and weapons inspectors) to ensure that Iraq was brought to its knees, its people starved, half a million of its children killed, its infrastructure severely damaged, after making sure that most of its weapons have been destroyed, in an act of cowardice that must surely be unrivalled in history, the ‘Allies’/‘Coalition of the Willing’ (better known as the Coalition of the Bullied and Bought) sent in an invading army!(Roy, Ordinary Person’s Guide to Empire 117).

The war in Afghanistan and Iraq could have been avoided if the U. S. had a little bit of mercy upon the mankind. The U. S. boasts by saying that the war against terror has in fact liberated the people of both Afghanistan and Iraq. But in reality it has paved way for new types of trouble in the world. In this crucial juncture, the powerful countries should lay down their weapons for a better tomorrow. Arms and ammunition cannot provide security to the people of this world as they struggle hard for food and medicine. The basic needs of the people should be given primary importance. Powerful countries should stop the ‘Big Brotherly’ attitude towards the third world countries. War denies people’s right to live in this world and it has become the greatest enemy of the people.

5.3.2 An Impartial Judge of Political Corruption

Roy, through her non-fictional writings, has turned out to be an impartial judge of political corruption. India is the biggest democratic country in the world but political corruption has become an order of the day in this country. In An Ordinary
Person’s Guide to the Empire, Roy makes a statement: “Politics is dirty or all politicians are corrupt” (234). One must be really bold to write anything against the politicians because they hold their office only for a short time but they exercise tremendous power over everyone. Roy had taken the challenge to write against the politicians especially after the state sponsored pogrom in Gujarat. In “Democracy”, Roy examined the whole issue of Gujarat massacre without any political or religious bias. The burning of the Sabarmati Express in Godhra paved way for the Hindu-Muslim riot in Gujarat. The death of fifty-eight Hindu passengers in the train incited violence against the Muslim community and the death toll rose to 2,000. Democracy has witnessed a gruesome face with the Gujarat massacre. Roy accuses the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and the Bajrang Dal behind the brutal killing of the innocent Muslims. The repercussions of the riot had far reaching impact. Roy says:

More than 15,000 people, driven from their homes, now live in refugee camps. Women were stripped, gang-raped; parents were bludgeoned to death in front of their children. Two hundred and forty dargahs and 180 masjids were destroyed. In Ahmedabad the tomb of Wali Gujarati, the founder of the modern Urdu poem, was demolished and paved over in the course of a night. The tomb of the musician Ustad Faiyaz Ali Khan was desecrated and wreathed in burning tyres. Arsonists burned and looted shops, homes, hotels, textiles mills, buses and private cars. Tens of thousands have lost their jobs (Democracy 267 - 268).
Mr. A. B. Vajpayee, the then Prime Minister of the country, justified the Gujarat riot “as part of the retaliation by outraged Hindus against Muslim terrorists” who were responsible for the death of fifty-eight Hindu passengers in the Sabarmati Express at Godhra (Roy, Democracy 265). Roy criticised the Prime Minister for not taking immediate action to put an end to the riot. While Gujarat was burning with an orgy of violence, “Our Prime Minister was on MTV promoting his new poems” (269). The people who were responsible for the burning of the Sabarmati Express in Godhra were not brought before law. In the riot that followed, there was an orchestrated violence against the Muslim community and the State Government of Gujarat added fuel to the fire.

India is a secular state. The people have the right to worship any religion but violence against the minorities is causing a great trouble in the country today. Anti-secular tendencies cause divisions in the country and that will lead to the disintegration of the nation. In “Democracy”, Roy accuses the Congress Party for inciting violence against the Sikh Community after the assassination of Indira Gandhi (275). Roy condemns the anti-secular activities of the two major political parties, the Congress and the BJP. They have many things in common:

In every case, the Congress sowed the seed and the BJP has swept in to reap the hideous harvest. So in the event that we’re called upon to vote, is there a difference between the two? The answer is a faltering but distinct ‘yes’. Here’s why: It’s true that the Congress Party has sinned, and grievously, and for decades together. But it has done by night what the BJP does by day. It has
done covertly, stealthily, hypocritically, shamefacedly what the BJP does with pride, and this is an important difference (Roy, Democracy 276).

