Chapter Three

Death of Democracy

The democratic India is based on the complete parliamentary system. In all the civilized countries, the general form of political life moves according to this system. This observation helps people to understand that political progress and parliamentary government are one and the same. Both are dependent on each other. Wint is of the opinion that parliamentary system will develop only if political field accepts to “. . . widen the Franchise, broaden the power of the Assemblies, trust the people, repeal all the coercive acts, let the masses carry arms” (93).

There was an important change that took place in the twentieth century. That Politics started emerging like a professional field, where people apart from educated thousands were accepted to be members in political parties. Even the political conflict which had earlier been reduced to discussions began to end up in communal riots. In the words of Wint, “There was also the problem of the relation between the nationalist movement and the sectional Communities into which India was divided. While the earlier political leaders had been mostly Hindu there were signs of a political stirring among the Moslem community” (100). That spoilt the political system and parliamentary structure of India.

In the anthology, Listening to Grasshoppers: Field notes on Democracy, Roy focuses on the dark side of democracy in the contemporary India in most of her essays. Kumar explains thus, “What Roy wants to tell us is about democracy’s failure that is not able to answer our short-term hopes and prayers, not able to protect our individual freedoms and to nurture our avaricious dreams, it will turn out to be the
endgame for the human race” (248). Roy tries to demonstrate a fact that democracy can no longer be relied upon to deliver justice or stability in India again.

Roy’s essay “Introduction: Democracy’s Failing Light” begins with the death of an Armenian journalist Hrant Dink. The journalist was shot outside his office for expressing his views on a forbidden topic in Turkey. Roy in the book Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy reveals how the facts on “. . . the 1915 genocide of Armenians in which more than one million people were killed” (Roy xii) were brought out by Hrant. In this essay, her thoughts go back to the history of genocide and the relationship between progress and genocide. Roy has been struck by the fact that the political party responsible for Armenian genocide is called as the “Committee for Union and Progress” (xii). She tries to portray the real meaning of the words ‘union’ and ‘progress’ which is implied through the title of the party.

The word ‘Progress’ is otherwise known as ‘development.’ If someone brings the issue of saving a river or protecting a forest, they will ask the question, “. . . Don’t you believe in progress?” (xiv). Roy finds that people who raise their voice against the houses being bulldozed or land being submerged by dam reservoirs request another alternative development model instead of this. In India, nearly two decades of this ‘Progress’ has only succeeded in making a vast group of poor people to struggle in the hands of the wealthier middle-class. The massive dispossession and desertification have been carried out by indiscriminate environmental engineering and massive infrastructural projects. Such projects bear the name of development for the poor, but serve the purpose of the aristocrats.

Here, Roy expresses how the battle for land is the talk of ‘development’ debate. India’s former Finance Minister, P. Chidambaram was Enron’s lawyer and a member of the Board of Directors of Vedanta previously. Vedanta is a multinational
Roy points out how, a year ago, Mr. Chidambaram said that his vision was to make 85 per cent of India’s population to live in cities. In order to carry out that vision, he required a lot of social engineering on an unimaginable scale. The meaning of this engineering is “. . . inducing, or forcing, about five hundred million people to migrate from the countryside into cities” (xv) as exposed in Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy. This is turning India into a police State, where people who refuse to surrender their lands are compelled to do it at gun point. And, Mr. Chidambaram who had been the former Finance Minister was later on elected as India’s Home Minister in spite of his participation in destroying the lives of poor people.

The underlying feature of this nightmare ‘vision’ is the master plan to clear tracts of land and all of India’s natural resources, making way for corporate plunder. The reversal of post-independence policy of land reforms has been put into effect. Already the multinational companies supported by Odisha have ravaged the forests, mountains and water systems. The mistake committed by these companies can only be called ‘ecocide.’ The bauxite and iron ore mining companies are destroying the whole ecosystem in eastern India. They are turning fertile land into desert. Roy is also afraid of the consequence that is going to affect Himalayas as hundreds of dam projects are being planned out there. The embankments built along the rivers to control floods prove harmful than ever before because of the rising river beds. Roy tells how the rising river bed brings “. . . more flooding, more waterlogging, more salinization of agricultural land and the destruction of livelihoods of millions of people” (xv).

In addition to this, many holy rivers of India have been turned into unholy drains that carry sewage and industrial waste. The rivers carry more waste than water.
Now there are limited number of rivers that run their natural course and fall into the ocean. Roy is shocked at the fact that the Supreme Court has ordered interlinking of rivers, thinking that rivers should not be allowed to run into the ocean. This is an unbelievable act which supports mechanical water supply system. If it is implemented, the mountains and forests would be drilled to create tunnels there by altering the natural contours and drainage systems of river basins and destroying deltas and estuaries. This will bring about havoc to the entire subcontinent. B. N. Kirpal is the judge who passed this order and joined the coca-cola company after retirement.

The next aspect which attracts one’s attention is artificial irrigation. Artificial irrigation has been given an important place without worrying about the fate of people who are ignorant of its dangers. Roy finds a drastic shift in cropping patterns. The food crops suited to local environment have been replaced by water guzzling, hybrid and genetically modified ‘cash’ crops,’ which depend on chemical fertilizers, pesticides and canal irrigation. The ill-treated farmland then becomes exhausted and infertile due to heavy chemicals deposited inside. As a result, cultivation becomes more expensive for the farmers. Roy’s figures reveal that, “over the last few years, more than 1, 80,000 Indian farmers have committed suicide” (xvi) as expressed in the book *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy*. While the state granaries are over flowing with the grains that get rotten, there is starvation and malnutrition among the farmers. Whenever the growth is supposed to reach a higher level, the prediction has turned worse.

Roy once again comes back to the words ‘union’ and ‘progress’ and talks about the incidents in India from 1989. In 1989, Congress government was actively involved in opening up India’s markets to international trade. At the same time, the
Bharatiya Janata Party began its campaign of Hindu nationalism or Hindutva. In 1990, the Bharatiya Janata Party leader L.K. Advani travelled across the country demanding the building of Ram temple in the place of Babri Masjid, an old mosque belonging to the sixteenth century. This mosque stands in the disputed site in Ayodhya. With Advani’s support, a mob destroyed the mosque in 1992. The Muslims retaliated by killing 1000 people in 1993. A series of attacks were carried out in order to avenge this and thereby killing about 250 people. In Roy’s opinion, it is strange that amidst all the communal frenzy, the Bharatiya Janata Party could win the elections in 1998 and come to power in the centre.

The rise of Hindutva or Bharatiya Janata Party is similar to the incident where America has extended its support to Communism and treated Islam as its greatest enemy once. But the same Islamist Mujahedeens were once supported by the President Reagan who compared them to America’s founding fathers in the white house. Suddenly, the founding fathers became terrorists and enemies of America. Those incidents gave a surprise or shock but still continues. After America’s hatred towards Islamists, the Indian government, once a friend of Palestinians, also turned against them. Now Israel has become the recent ally of India. They perform joint military exercises, share intelligence and discourse on matters to retrieve occupied territories.

Coming back to 1998, when the Bharatiya Janata Party came to power, the ‘Progress’ project of Privatization and Liberalization was about 8 years old as expressed by Roy. Previously, in election campaigns Bharatiya Janata Party was against liberalization. But when it came to power, it accepted the free market happily and made trade agreements with huge corporations like Enron. It manifests a thing
that in our country, once the elections are over, the representatives are free to break promises and change their minds.

Some weeks later, the Bharatiya Janata Party conducted a series of nuclear tests. India conducted nuclear tests earlier in 1975, but the 1998 tests were of a different order. The tests were greeted by everyone and what had once been considered unacceptable became a thing to be celebrated. The ideology of Hindu communalism and nuclear nationalism has been injected into the bloodstream of people. Young minds are filled with violence and bloodshed. Muslim community, according to Roy, has suffered a decline in their fortune and has been pushed down to the bottom line along with Dalits and Adivasis. Roy thinks of the past when one million Hindus and Muslims killed each other during the partition of India in 1947. Her question in the book *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy* is, “Could our future be rushing, forward into our past?” (xx).

Then Roy lists the incidents from 2002 to prove that genocide lies behind the words ‘Union’ and ‘Progress.’ In February 2002, fifty eight Hindu pilgrims were burned alive in a train returning from Ayodhya. In retaliation to that, the Bharatiya Janata Party government in Gujarat under the leadership of the Chief Minister Narendra Modi carefully planned the genocide of Muslims in the state. According to Roy, it was terrible to accept that the people of Gujarat silently stood by and witnessed the massacre of more than two thousand people. She describes this genocide thus, “Women were gang raped and burned alive. One hundred and fifty thousand Muslims were driven from their homes. The community was, and continues to be, ghettoized. Socially and, economically ostracized” (xx) as manifested in the book *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy*. 
Gujarat has now become a state which is known for the communal genocide. In the past, Gujarat has witnessed only riots but now genocidal massacre robs the lives of number of people. Gujarat carnage is similar to the horror that took place in Rwanda, Sudan and Congo. It seems to be a warning issued to Muslims from a democratic nation. Soon after the Gujarat massacre, Narendra Modi has requested for early elections and returned to power in Gujarat. Recently, Modi has been serving a third term as chief minister and appreciated by business corporations for his faith in free market and progress. In a disturbed mood, Roy raises a question, who will be the target of genocide after Muslims. She asks whether it will go on “alphabetically: Adivasis, Buddhists, Christians, Dalits, Parsis, Sikhs? . . . . We won’t have to wait long for answer” (xxi) in the book Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy.