Though India professes itself to be a secular state, a lot of anti-secular activities take place in the country. The ironic thing about anti-secular activities is that they have been perpetrated by the political parties in a country where the biggest democracy exists. Roy accuses the political administration for not taking effective steps to bring the culprits before law. The brutal killing of the Sikhs in Delhi in 1984, the demolition of the Babri Masjid, the Shiv Sena led massacre of Muslims in Bombay in 1993 and the Bajrang Dal led genocide against Muslims in Gujarat in 2002 were some of the saddest aspects of Secular India (Roy, Ordinary Person’s Guide to the Empire 97). Roy criticises the authorities by stating that “Neither the police, nor the courts, nor the Government has taken serious action against anybody who participated in this violence” (97). The police even opened fire on the unarmed Adivasi people in different parts of the country without any provocation. In “Peace is War”, Roy has examined the atrocities against the Adivasis:

In April 2001 the police opened fire on a peaceful meeting of the Adivasi Mukti Sangathan in Mehndi Kheda, Madhya Pradesh. On 2 February 2001, police fired on a peaceful protest of Munda Adivasis in Jharkhand, who were part of the protest against the Koel Karo hydroelectric, killing eight people and wounding twelve. On 7 April 2000, the Gujarat police attacked a peaceful demonstration by the Kinara Bachao Sangharsh Samiti (the Save the Coast Action Committee) against the consortium of NATELCO and UNOCAL who were trying to do a survey for a proposed private port . . . In Orissa, three
Adivasis were killed for protesting a bauxite mining project in December 2000. In Chilika, police fired on fisherfolk demanding the restoration of their fishing rights. Four people were killed (99 - 100).

The Adivasis often become a prey to the police firing as they have no political support. The constitution of India guarantees special rights and privileges to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Yet, the police and political administration target the Adivasis knowing well that they cannot retaliate with sophisticated weapons. Political corruption has become the order of the day and democracy has become the government ‘off’ the people, ‘buy’ the people and ‘forget’ the people as against the famous definition of ‘Democracy’ by Abraham Lincoln. Once the people elect their representativeness, they have no power in the political administration. Partisan spirit is predominant in a democratic government and the views and aspirations of the ordinary people are not taken into consideration. Roy encourages the people to question the authorities so as to narrow down the gap between the people and political administration:

The only way to make democracy real is to begin a process of constant questioning, permanent provocation, and continuous public conversation between citizens and the State. That conversation is quite different from the conversation between citizens and the state . . . All over the world today, freedoms are being curbed in the name of protecting freedom. Once freedoms are surrendered by civil society, they cannot be retrieved without a struggle. It is so much easier to relinquish them than to recover them (Roy, Peace is War 108).
5.4 Conclusion

Roy’s non-fictional writings target specific incidents and events. She has a scientific bent of mind to argue things logically. The non-fictional world of Roy is all about atrocities and violence against the poor and the destitute; a world dominated by the powerful and the rich. Roy hopes against hope that a better tomorrow would be dawned upon this world. She considers her activistic writings not as a profession but as a mission to answer the call of the millions of her countrymen who suffer in the name of development. The non-fictional writings are not the pent-up emotions of the author but specific game plans to fight the future war:

We have to fight specific wars in specific ways. Who knows, perhaps that’s what the twenty-first century has in store for us. The dismantling of the Big. Big bombs, big dams, big ideologies, big contradiction, big countries, big wars, big heroes, big mistakes. Perhaps it will be the Century of the Small. Perhaps right now, this very minute, there’s a small god up in heaven readying herself for us (Roy, Greater Common Good 5).

The non-fictional writings of Roy aim to teach the people the seriousness of different issues that take place in this society. When India conducted the nuclear tests in 1998, the people of this country hailed it with great enthusiasm. The mistaken notions of the people have been corrected by the publication of The End of Imagination. It had an acute positive energy to delve deep into the hearts of the people. After having realised the seriousness of the issue, the people began to shout
slogans, “Bread, not Bombs, Homes, not Tombs” (14). In the Preface to *The End of Imagination*, Kizhakemuri writes:

> The proliferation of nuclear weapons threatens the very existence of mankind.

In *The End of Imagination* Roy’s concern for humanity, threatened by self-brought calamity is expressed with great sincerity and depth of feeling. It is an inspired outburst against the sinister attempts at the dehumanization of man, the destruction of human civilisation and the self-aggrandisement of small minded politicians. She forcefully condemns the perverse emphasis on national identity and national security by the leaders of a nation that has come nowhere near solving its problems of poverty and backwardness. Her unsentimental lament for the bleak future of humanity is heart-rending.