In January 1999, the terrorists belonging to Bajrang Dal, a Hindu Militia group attacked Australian Missionary, Graham Staines and his two sons. Roy manifests that it is the next step in their attack on religious groups. And in December 2007, a series of attacks on Christians were carried out by Hindu Militias. Christians were targeted in several states like Gujarat, Karnataka and Odisha. There, the churches were all demolished by the angry Hindutva persons. At least, sixteen Dalit and Adivasi Christians were killed by Hindu Dalits and Adivasis in Kandhamal, Odisha. The fear of Adivasi Christians is presented by Roy in the book Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy thus, “. . . tens of thousands of Christians now live in refugee camps or hide in the surrounding forests afraid to venture out to tend their fields and crops” (xxii). The aim of Hindutva project is ‘Hinduizing’ Dalits and Adivasis in order to turn them against Muslims and Maoists.
Another important reason for these killing is that large communities live in forests and on mineral rich lands where the big corporations have their eyes upon. They want government to vacate these people and clear the path. So, the Hindutva projects and camps are not to bring people under Hindu community, but a means of controlling or vacating people. By December 2008, the Bharatiya Janata Party government came to power in a southern State. Bangalore or Mangalore is the centre of India’s IT industry. Here, the Hindu vigilant mobs have attacked women in Jeans and western dresses. The problem is still going on. Wherever the Bharatiya Janata Party government has set its roots, the organic relationship between ‘Union’ and ‘Progress’ has been established.

‘Progress’ is a word that government associates it with corporation and people. The civil war is endless. And it was openly accepted by the government in January 2009. In a public function, the CEOS of the two biggest corporations of India, namely, Ratan Tata and Mukesh Ambani were crowned with Gujarat Garima or pride of Gujarat award. They also celebrated the policies of Narendra Modi and greeted him as the future candidate for Prime Minister. According to Roy, the civil war has become an openly declared war all over India in the name of ‘Union’ and ‘Progress.’

The money spent on 2009 General Election is nearly two billion dollars. But Roy states in the book *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy* that, “... according to some media reports the actual amount that was spent is closer to ten billion dollars” (xxiii). She is surprised when she thinks of the source of this enormous amount. The 2009 Election was a clean sweep for the Congress and its Allies or the United Progressive Alliance. More than 90 percent independent candidates lost the election. Roy feels that “... without sponsorship it’s hard to win an election” (xxiii) as expressed in the book *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes*
Expressions like comfortable victory and majority of votes to United Progressive Alliance turn out to be deceptive. The actual percentage of votes won by United Progressive Alliance was 10.3 percentage of the country’s population.

Once the elections were over, Govindacharya, the former chief ideologue of the Bharatiya Janata Party and progenitor of the Ram Janama Bhoomi Movement suggested that the Congress and Bharatiya Janata Party should form a coalition. Likewise, in Chhattisgarh for example, when the Bharatiya Janata Party was ruling the government, Congress politicians secretly took care of Salwa Judum, the government supported people’s militia. The government and Salwa Judum have launched a joint operation to displace the Maoists from forests and acquire lands for corporations that are waiting to set up steel factories and mining iron ore.

In Chhattisgarh, the two biggest political parties are against the Adivasis in Dantewara, who are considered to be India’s poorest people. Due to extreme operations and threats, fifty thousand people have moved into Salwa Judum Camps. Roy also gives an account of three hundred thousand people hiding in the forests. They are being called as Maoist terrorists or sympathizers. The corporations are waiting for their chance to capture the lands with the government support. Recent general election is a matter of great concern for some corporate houses rather than political parties. They project advertisements with bollywood stars, asking people to go out and vote. The Khan Market has offered discounts to people whose index fingers are marked with ink. Roy states that democracy has become a sport in India.

In view of the elections in 2009, the BBC arranged a coach in a train naming it ‘The India Election Special.’ This train took journalists from all over the world for enjoying the miracle of India elections. The BBC posters were put up in cafe and hotels. One of the posters near Roy’s house reads thus, “(Will India’s Votes rescue the
world’s currency notes)” (xxv) as it is expressed in the book *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy*. The Indian electorate has been turned into a market. Here voters are seen as consumers and democracy is sent to the free market. Any person who cannot consume is an exception.

During the term of Congress regime, they have passed three Progressive Acts to reduce the devastation suffered by the country. They are the Forest Rights to Information Act and the most important National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA). The NREGA is an act which guarantees to every rural family, hundred days of work a year with the minimum wages that is Rs.8000 per year for a family. According to Roy, this is an amount just enough to enjoy one good meal in a restaurant with wine and dessert. For people who have lost their lands and means of livelihood, this meagre amount cannot offer any relief. But implementing this NREGA and checking if the money given by the government reaches the people is a tough task for the social activists. The activist has to fight with the corrupt government officers, power brokers and middlemen. Sometimes it is a tough time with threats and violence. Roy, in the book *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy*, points out how “one rural activist in Jharkhand immolated himself in anger and frustration at the injustice of it all” (xxvi).

The NREGA was one of the main aspects of the Congress party’s next election campaign. But the election was over with Congress attributing its victory to the policies of NREGA. The left party that criticized the economic policies of Congress government and its support to corporate houses also tried to follow the same method in West Bengal. The announcement about the building of a chemical hub arrived in the district of Nandigram. It was followed by the news of a manufacturing
unit for the Tata Nano in Singar and a Jindal steel plant in the forests of Lalgarh in Purulia. People were forced to surrender their lands and fertile places at gun point.

Some of the militant uprisings in certain areas were put down with bullets and lathi Charges. Amidst all the fights, the people won over them. They won all the three battles and made the government to retreat. The Tata had to move the Nano project to Gujarat. For the first time in thirty years, the left party faced a heavy defeat in elections in West Bengal. The defeat of the left party was the result of its anti-development policies. Roy feels that the loss of left party is not something to celebrate.

The left has to blame itself for the humiliation it faces now. This creates more space for progressive politics. Roy’s dilemma is whether this change is good or bad. She poses questions in the book *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy* like “What good will forest rights be when there are no forests? What good will the Right to Information do if there is no redress for our grievances? What good are rivers without water? What good are plains without mountains to water and sustain them?” (xxvii). It is like coming down the cliff in a high speed without brakes and thinking over what to sing. Roy finds ‘Jai Ho’ as a right choice for the people who celebrate rather than aspiring to teach the nation, where it heads to or what crisis comes next.

The 2009 elections seem to have accepted that ‘Progress’ project is still running. In this election campaign, two important things got coverage in the media. One is the 100,000 rupee Tata Nano, rolling its wheels out of Gujarat, and, second is the famous hate speech of the Bharatiya Janata Party debutant, Varun Gandhi. Varun Gandhi used bad words to sterilize the Muslim Community. Finally in the meeting, he
ended thus, “‘I don’t want a single Muslim vote’” (xxix) as expressed in the book *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy*.

Roy calls Varun Gandhi as a modern politician using the democratic system to create a majority vote bank. Her own words in the same book prove how “a politician needs a vote bank, like a corporation needs a mass market. Both need help from the mass media. Corporations buy that help. Politicians must earn it” (xxix). It shows how some political leaders earn it and others perform dangerous circus stunts. Varun Gandhi’s name was flashed in the headlines. Though the attempt was dangerous, his stay in prison made him an instant martyr.

At first, Varun Gandhi was gently chastised by his party elders and then he was flown around in a helicopter as star campaigner for the Bharatiya Janata Party. Roy is surprised to find Varun Gandhi emerging victorious in election. At this point, her contemplation is that, “… are ‘the people’ always right?” Roy is worried at the lesson the Bharatiya Janata Party draws from its few victories and many losses in election. Wherever the Bharatiya Janata Party has won, their detestable speech has proved to be a successful weapon. Still, the Bharatiya Janata Party remains the second largest party, the only real challenge to Congress. Once again it may fight with full strength.

Roy’s view is that the Bharatiya Janata Party alone cannot be held responsible for troublesome politics in India. In the book *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy*, she says, “whether it’s nuclear tests, the unsealing of the locks of the Babri Masjid, the culture of creating fissures and pitting castes and communities against each other, or passing retrograde laws, the Congress got there first and has never been shy of keeping the ball in play” (xxx). The past reveals how both the parties have used massacres as a weapon to get political allowances. These massacres
sometimes make them feast on it with stipends or else they accuse each other of mass murder. So far, no one has taken genuine steps to punish the guilty and establish justice. They exchange only public accusations, and try to protect murderers from real punishment.

As time goes on, the massacre is absorbed into the judicial system, and left to remain there for sometime, before being sent out as a campaign material for the next election. Roy says that it is all part of the framework of Indian democracy. She is fully aware that in Indian democracy, the judiciary, the police, the free press, elections and so on, never do what they are meant to do. They seem to act exactly in the opposite way. There is a cover hiding their activities in the name of Union and Progress. When this is the situation, a warning sent or voices against it will only increase the confusion. The Indian democracy is already chaotic and it has stepped into an agreement of tolerance.

The word ‘agreement’ reminds Roy of the Kashmir issue. She explains how every part of Kashmir works under the establishment of an agreement, including the media, bollywood and bureaucracy. The war which has taken place in Kashmir is nearly twenty years old. It has claimed the lives of about seventy thousand people. She gives a picture of this tragedy and it goes on like this in the book Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy, “tens of thousands have been tortured, several thousands have ‘disappeared,’ women have been raped and many thousands widowed. Half a million Indian troops patrol the Kashmir valley, making it the most militarized zone in the world” (xxxi). Recently, the Indian army has agreed that militancy is crushed in most parts of Kashmir. Roy expresses that it may be true but the question is how the domination of the army can bring true victory in Kashmir.
In a democratic nation, it has become difficult to exist without the military domination and India justifies it through regular elections. The election in Kashmir has a long and fascinating past. From 1990, with the armed uprising, elections are being conducted in Kashmir under the threatening arms of the military. Repeatedly, the intelligence agencies have created political parties and politicians. The construction or destruction of the party is at its will. It is they who decide the result of each election as to who should replace next. But at the end of every election, the news comes that India has won a perfect mandate from the hands of people in Kashmir.

An issue regarding the allotment of land to Amarnath Shrine Board arose in 2008. Due to this problem, Kashmir witnessed a massive, non-violent uprising. And day after day, hundreds of thousands of people defied soldiers and policemen who fired straight into the crowds, killing scores of people and thronged the streets. The city reverberated with shouts of ‘Azadi’ from morning to night. Even the people like shopkeepers, doctors, houseboat owners, weavers, carpet sellers were out with placards of ‘Azadi.’ This particular struggle went on for several days.

People started massive protests against the military activities. The issue was dealt by the Indian government as democratic and a non-violent action. But it brought about fissures in the mainstream public opinion of India. Roy feels that, after terrible pressure from people the government panicked and was unsure as how to end the mass civil disobedience of people. Due to unrest, it imposed the harshest curfews with shoot at sight orders. This order caged millions of people in their homes for many days. The democratic Indian government also placed many pro-freedom leaders under house arrest and several others were jailed. In addition to this, the army carried out house to house searches and arrested hundreds of people. The famous Jama Masjid was closed for seven weeks thereby putting an end to Friday prayers.
After bringing the rebellion under control, the Indian government acted extraordinarily, with the announcement of elections in the State. The Pro-independence leaders tried to call for a boycott and they were re-arrested. Many were of the opinion that the call for election would be a huge embarrassment. But the security establishment did not take any chances and locked all the spies and journalists with renewed energy in their homes. None was allowed to express their opinion or open their mouth. Even Roy was put under house arrest in Srinagar for two days.

It was a huge risk for the Indian government to call for elections at such a situation. The result was startling for everyone including Roy. The election turned out to be a tremendous success. The number of voters was larger than ever before. And the biggest surprise was that the people from the most militarized districts in Kashmir valley went to vote. The group under house arrest comprising analysts, journalists and psephologists did not ask why people, who suffered under shoot at sight orders, suddenly changed their minds. In Roy’s opinion in the book *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy*, “No one speculated about the mystery of hundreds of unknown candidates who materialized out of nowhere to represent political parties that had no previous presence in the Kashmir valley. Where had they come from? No one was curious” (xxxiii).

For many decades, people in Kashmir are living under military occupation. Margolis, in an international journal, gives an estimate of how, “80,000 Kashmiris have so far died in the uprising, the majority Muslims” (15). This death toll continues to rise from 1947, as Muslims are against Indian rule. The soldiers who have to protect people are seen entering into houses and dragging people out at anytime, even at night. All that these people expect is that someone must represent them in the
parliament. Roy considers this to be the only hope of Kashmir civilians, which may never turn true.

Kashmir is always in a troublesome situation because of its peculiar position in geographical setup. It is a region drenched in weapons and sliding into chaos. Roy points out that Kashmiri freedom is trapped in various ideologies like Indian Nationalism, Pakistani Nationalism, U.S. Imperialism and Taliban movement. These ideologies are capable of causing genocide to nuclear war. Amidst all these, Kashmir is the medium through which terrorism is unfolding in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The end has already been witnessed through the Mumbai attacks in 2008.

Roy is sure that Kashmir dispute is also as old as that of Palestine. It has to be resolved. In an international Indian journal, Margolis reveals like this, “Resolving the Kashmir dispute will eliminate the gravest danger faced by mankind: an India-Pakistan nuclear exchange that could kill at least 2 million initially, 100 million thereafter, and spread clouds of radioactive dust around the globe” (15). But the government of India is not prepared to solve the problems. While other countries deal with bloodshed, civil war and concentration camps, India boasts of a beautiful election. This type of ‘Demon-crazy’ cannot fool people all the time.

The adverse effect of shoot at sight orders in Kashmir is the poisoning of the underground porous rocks with water. And the most insane story of it all is, making Siachen glacier the highest battlefield in the world. Many Pakistani and Indian soldiers have been deployed there and Roy, in the book *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy*, pictures the condition thus, “the glacier has become a garbage dump now, littered with the detritus of war, thousands of empty artillery shells, empty fuel drums, ice-axes, old boots, tents and every other kind of waste that thousands of warring human beings generate” (xxxvi).
Kashmir has become a monument of human folly and is melting up fast. The glacier has shrunk to about half its size. According to Roy, it will cause severe floods in the subcontinent, and affect the lives of millions of people. Roy read this essay in Istanbul among the angry Turkish authorities. At the end of her speech, Hrant Dink’s wife hugged her. Roy begins the essay “Introduction: Democracy’s Failing Light” with Hrant Dink’s assassination and talks about the meaning of the words like unity, progress and genocide.

The next essay “Democracy Who’s She When She’s at Home” deals with the Godhra incident and its result. The essay begins with Roy’s response to her friend’s phone call from Vadodara. The friend is upset over what happened to another Muslim friend, Sayeeda, caught by a mob. Roy, in the book Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy, narrates the cruelty of this incident by explaining how “. . . her stomach had been ripped open and stuffed with burning rags. Only that after she died, someone carved ‘OM’ on her forehead” (3). Terribly upset by this incident, Roy wonders whether Hindu scriptures preach such things.

This kind of savagery that took place in Gujarat had been justified by the then Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee as a sort of retaliation by Hindus against Muslim terrorists, who were responsible for burning alive fifty eight Hindu passengers on the Sabarmati Express in Godhra. Those people who were burnt alive also had a gruesome death and were the loved ones of many unfortunate families. Both the religions are slaughtering each other and there is not much of a difference between them. Their worship takes place on an altar and are followers of the same murderous God. This beastly attitude has made Roy say in the book Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy like this, “. . . right now we’re sipping from a poisoned chalice – a flawed democracy laced with religious fascism” (4).
During the time of the Godhra incident, the Bharatiya Janata Party has lost the parliamentary elections in India. This has begun with the passing of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA). Even the plan to replace Ram Mandir on the destroyed mosque in Ayodhya is a failure to them. Now, the only major State to have the Bharatiya Janata Party rule is Gujarat. Bharatiya Janata Party is working out all political experiments with Hindu fascism as its ideology. After the Godhra incident, they planned a heavy destruction for Muslim community. This plan was led by the group of Hindu nationalists, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Bajrang Dal.

The official sources said that eight hundred people died. But, as per the report from independent sources, the number has gone up to two thousand. Roy, in the book *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy*, describes this gruesome incident thus, “women were stripped, gang-rape; parents were bludgeoned to death in front of their children. Two hundred and forty shrines and one hundred and eighty mosques were destroyed” (4). In addition to this, they destroyed the tombs of Wale Gujarati, the founder of the Modern Urdu poetry and Ustad Faiyaz Ali khan in Ahmadabad. They even burnt and looted shops; destroyed a number of homes, hotels, buses and private cars that belonged to Muslims. Many Muslims lost their jobs because of this incident.

Roy also mentions about the gruesome death of Ehsan Jaffri. That how a fanatic group surrounded the house of Ehsan Jaffri, the former M.P. of the Congress party. They dragged him out of his house and killed him. Jaffri’s anxious phone calls to the Director General of Police, the Police Commissioner, Chief Secretary, and the additional Chief Secretary pleading for help were all useless. Even the mobile police vans around his house did not take any action. This Jaffri had once been a strong critic against the Chief Minister of Gujarat, Narendra Modi during his campaign for the
Rajkot Assembly by election in February. In Gujarat, thousands of people turned into violent mobs armed with petrol bombs, guns, knives and swords.

The Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal also brought Dalits and Adivasis in buses and trucks to support them. Along with them, the middle-class people took part in looting process. They also decided to make a deliberate attempt to destroy the economic base of Muslim community. All the leaders of the gangs possessed computer generated cadastral lists to chart out the place where Muslims had their homes, shops and business. The main network of mobile phones was used to coordinate the action. The gang had trucks loaded with gas cylinders which were used to blow up Muslim establishments. The police were not only protecting them but also hiding the reality from the eyes of media.

At the time when Gujarat was burning, the former Indian Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee won the elections and was on MTV introducing his new poems and releasing the audio cassettes. According to the reports received by Roy, more than a hundred thousand copies were sold. Nearly a month after these incidents, the Indian Prime Minister visited Gujarat. Mr. Vajpayee along with Mr. Modi gave a speech at the Shah Alam refugee camp. When he tried to express his concern for the burned, bloodied, broken people, no sound emerged from his mouth, except the mocking of the wind blowing outside. Mahatma Gandhi’s daughter, Tara Gandhi expresses her views about Modi, which have been quoted by Hashmi in his article published in an international journal are as follows: “I did not find any trace of anguish on Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi’s face when he spoke about the 2002 post-Godhra riots in his state” (11). With this kind of speech in Gujarat, Modi and the Prime Minister of India were moving around in a Golf cart making business deals in Singapore. Even now, the streets of Gujarat are haunted by the killers. It is this mob i.e. Rashtriya
Swayam Sevak Sangh and Vishwa Hindu Parishad that controls the entire life of people.