Roy, an emissary of peace with justice, reiterates through her activist writings to stop war and vengeance. War is not a solution to any of the issues of the world. The end result of war and terrorism is suffering and human casualties. Globalization and privatisations have changed the life-styles of people and they aim at the culmination of human society. They should be eradicated with the intervention of powerful government:

> Terrorism is vicious, ugly, and dehumanizing for its perpetrators as well as its victims. But so is war. You could say that terrorism is the privatization of war. Terrorists are the free marketers of war. They are people who don’t believe that the state has a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence (Roy, *Ordinary Person’s Guide to Empire* 324).
Roy’s non-fictional writings aim at peaceful change as she believes that change is the only permanent thing in the world. The powerful nations should be ready for a change in attitude and outlook towards the developing and underdeveloped nations. The third world countries shouldn’t be mere buyers of second-hand weapons from the first world. All peace loving nations should come together under one platform without any priorities for a serene and calm life in the world.

This chapter of the thesis dealt with Roy’s non-fictional world. It is a saga of violent outrage against injustice in the society. In the name of development, the Government very often crucifies the poor people by taking away their land and property. Through her non-fictional writings, Roy upholds the fundamental rights of the citizens. She reacts strongly against the politicians and bureaucrats for making the poor people’s lives more miserable. ‘Subalternity as Reflected in Art and Activism of Arundhati Roy’ is the concluding chapter of the thesis which examines Spivak’s theory of subalternity in the ‘art’ and ‘activism’ of Roy.

Notes

1 Narmada Bachao Andolan - NBA (Save Narmada Movement) is a non-governmental organisation that started in 1985 and the leadership is provided by Medha Patkar and a number of activists to fight against the Sardar Sarovar Dam being built across the Narmada river, Gujarat, India. It originally focused on the environmental issues related to trees that would be submerged under the dam water. Recently it has re-focused with the aim to enable the poor citizens especially the displaced tribal people to get the full rehabilitation facilities from the government.
2 In 1961 Jawaharlal Nehru laid the foundation stone for the Sardar Sarovar Project (SSP). After receiving clearance from the Ministry of Environment in 1987, construction began in full swing. When the dam is completed the final height will go up to 138.68 meters. The present height of the dam is 121 meters.

3 The Government of India doesn’t have a National Rehabilitation Policy. When the people suffer in the name of development by sacrificing their land and property, the Government doesn’t take adequate measures to rehabilitate them by providing land for land as the basis of rehabilitation rather than the cash compensation.

4 The Land Acquisition Act of 1894 is a legal Act in India which allows the Government of India to acquire any land in the country. It means acquiring of land for some public purpose by government/government agency as authorised by the law from the individual landowner(s) after paying some compensation in lieu of losses occurred to land owner(s) due to surrendering of his/their land to the concerned government agency.

5 The Narmada Valley Development Project is the single largest river development scheme in India. It is one of the largest hydroelectric projects in the world and it will displace approximately 1.5 million people from their land in three states (Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh).

6 The World Bank appointed Bradford Morse as the Chairman of the Independent Review in June 1991. He had made a thorough assessment of the
The Sardar Sarovar Project. In June 1992, the Independent Review was published. The Review is also known as ‘Morse Report’.

The World Bank appointed the Pamela Cox Committee after the publication of the Independent Review. On the recommendation of the Pamela Cox Committee, the World Bank withdrew from the Sardar Sarovar Project in 1993.

Under Section - 4 of the Inter-State Water Disputes Act of 1956, the Central Government constituted Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal (NWDT) on 6th October 1969 to adjudicate upon the sharing of Narmada waters and Narmada River Valley Development under the Chairmanship of Justice V. Ramaswami.

The first private sector hydroelectric project in the country. The Maheshwar Dam is one of the thirty large dams envisaged under the controversial Narmada Valley Development Project. Conceived in 1975, the Maheshwar project was initially to be undertaken by the Narmada Valley Development Authority (NVDA) but it was handed over to the Madhya Pradesh Electricity Board (MPEB) in 1989.

A belief that the threat of a nuclear counter-attack will discourage a country from using power first.
Works Cited