The mob’s high handedness and control further extended from religious affairs to property disputes and planning of water resources. This was one of the reasons for assaulting Medha Patkar of the Narmada Bachao Andolan. Still, Muslim business establishments have stopped working and they are not provided food even in restaurants. The Muslim students are not allowed to attend schools. In the book *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy*, Roy gives a picture of how “Muslim parents live in dread that their infants might forget what they’ve been told and give themselves away by saying ‘Ammi’ or ‘Abba’ in public and invite sudden and violent death” (6). Roy’s conflicting question is that if Ram Mandir is built whether all the people will receive food, clothing and shelter.

India, according to Roy is a blend of many cultures, but once it lacks the beauty and splendour of it, the country will turn into a tomb and smell like a crematorium. The people who died in Gujarat have all the rights to be mourned as they are part of India. Hundreds of journals and newspapers have been asking the question regarding why they do not condemn the burning of the Sabarmati Express in Godhra in the same way they have reacted to other killings which are unacceptable for people. Roy expresses that they do not understand the fundamental difference between the subjugation of Muslims taken place right now in Gujarat and the burning of the Sabarmati Express in Godhra.

The point to be considered is that no one knows who has actually been responsible for the immolation in Godhra. While Roy describes the Godhra incident as reported in newspapers, there is another Delhi-based lawyer who clearly explains what has taken place exactly before the burning of the Sabarmati Express. On 27
February 2002, the Sabarmati Express no. 9166, began its journey from Muzaffarpur to Ahmedabad, passing through Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and entering Gujarat at Dahod. There was a halt of five minutes after Dahod, in a sleepy little town called Godhra railway station at 7.43 a.m. At that time, the Karsevaks returning from Ayodhya got on the platform chanting religious Slogans. They prevented some Muslim vendors from receiving payment for their things. The Karsevaks also beat up hawkers and molested a Muslim woman. The entire place was agitated and some threw stones on Karsevaks who got into the train, immediately after it took off. The official record presented by Nitya Ramakrishnan in the journal “Insight: Economic and Political Weekly” is that, “the train starting for Vadodara at 7.48 a.m., stopped, moved and stopped again some 800 metres from the platform. An irate crowd collected on the platform side of the train. Suddenly, in the midst of all this coach S-6 went up in flames. Fifty-nine passengers died in the fire” (39).

The Gujarat government made a forensic report and explained how sixty litres of petrol was poured on the floor by someone in the train. As per Nitya Ramakrishnan’s reports, hundred and forty litres of petrol was bought and stored the previous night. One or three of the assailants would have got on the train, pouring 140 litres of petrol and setting fire to it. Among the 94 men convicted, the court also included the persons who threw stones at the train. The forensic report also made it clear that all the doors in the carriage were locked from inside. The dead bodies of burnt passengers were found in a heap in the middle of the carriage. Till now, there is no news as to who fired it. At first, the then Home Minister L.K. Advani made a public statement by manifesting that it was a plot by Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). Then months later, the police said that it had no evidence to support that. Many theories were projected for that by different persons to suit their political position. Some said that it was the Pakistani plot, others put it on the Muslim
extremists and towards the end they accused the angry mob of Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Bajrang Dal who destroyed the entire Gujarat.

The independent report received by Roy proves that the pogrom against the Muslim community in Gujarat is created by the government as a spontaneous reaction to Godhra incident. Without any evidence the State has committed a greater crime compared to others. In this massacre, the State projects a view that it acts for the welfare of its citizens. It tries to give a completely different picture on the killing of Muslims as retaliation to the Godhra incident. That is why the killing of Muslims is not condemned in the same way it has reacted to the Godhra massacre.

As an aftermath of the Gujarat massacres, the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh which consists of the Prime Minister, the Chief Minister and the Home minister as its members gave an announcement that Muslims should earn the good will of the majority community. In the national executive meeting of the Bharatiya Janata Party in Goa, Modi was greeted as a hero. The offer to step down from the office of the Chief Minister was not accepted. Then later, in a public speech, he compared two events in Gujarat to Gandhi’s ‘Dandi March.’

Roy feels that the parallels given between India and Pre-war Germany are not surprising. Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh founders have a strong admiration for Hitler and his methods. The only difference is that, there is no Hitler in India. Instead, she lists a group of organizations which functions like the dictator in the book Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy as follows: “. . . the hydra-headed, many-armed Sangh Parivar- the joint family of Hindu political and cultural organizations . . . the BJP, the RSS, the VHP and the Bajrang Dal . . . .” (8). The success of these organizations lies in their ability to do things of cruelty to people all the time.
The massacre in Gujarat is not the first pogrom in Gujarat, but there have been several kinds of pogrom directed at particular castes, tribes and religious faiths. As an example Roy goes back to 1984, when the assassination of Indira Gandhi took place. Following this assassination, there was the massacre of three thousand Sikhs in Delhi. According to Roy in the book *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy*, Rajiv Gandhi used this as an opportunity to speak elegant words like this, “‘when a large tree falls, the earth shakes’” (10). With these words, he won the elections of 1985, 'but the basis of it was a sympathy wave created by the death of his mother, Indira Gandhi. None has been punished for the death of Indira Gandhi except the innocent killing of Sikhs. So Roy comes to the point that the seed has always been sown by the Congress and reaped by the Bharatiya Janata Party into a large harvest.

Roy also gives an important difference between the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party. Her own words in the book *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy* prove how “. . . 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” (10). Such shameless acts or acts of pride continue with the spread of communal hatred by many organizations like Sangh Parivar. The Sangh Parivar has been planning communal hatred for years and the main goal of it is to inject poison slowly into the society’s blood stream.

Roy reveals how hundreds of Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh shakhas and Saraswati Shishu Mandir schools across the country, have been introducing religious hatred and falsified history to children and young people who are learning there. This is not different from the actions of Taliban who sows Madrassas all over Pakistan and Afghanistan. In Gujarat also, some Madrassas are introduced to cultivate religious
hatred among people. These Hindu communalists work as a team and serve the purpose perfectly thus bringing about the necessary revenge among people. This kind of relentless pressure will force the majority of the Muslim Community to live in ghettos as second class citizens. They have been gripped by constant fear with no civil rights and no justice.

Any small alteration in this kind of life may prove lethal. In spite of the total rejection in the state, the Muslims will learn to keep very quiet and accept their lot by creeping into the edges of society in which they live. This kind of fear will also grip other minority communities in course of time. If this trend continues, many young children will turn into militants. The attitude of the government will force them to indulge in terrible things in future. It reminds Roy of the words spoken by the former President of America, Bush during the September 11 attacks. His words sprung out like canon as manifested in the book *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy* in this manner, “either you are with us or you are with the terrorists” (11). These words justify the butchery and genocide that is going to occur in future.

Roy gives a dismal picture of the future in these words in the book *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy* thus, “When all our farmlands are mined, our buildings destroyed, and our infra-structure reduced to rubble, our children physically maimed and mentally wrecked, when we’ve nearly wiped ourselves out with self-manufactured hatred” (12). The only means to come out of this self-destruction at the critical point will be the appeal to America for help. This is a kind of warning that Roy gives to the government, where she concludes that another step of communal hatred will lead to a greater fall. But there seems to be no change and the journey continues in the same path. During the National Executive meeting of the Bharatiya Janata Party in Goa, the then Prime Minister of democratic India, Mr.
Vajpayee made a historic speech. In that meeting, he openly revealed his hatred for the Muslims by criticizing them and making hints at the uncertainty of their future.

After the Gujarat’s holocaust, the Bharatiya Janata Party was confident of its success in the election. After 11 years of hard and undaunted struggle, Narendra Modi led Gujarat government and the Bharatiya Janata Party government finally decided to pay for the repairs of the mosques damaged during the riots in Gujarat due to Godhra incident. There was a difference in Modi’s compensation given to the affected families of Hindu and Muslim communities. The money allotted to those dead in the burning of Sabarmati Express was 500,000 but he gave only 200,000 to those affected in the riots. And a very meagre amount of 500 rupees was spent for people whose houses were ruined or burnt during the riots.

There was a naive hope of secular parties withdrawing their support to the Bharatiya Janata Party, but proved it to be a stupid thought, as the twenty two allies of the Bharatiya Janata Party led coalition did not withdraw their support. The hope of Roy and others has been crushed forever. The only person to condemn what happened in Gujarat is Deepak Parekh, the CEO of India’s corporate community. It is more surprising to hear that Farooq Abdullah, the Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir and the only Muslim politician is in favour of Modi’s government as he has a dim hope of becoming the next Vice President of India. And the worse thing is that Mayawati, the leader of the Bahujan Samaj party (BSP), the only hope of lower caste, has made an alliance with Bharatiya Janata Party in Uttar Pradesh.

Other left Parties and Congress have launched a public agitation asking for Modi’s resignation. At this point, Roy gets angry and contemplates like this, “Resignation? Have we lost all sense of proportion? Criminals are not meant to resign? They’re meant to be charged, tried and convicted. As those who burned the
train in Godhra should be” (13) as expressed in the book *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy*. According to Roy, there are hundreds of testimonies and mass evidence against Modi. So the Supreme Court has a great option of acting against Modi and his communal groups namely the Bajrang Dal and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad.

In India, even if a politician is a butcher or genocidist, he can escape from prosecution. They enter into parliament and disrupt its proceedings to show that they are unbeatable. Often, Commissions of Enquiry are set up, but they ignore all the findings and truths about these politicians. At this juncture, the question in Roy’s mind is, “should elections be allowed or not? Should the Election Commission decide that or the Supreme Court?” (14) as manifested in the book *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy*.

When Modi is allowed to walk free and continue his career as a politician, it is not going to change anything even if elections are held or deferred. With such a person, the fundamental governing articles of democracy are not just being neglected but deliberately damaged. Roy is worried about what will happen if the Bharatiya Janata Party wins the election in Gujarat. If this happens, genocide may become the subject of election campaigns. Fascism will set its firm foot print in India. The fascism’s ghastly entry appeared in the Pokhran nuclear tests of 1998. From then onwards, the blood thirsty patriotism is openly accepted as a political currency. Whenever the hostility between India and Pakistan increased, the enemity between Hindus and Muslims in India also increased. The battles fought against Pakistan had a horrible impact on the country.

Recently, Indian nationalism is meant to signify Hindu nationalism. In an interview to Reuters, Modi himself accepts like this, “I am nationalist. I’m patriotic.
Nothing is wrong. I am born Hindu. Nothing is wrong. So I’m a Hindu nationalist. So yes, you can say I’m a Hindu nationalist because I’m a born Hindu” (11) as quoted by Hashmi in his “The Milli Gazette.” In fact these words do not express his respect for Muslims but his hatred for them. Roy finds nationalism stepping into a kind of fascism. It is nationalism in many avatars like communalist, capitalist and fascist that have been the root cause of all the genocide of the twentieth century. The Sangh Parivar which promotes communal hatred does not seem to understand the meaning of civilization. Its goal, according to Roy, is changing India into “a limbless, leadless, headless soulless force, left bleeding under the butcher’s cleaver with a flag driven deep into her mutilated heart?” (16) as stated in the book *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy*.

Fascism has crept slowly into India over the past few years, shaped by the ‘democratic’ institutions. All the groups namely the Parliament, the press, the police, the administration are to be blamed for this transformation. Whenever people defend the rights of an institution or leave it unchallenged, (including the Supreme Court), it enters into a kind of fascism. The national press apart from others is courageous enough to denounce the events that took place in the last few weeks.

Though fascism enters into all the instruments of state power, the genuine reason is to wipe out civil liberties and to increase day to day injustices through its slow, steady process. What Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh means by fighting now is that, battling out to win back the hearts and minds of people. But at the same time, it does not want Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh shakhas and the Madrassas promoting hatred to be banned. On the part of people, they require open discussion from resistance movement across the country on the real happenings outside. It can be listed like this that bonded labour, marital rape, sexual preferences, women’s wages,
uranium dumping, unsustainable mining, weaver’s woes, farmer’s suicides. The battle must be against displacement, dispossessing and everyday violence. The newspaper columns and prime time TV spots should project reality, rather than evoking human passions.

The Indian people are still affected by the terrible event in Gujarat. Thousands are journeying through the horrors every day, and having a tough time. The Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh is always marching around them and hoisting the saffron flag. They can be seen in little parks, empty lots and villages. It is like the area being occupied by men in khaki uniforms marching all the time. The question in Roy’s mind is, where they are marching to. The Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh is devoid of any concern for history and this lack of knowledge protects them from worrying about the danger of self-annihilation. Fascism is like radioactive fallout of a nuclear strike that may cripple generations to come. Such higher levels of rage cannot be overcome through public denunciation but requires a number of hymns expressing brotherhood and love.

As freedom struggle and its passions have been torn into pieces, fascism has found its way through India. Hatred and mutual distrust are the words destroying the country for more than half-a-century, from the time of Indira Gandhi. The wounds of the past have never been allowed to heal by any of the politicians. The scene of bloodshed is always in the minds of people. Roy exposes how political parties make use of parliamentary democracy for electoral advantage. Just like the termites destroying a mound, politics has carved tunnels and underground passages into India, thus changing the meaning of the word ‘secular.’ Recently, the communal forces that killed Mahatma Gandhi have been raising their heads to project the thing that communal harmony is not maintained in India. In the article “Clarion Call for
Defeating Communal Forces,” Nitish Kumar said like this, “We will not tolerate communalism. We are a divisive country. Unity in diversity is our strength. To fight the attack on this foundation of our country, we have all come together” (12).

The foundation of the secular structure like constitution, Parliament and courts of law which have been the backbone of democracy, has become weak. In such circumstances, it is not right to keep on blaming the politicians and demanding justice. The leaders chosen by the people have let the people down, and hence the leaders alone cannot be blamed for the downfall. The fact is that there is a great flaw in parliamentary democracy which politicians will exploit. The kind of problems that rose up in Gujarat are due to such flaws. The relationship between the leaders and the people has not been smooth and there is ill-will and hatred between them. The flaw in parliamentary democracy has to be carefully dealt with, to bring about a proper and permanent solution. Fascism cannot enter into India merely through the politicians’ exploitation.

Roy feels that every ordinary citizen over the past years has not only lost the systematic state of rule but also dignity, security and relief from poverty. Any democratic institution will be successful only if its people are ready to act for real, social justice. The real social change lies in the hands of those classes of people who are influential in society and politics. But recently, corporate globalization spoils the beautiful social fabric, ripping it apart culturally and economically.

The sense of vain pride in religion has become the pathway for the emergence of fascism in India. Even if people are uprooted from their homes, and though they have lost their culture and language, there is something they feel proud of. This religious feeling is not acquired through hard work. The emptiness of this pride is not realized but fuels a kind of anger directed towards the target. Something that is not
acceptable to Roy is the point where the poorest of the poor is used as a weapon to annihilate the second poorest community in the world. Dalits and Adivasis in Gujarat are treated as the worst among all the other castes. Here, they join hands with the upper class oppressors to turn on those who are less unfortunate than them.

When Roy thinks of violence, she does not want to put the blame on the poorest class in the name of religion. She explains that their leaders have bribed them to wander ruthlessly, while they themselves are feasting at the table. It is purely nonsense to try to put the entire India into the Hindu fold. It is an attempt to create communal tension among the people. The result is the outbreak of riots in various parts of the country. The problem in Muzaffarnagar is an example for this. In order to stop this, secular and democratic forces must fight and maintain people’s unity.

There are nearly one hundred and fifty million Muslims in India. They are not an easy prey to the Hindu fascists. The question posed by Roy in the book *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy* is, “... do people like Modi and Bal Thackeray think that the world will stand by and watch while they’re liquidated in a ‘Civil War’?” (20). Already press reports from the European Union have condemned the killing in Gujarat and compared it to the Nazi rule. The response of the Indian government is that foreigners should not be allowed to comment on what is called an ‘internal matter.’ Roy sarcastically says that if India wants to suppress the truths, it can be done only by blocking all sources of electronic media.

Till now, only Laloo Prasad Yadav, the Head of the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), has revealed himself to be truly passionate about India. His comment on this subject is translated by Roy in the book *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy* thus, “(Which mother’s son says this is a Hindu Nation? Send him here, I’ll tear his chest open)” (21). There is no quick fix for this fascism but if others also
show their commitment to India like this, then it may change the intensity of it. The people must be ready to step out and rally on the streets, at work, in schools and everywhere. If not “. . . like the ordinary citizens of Hitler’s Germany . . . we too will find ourselves unable to look our own children in the eye, for the shame of what we did and didn’t do. For the shame of what we allowed to happen” (21) as stated by Roy in the book *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy*. Roy is sad that in democratic India a sense of fear creeps into people when night sets in.

Roy’s essay “And His Life Should Become Extinct: The Very Strange Story of the Attack on the Indian Parliament” deals with the hanging of Mohammad Afzal, the accused caught in the case of Parliament attack. A picture flashed by the newspapers and television reports how Indian Parliament came under attack during its winter session on 13 December, 2001. The time was exactly 11:30 a.m. in the morning, when five armed men entered the gate of the Parliament in a white ambassador car with improvised explosive device.

Having been surrounded and attacked by the police, the armed men opened fire and jumped out of the car. The gun battle went on and soon all the attackers were killed. In that fight, eight security personnel and a gardener were killed. The police reports stated how the dead terrorists had enough explosives to blow up the parliament building and ammunitions to kill a whole battalion of soldiers. There was something strange between them and the terrorists, as they left many evidences behind like weapons, mobile phones, phone numbers, ID cards, photographs and even a love letter.

After the attack, it was not surprising that the then Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee saw the resemblance between this one and the September 11 attacks in the United States that took place only three months before. Roy narrates how on 14
December 2001, the Special Cell of the Delhi Police claimed that several people involved in this conspiracy had been tracked down. Police reports mentioned that it was a joint operation, carried out by Pakistan based terrorist groups like Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad. Next day, that is 15 December 2001, a list of 12 people who were supposed to be part of this conspiracy was submitted. Roy, in the book *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy*, says that the names of persons in the list are, “Ghazi Baba of the Jaish (Usual Suspect I); Maulana Masood Azhar, also of the Jaish (Usual Suspect II); Tariq Ahmed (a ‘Pakistani’); five deceased Pakistani terrorists (We still don’t know who they are). And three Kashmir men, S.A.R. Geelani, Shaukat Hussain Guru and Mohammad Afzal; and Shaukat’s wife, Afsan Guru” (46). The last four were among the arrested persons.

Following this incident, parliament was adjourned for many days. The international flights were cancelled and massive mobilization was carried out by sending half-a-million troops to the Pakistan border. Precautionary measures were also taken by evacuating the foreign embassy staff and issuing cautionary travel advice for tourists travelling to India. It was a time of emergency as the world was waiting with bated breath to know the aftermath of that attack. They were probably expecting a nuclear war. Roy reveals that the money spent for these things is estimated to be one hundred billion rupees. The sudden, panic stricken process of mobilization took the life of a few hundred soldiers.

On 4 August 2005, the Supreme Court gave the final judgement in this case. The view of Supreme Court was that, this attack was an act of war. This opinion came from the words in the fake home ministry sticker found on the car with strong, anti-Indian feelings. Roy, in the book *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy*, has quoted the words on the fake Home Ministry sticker as follows:
‘INDIA IS A VERY BAD COUNTRY AND WE HATE INDIA WE WANT TO DESTROY INDIA AND WITH THE GRACE OF GOD WE WILL DO IT GOD IS WITH US AND WE WILL TRY OUR BEST. THIS EDIET WAJPAI AND ADVANI WE WILL KILL THEM. THEY HAVE KILLED MANY INNOCENT PEOPLE AND THEY ARE VERY BAD PERSONS THERE BROTHER BUSH IS ALSO A VERY BAD PERSONS HE WILL BE NEXT TARGET HE IS ALSO THE KILLER OF INNOCENT PEOPLE HE HAVE TO DIE AND WE WILL DO IT’. (47)

The words were actually pasted on the windscreen of the car that drove into the Indian Parliament. The case was filed under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) in a special fast track trial court. This trial court sentenced Geelani, Shaukat and Afzal to death on 16 December 2002. Shaukat Guru’s wife, Afsan Guru was sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for five years. But a year later, the high court released Geelani and Afsan. The death sentence of Shaukat was changed into ten years of rigorous imprisonment. It was really surprising that Afzal’s death sentence had been upheld by the Supreme Court. He was given three life sentences and a double death sentence.

Earlier, the Supreme Court on 4 August 2005 explained clearly that there was no evidence that linked Afzal to any terrorist group or organization. There was no direct evidence to connect him but circumstantial evidence unerringly pointed to his collaboration with the slain ‘fidayeen’ terrorists. Apart from the direct evidence as Roy points out, the available source is collected from some circumstances. There is a controversial paragraph in the judgement which manifests that the entire nation will be satisfied only if capital punishment is given to the offender. The words like
collective conscience of the society cannot determine the death penalty of a person. The predatory politicians as well as the court make use of society as a prey to decide the fate of a person.

The final reasons given by the Supreme Court stand thus, “the appellant, who is a surrendered militant and who was bent on repeating the acts of treason against the nation, is a menace to the society and his life should become extinct” (48) as quoted in the book *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy*. Roy finds a flaw in this judgement, claiming the meaning of a surrendered militant. The real question behind this is, should Afzal’s life become ‘extinct?’ Recently a group of small, minority of intellectuals, activists, editors and lawyers has objected to death sentence as a matter of moral principle. They argue that death sentence does not obstruct the terrorists who act as suicide bombers. The terrorists are bent on killing as many people as possible. For terrorists death is the main attraction and lethal punishments will not bring about any change in the determined action. If the surrendered militants’ death is a specter for people to watch every day, then majority of the Indian citizens also have to suffer the same fate when they are arrested in any case.

L.K. Advani makes a plea that Afzal should be hanged immediately without a moment’s delay. The public opinion in Kashmir is equally overwhelming and disturbing. There are huge protests to make it obvious that if Afzal is hanged, the consequences will be politicized. The Kashmir people have always been subjected to brutality and hence it will be difficult for them to believe in justice from courts anymore. But others like to see Mohammad Afzal hanging from the gallows like Maqbool Butt, a proud martyr to the cause of Kashmir’s freedom. In the eyes of most Kashmiris, Mohammad Afzal is a prisoner-of-war, being at the court for trials. The
political parties have an ulterior motive in speeding up the verdict of death sentence for Afzal.

Amidst all these, a sad thing to be considered is that, Afzal has lost the rights to be an individual. He is a hard core criminal of India and Kashmir’s great hero at the same time. The time to intervene in this politicized situation has come and gone. The judicial process of the Supreme Court has been completed and the evidence has already been examined. It has blamed two of the accused, and released two others caught in the parliament attack.

Roy comes to the story of Mohammad Afzal whose story is entwined with the story of the Kashmir valley. The origin of this story is the war zone, where laws are different and beyond the sensibilities of a normal philosopher or scientist. The parliament attack is a strange, sad story that took place on 13 December, 2001. This attack speaks a lot about the way the world’s largest democracy works at present. Here the biggest things are connected to smaller things. The cause of this attack is the effect of the cruelty and torture faced by the people in the police stations as well as in the Paradise Valley. No one is able to provide answer to what leads a nation into the brink of nuclear war. Roy along with a small group of people gathered in Jantar Mantar in New Delhi to protest against Mohammad Afzal’s death sentence. She is sure that Mohammad Afzal is just a pawn caught up in the game of chess.

Afzal is not a dragon, but he is the footprint of the dragon. His arrest is to make the footprint extinct, so that no one will know about the real dragon. On that particular afternoon, many journalists and T.V. crews participated in the protest. Their attention was focused on Ghalib, Afzal’s little son who was unaware of his father going to the gallows. The people who participated in the protest were offering ice
creams and cool drinks to the little boy due to their inability to give any sort of comfort and support.

When Roy turned to look around and saw the people gathered there, she found a small stocky man nervously introducing the speakers and making announcement. He was S.A.R. Geelani, a young lecturer in Arabic Literature at Delhi University. This Geelani was the third accused in the Parliament attack case. His arrest took place on 14 December 2001 by the Special Cell of the Delhi police. Geelani was brutally tortured and his family including his wife, small children and brother were illegally detained by the police as he refused to confess the crime which he never committed. This information was not reported in the newspapers.

The information given by the newspapers was entirely an imaginary non-existent confession. Geelani appeared to be the master mind of the conspiracy to the Delhi police. They were perfectly aware that criminal trials would be shaped and modelled by public opinions. The case would never come in for any legal scrutiny. Roy describes how the drama finally reached its pinnacle with Zee TV producing a film titled December 13, a docudrama. It claimed that the informations were based upon the charge-sheet framed by the police. This film was screened only before the then Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee and L.K. Advani. They were watching it quite happily. Geelani spent 18 months in jail, mostly reduced to solitary confinement. The release came only when the High Court acquitted Mohammad Afzal and Afsan Guru.

Roy portrays the arrest of Afsan Guru as something pathetic in her life. At the time of arrest, she was pregnant and delivered her baby in prison. This experience heavily broke her and she now suffers from a serious psychiatric attack. The Supreme Court had no evidence to link Geelani with the parliament attack or any terrorist organization. The contradiction here is no newspaper or journalist or T.V. channel has
apologized to Geelani, for the lies portrayed by them so far. Now, Geelani is a freeman ready to meet the press and talk to the lawyers in order to clear his name.

Though released from prison, Geelani had to meet some problems from the special cell police and a mysterious gun man. One day, at the time of his final hearing in the Supreme Court, Geelani went to meet his lawyer. At that time, a mysterious gun man appeared from the cover of darkness and fixed five bullets into his body. His survival today is a miraculous escape. It is an unbelievable new twist to the story. For the first time, Geelani then understood that someone was worried about what he knew and what he would reveal outside.

He thought that the police would give up this investigation and find out other advancements in the parliament attack case. But the Special Cell considered Geelani as a suspect in that assassination. They took immediate action by confiscation of his computer and car. When the news reached the activists, they gathered outside the hospital demanding an inquiry into the assassination attempt. That inquiry never took place because it would include an investigation into the Special Cell police. Having survived all those terrible trials, Geelani, stood up in public at Jantar Mantar explaining the people that, Mohammad Afzal did not deserve the death sentence. It would have been easy for him to remain at home and keep his head down. Instead, he was there, courageously voicing out for Mohammad Afzal. Roy was moved by this brave attempt.

In the same line where Geelani stood speaking to journalists and photographers, there was another person in a lemon T-shirt and gabardine pants holding a tape recorder. His name was Iftikhar Gilani. This Gilani was also sent to prison once. His arrest took place on 9 June 2002. At the time of arrest, he was the reporter of the Jammu based Kashmir Times. Iftikhar was charged under the Official
Secrets Act and his crime was that he possessed some information regarding the deployment of the Indian troop in Kashmir.

That information was actually published by a Pakistan research institute and was available on internet for anyone to download. The Intelligence Bureau officials seized his computer, destroyed his hard drive, meddled with the downloaded file and changed some of the words to make it appear as an Indian document only for reference. This appears like a secret document stolen out of Home Ministry prohibited for circulation. Despite the repeated appeals from Iftikhar Gilani for hearing, the Directorate General of Military Intelligence ignored it and kept quiet on that matter without clarification for six months. Iftikhar Gilani was beaten and humiliated in the prison.

The autobiography of Gilani *My Days in Prison* reveals the pathetic condition of Gilani that he was made to clean toilet with his shirt and wear it for many days. As court arguments were going on for several months, it became obvious that if the case continued, it would bring a big embarrassment for the police, so finally he was released. Now, he appears outside as a free man, a reporter who has come to Jantar Mantar in order to cover a story. Roy felt then that the three persons, S. A. R Geelani, Iftikhar Gilani and Mohammad Afzal should have been in the same Tihar jail.

Apart from Mohammad Afzal, the other two were fortunate enough to have a community of middle-class friends, journalists and university teachers, who stood by them and supported them in their time of need. The lawyer of Geelani, Nandita Haksar mobilised an All India Defence Committee for him. It was coordinated by a group of activists, lawyers and Journalists. Another important fact was that many well-known lawyers like Ram Jethmalani, K.G. Kannabiran and Vrinda Grover also represented him. They were ready to prove how Geelani’s case was nothing but a
bundle of absurd assumptions, suppositions and lies that created evidence. It needed a whole team of top lawyers to make the judiciary understand the case of Geelani. Of course, as newspapers pointed out winning Geelani’s case was a Herculean task. But, unfortunately Mohammad Afzal did not have anyone to fight for him.

Mohammad Afzal was lodged in a high security prison from the time he was arrested. Till the charge sheet was filed by the police, he had no legal defense or legal advice. Among the four accused, he was the most important target for the Police. His case was more complicated than Geelani’s. During that time, Afzal’s younger brother Hilal was illegally detained by the Special Operations Group in Kashmir. Hilal’s release took place only after the charge sheet was filed. On 20 December 2001, the Investigating Officer and Assistant Commissioner (ACP), Rajbir Singh, summoned a press conference at the special cell. In that press conference, Mohammad Afzal was made to confess the crime before the media.

The Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Ashok Chand told the people in that same press meet that Afzal had already confessed to the police. This was absolutely untrue. The day before his confession, Afzal had been under police custody and subjected to heavy torture and unbearable humiliation. It was one of the reasons for why Afzal in the media confessions admitted his responsibility. While answering some of the questions of the media, Afzal clearly stated that Geelani had nothing to do with that attack and proved him innocent.

The moment Afzal started talking like this, the ACP Rajbir Singh shouted at him and asked him to shut up. He also asked the media not to broadcast that part of Afzal’s confession. The media did not report it at that time but three months later, in a television channel, Aaj Tak, the confession program was telecast again and it included this part also. In the eyes of the public, Afzal has already accepted his guilt. Roy says
that the common people are ignorant of the law and criminal procedures involved in this. The collective conscience of the society will find it hard to make a second guess. Their verdict is based on their first opinion made after Afzal’s confession.

Afzal’s official confession was extracted from him forcefully. The narrative was beautifully sealed in an envelope and produced by DCP, Ashok Chand to the Judicial Magistrate. Roy, in the book *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy*, describes how the confession of Afzal is like the weaving of a tale as follows:

. . . a masterful tale that connected Ghazi Baba, Maulana Masood Azhar, a man called Tariq and the five dead terrorists; their equipment, arms and ammunition, home ministry passes, a laptop and fake ID cards; detailed lists of exactly how many kilos of what chemical he bought from where, the exact ratio in which they were mixed to make explosives; and the exact times at which he made and received calls on which mobile number. (60)

All the points of the confession fitted perfectly into the evidence collected by the police previously. It perfectly matched the version that the police offered in the press meet some days ago, just like Cinderella’s foot went right into the glass slipper. At first, both the High Court and the Supreme Court revealed that there were some lapses and violations of procedure in Afzal’s confession. But somehow, the confession still survives as a phantom in the prosecution.

The confessional document of Afzal serves as the major source of Pakistan’s involvement in the Parliament attack. The government of India made a statement on 21 December 2001 that it was ready to launch a war against Pakistan if there was a clear proof of its involvement. The only proof of Pakistan’s involvement is Afzal’s
confession possessed by the government. The next proof is the sticker on the car. After the extraction of this illegal confession from Afzal under torture, hundreds of soldiers have been moved to the Pakistan border expecting a nuclear war at its brink. Now Roy asks questions in the same essay like, “. . . could it have been the other way around? Did the confession precipitate the war, or did the need for a war precipitate the need for the confession?” (61).

Days later when Afzal’s confession was no longer the talk of the High Court, the link to Pakistan terrorist groups like Jaish-e-Mohammad and Lashkar-e-Toiba also ceased. The only available evidence other than this link was the identity of the five dead fidayeen. In the police custody, Afzal identified those dead persons as Mohammad, Rana, Raja, Hamza and Haider. The Home Minister, Police and the trial court judge concluded that they were Pakistanis. Still, the matter rests there without any end and there is no clue about their identity.

The High Court said what mattered most was the connection with the accused and not their identity. According to Roy, in the real statement of the accused, Afzal said like this, “‘I had not identified any terrorist. Police told me the names of terrorists and forced me to identify them’” (61) as quoted in the book Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy. When that statement came out, it was too late for him. Even on the first day of his trial, the trial court judge accepted Afzal’s identification of the dead bodies and the postmortem reports as undisputed evidence without any formal proof.

The irresponsible action of the trial court has had serious consequences on Afzal. Roy quotes the stand of the Supreme Court in the book Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy thus, “‘. . . the first circumstance against the accused Afzal is that Afzal knows who the deceased terrorists were. He identified
the dead bodies of the deceased terrorists. On this aspect the evidence remains unshattered” (61-62). There was a possibility that the dead terrorists were foreign militants, but it could be the other way round also.

Identifying dead people as foreign terrorists is not uncommon among the police security forces in Kashmir and Delhi, as they have already blamed even innocent persons as terrorists. Among the many cases in Kashmir, the most important is the killing that took place after the Chattisinghpora massacre and brought about an international scandal. Roy goes back to the past and narrates what actually took place in the night of 20 April 2000. It was the day when the then U.S. President Bill Clinton arrived in New Delhi and also 35 Sikhs in Chattisinghpora were shot dead by unidentified gun men in Indian army uniform.

The Kashmiri people suspected that Indian security forces were behind that attack. After five days, the SOG and Rashtriya Rifles unit of the army killed another five people in a joint operation outside a village called Pathribal. But the next morning it was announced that those Pakistan based foreign militants had killed all the Sikhs in Chattisinghpora earlier. Even the bodies could not be identified as they were in a disfigured state. The sad truth was that the dead were local people from Anantnag district killed in cold blood. The dead people had civilian clothes under the army uniform. Roy also gives other examples to project the fact in the absence of evidence that the words of the police cannot be trusted.

Mohammad Afzal's hearings in the fast track trial court began on May 2002. Roy explains the background in which the trial took place. When his trial was going on, the anger over September 11 attacks was still in the air. At the same time, the United States was celebrating its victory in Afghanistan. Gujarat was paralyzed with the communal riots because of the fire in S6 coach of the Sabarmati Express. It was
also the time when the plan to avenge the killing of Hindu pilgrims was made as a result of which more than two thousand Muslims were butchered and one hundred and fifty thousand were driven from their homes. On the part of Afzal, everything that happened at that time went wrong against him.

With no access to the outside world or money to hire a lawyer Afzal was put inside a high security prison. Even the lawyer appointed for his trial was asked to be discharged from the case, as he was professionally hired by another team of lawyers in defense of Geelani. The court appointed another junior lawyer with little experience to represent Afzal. That young lawyer did not visit his client in jail to collect instructions. At the time of trial, he did not call a single witness in Afzal's defense and never cross questioned any of the prosecution witnesses.

After five days, Afzal requested the court for another lawyer and gave a list of lawyers that the court might hire for him. But everyone in that list rejected him. The reason behind this is, when Ram Jethmalani agreed to represent Geelani, the Shiv Sena mobs attacked his Mumbai office. The judge was helpless at that point and gave Afzal every right to cross examine his witnesses. Here, Roy states that it is really astonishing her as the judge expects an ordinary person to cross examine his witnesses in a criminal trial. This task is really impossible for someone without previous knowledge about criminal tasks including the new laws like POTA, the Evidence Act and the Telegraph Act. It is a tough job even for an experienced lawyer who works overtime in the court.

Afzal's case was built up in the trial court with the strength of testimonies from nearly eighty prosecution witnesses. The witnesses, according to Roy, includelandlords, shopkeepers, technicians from cell phone companies, the police themselves. At this crucial period of the trial, the evidence needs to be gathered and
put on record. There was no one to defend Afzal at that critical period. At this point he almost lost his case and was about to be hanged. The trial period was an embarrassing one for the Police of the Special Cell as they were often admonished by the Supreme Court. It was a bare fact that the accumulation of lies, creation of stories, forged documents and many lapses in the procedures began from the very first day of investigation.

The judgements of the Delhi High Court and the Supreme Court pointed out those things and disapproved the behaviour of the police and called it as a disturbing feature in the trial. But amidst all the confusions, the police were not seriously reprimanded except being penalized. There was a disregard for procedural norms from the Special Cell in every step of the case. It was careless enough to think that nothing would be found out about the investigations which were carried out. Their confidence was shaken by the High Court and the Supreme Court.

There were many lies in almost every part of the investigation. At first the Delhi police said that Afzal and Shaukat were arrested based on the information given to them by Geelani soon after his arrest. But the court records show how the message to look out for Shaukat and Afzal was flashed to the Srinagar police on 15 December, 2001 at 5.45 a.m. According to Delhi police records, Geelani was arrested in Delhi on 15 December, 2001 at 10 a.m., which was four hours after they started looking for Afzal and Shaukat in Srinagar. The police was not able to explain the difference in the records.

Roy, in the book *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy*, reveals how the high court put it on record saying that, "... the police version contains a 'material contradiction' and cannot be true. It goes down as a ‘disturbing feature’” (66). The question why the Delhi Police had to lie in that matter remains
unanswered. It is a normal procedure that when a person is arrested there must be two public witnesses to sign the Arrest memo and the Seizure memo. The Seizure memo is for the things they may seize during the arrest like goods, cash and document.

According to the Delhi Police claim, both Afzal and Shaukat were arrested together on 15 December, 2001 at 11 a.m. in Srinagar. The reports also explained the things about the seizure of a truck registered in the name of Shaukat's wife and further explained the way they both were trying to escape in that truck during the arrest. The reports also give details about the seizure of Nokia mobile phone, a laptop and one million rupee from Afzal. But, it was very contradictory to the statement of Afzal who revealed that he was arrested at a bus stop in Sri Nagar, and nothing like laptop, mobile phone or money was seized from him.

The Arrest memos for Afzal and Shaukat were signed in Delhi, by Bismillah, Geelani's younger brother. At the time of that scandalous signature, Bismillah was detained and held in illegal confinement in the Lodhi road police station. The two other witnesses who signed the Seizure memos for the phone, laptop and one million rupee are from Jammu and Kashmir police. One of the witnesses with the number 62 was the constable Mohammad Akbar who was not a stranger to Mohammad Afzal. According to Jammu and Kashmir police, Mohammad Afzal and Shaukat were first spotted in Parimpura fruit market. They did not arrest them immediately there, but followed them to a less public place where there were no public witnesses. This was another serious inconsistency in the prosecution.

The High Court judgement clearly pointed out that the time of arrest of the accused persons had undergone some serious changes. The claim of the Police to have recovered the most vital evidence that connected Afzal with that conspiracy at the conflicting time and place of arrest was a shocking thing to Roy. The vital evidence
recovered by the police was the mobile phone and the laptop. Though there was a problem in the date and time of arrest and in the seizure of evidence, the only available documents were the words of the police against those of a terrorist.

The police also happened to find some files in the seized laptop that had the fake Home Ministry pass and the fake identity cards. These were the only useful information recovered from the laptop. They stated that Afzal was carrying it to Sri Nagar in order to return it to Ghazi Baba. But the investigating officer, ACP Rajbir Singh made a statement that the hard disk of the computer was sealed on 16 January 2002 but it was accessed even after that date. The High Court was actually well aware of that but did not take any action. Roy, in the book *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy*, contemplates on this issue and thinks that it is strange to know how:

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\ldots\text{the only incriminating information found on the computer were the files used to make the fake passes and ID cards? And a Zee TV film clip showing the parliament building. If other incriminating information had been deleted, why wasn't this? And why did Ghazi Baba, chief of operations of an international terrorist organization, need a laptop-with bad artwork on it-so urgently?} \, (67)
\]

The tough evidence produced by the Special Cell gave way to suspicion. Their work seemed to be just the recovery of mobile phones, SIM cards, computerized call records and testimonies from cell phone companies who sold the phones and SIM cards to Afzal and his group. The call records were also produced, which reveal that Shaukat, Afzal, Geelani and the dead Mohammad had been in touch with one other. Those records were found to be uncertified computer printouts rather than copies of primary documents. Here, Roy points out how the call records have produced two
calls made exactly at the same time from the same SIM card with different handsets and IMEI numbers. The meaning of this is that the SIM card must have been cloned or else the call records were false.

The prosecution heavily depend on one mobile phone number, that is, 9811489429. According to the police, it was Afzal's number and that was the number that connected Afzal to Mohammad, Shaukat and Geelani. The police records revealed how that number was found on the identity tags of the slain terrorists. The proof left behind had been convenient for the Police to trace it back to Afzal. The words written on their tags as given by the police were, “lost kitten! Call mom at 9811489429” (68) as quoted in the book *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy*. Roy mentions this as strange, because in a normal procedure the evidence gathered at the scene of the crime will remain sealed. But in Afzal’s case, the ID cards were never sealed or put under the custody of police. So, there was more chance of them being tampered at any time.

The only evidence that 9811489429 was Afzal's number was the confession of Afzal that he gave to the police amidst heavy torture. The SIM card of the above said mobile phone was never found. Kamal Kishore was the prosecution witness produced by the police, who identified Afzal and told the police that Kishore sold Afzal, a Motorola phone and a SIM card on 4th December 2001. There was a change in the call records that trust on the fact that the particular SIM card was in use from 6 November 2001, a month before Afzal bought it. This proves the thing that either the witness is lying or the call records produced by the police are false. The High Court has been doubtful over this discrepancy and resolved it by expressing Kamal Kishore’s revelation that he just had sold Afzal a SIM card, and not that particular SIM card. Roy quotes the Supreme Court’s view in the *Listening to Grasshoppers*:
Then a series of prosecution witnesses that mostly included shopkeepers, identified Afzal as the man to whom they had sold various things like ammonium nitrate, aluminium powder, sulfur, a mixer grinder, and packets of dry fruit. Usually, the normal procedure is to make these shopkeepers pick out Afzal from among a number of people in an identification parade. But there, it didn't happen. Instead, Afzal led the police to those shops and introduced himself as an accused to the witnesses in the parliament case.

There are some questions left unanswered as to whether Afzal led the police or the police led him to the shops? When the confession of Afzal was, a major legal evidence, then why the Police did not give importance to the revelation of all the other witnesses. The judges were confused by the violations of procedural norms but did not consider them to be serious. Roy tries to prove how an ordinary person who sell electronic goods without receipts are always under the control of the Delhi Police.

On coming to the final stage of her views on the shift from procedural norms, Roy says that she is not doing the work of a detective. She has collected many of the above said data from an excellent book, December 13: Terror over democracy, written by Nirmalangshu Mukherji in the form of two reports named as ‘Trial of Errors’ and ‘Balancing Act.’ The book has been published by the People’s Union for Democratic Rights, Delhi. Her next important collection has been from the three thick volumes of judgements by the Trial Court, the High Court and the Supreme Court. These public documents have all been lying in her desk. Roy finds it necessary to reveal the truths to the public, which are so long hidden by the free press.
Roy’s question in the book *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy* is, “why is it that apart from a few sporadic independent commentators, our newspapers carry front page stories about who the hangman is going to be, and macabre details about the length (60 feet) and weight (3.75 kilograms) of the rope that will be used to hang Mohammad Afzal” (70). Doesn’t the public expect the free press to express only the facts on a particular situation? Roy is not able to understand whether to praise them and sing hosannas or just to leave it for them to decide.

Coming back to Afzal’s case, Roy manifests that the most ignored legal document in this case is the statement of the accused under section 313 of the criminal procedure code. The charge sheet given by the court is in the form of questions to put the evidence against him. The choice is then left to Afzal as he can either accept the charges or dispute them and has the opportunity to present his version of the story. As Afzal has not had any opportunity to explain the facts on his side, this is the only one document that narrates his story in his own voice.

Here in this document, Afzal accepts some of the charges made against him by the prosecution. Afzal met a man named Tariq who introduced him to Mohammad. Afzal helped Mohammad to come to Delhi and bought him a second hand white ambassador car. That Mohammad was one of the five fidayeen killed in the attack. One important thing in the statement by Afzal is that he makes no effort to completely prove himself as innocent. His actions are put forth in a context that is entirely devastative. The statement given by Afzal explains the role he played in the parliament attack. This also gives one an understanding of some possible reasons as to why the investigation was so bad and why it fell short almost at crucial junctures. Such acts cannot be dismissed as being incompetent and bad actions. Though the court does not believe Afzal, it is not right for them not to have any consideration to
what Afzal tries to convey, including the means of trial and the role of the special cell police.

The information given by Afzal about the names, places and dates is already known to him as his family has lived in Kashmir. Afzal lived in Sopore in Jammu and Kashmir. In the year 2000, when Afzal was there in Kashmir, army people used to harass him every day. An officer Raja Mohan Rai told him that he must give information about the militants. Afzal was a surrendered militant and so had to mark his attendance at army camp every Sunday. They never tortured him physically but often threatened him. Due to this, Afzal used to give small bits of information that he used to gather from newspapers in order to save him.

In June 2000, he left that village and migrated to a town by name, Baramullah. Here, he was running a shop with surgical instruments that he sold on commission basis. One day as he was going home on a scooter, the S.T.F. (Special Task Force) got hold of him and tortured him continuously for five days. That arrest took place as somebody gave information to S.T.F. that he was once again involving in militant activities. That person was released in the presence of Afzal. Afzal also got released later after being put in custody for about 25 days and paying one lakh rupees.

The information given by Afzal was also confirmed by the Special Cell Police from other sources. Some days later, he was given a certificate by the S.T.F. who made him a special police officer for six months. But they were well aware that Afzal would not work for them. Tariq, a S.T.F officer met him in Palhalan S.T.F. camp and also came to Sri Nagar telling him that he basically worked for the S.T.F. Afzal accepted the fact that he also worked then in the S.T.F. The dead terrorist, Mohammad was along with Tariq and told him how he was from the Keran sector of Kashmir. Tariq requested Afzal to drop Mohammad in Delhi as he had some work to
do there. Unaware of Mohammad being a terrorist, Afzal dropped the man in Delhi. Later, when his arrest took place on the parliament attack case on 15.12.2001 at Sri Nagar bus stop, he was really surprised at what went wrong.

One of the witnesses by name Akbar had conducted a raid in his shop one year before the December 2001 attacks. He told the local police station that Afzal and Shaukat had sold fake surgical instruments and taken five thousand rupees from him. Following that, Afzal was tortured severely at the Special Cell and one Bhoop Singh even forced him to drink urine. He also witnessed the family of Geelani being detained there, while Geelani himself was in a miserable condition. Geelani was not even able to stand at the time of interrogation.

Both Geelani and Afzal were taken to the doctor for examination. They were instructed to tell him that they did not have any health problem, failing which both of them would be tortured further in prison. Then with court’s permission, Afzal added some other details that linked him to that case. There Afzal expressed that Mohammad came with him to Kashmir. Tariq handed Mohammad over to Afzal and Tariq then worked with the security force and S.T.F. Jammu and Kashmir police. Afzal also revealed how Tariq told him if there was any problem related to Mohammad, it would be solved by him. The work allotted to Afzal was that he must drop Mohammad in Delhi and nothing else.

And if Afzal failed to accept that, he would be arrested in some other case. So he brought Mohammad to Delhi under heavy pressure even after knowing well that he was a terrorist. After that, Afzal submitted a picture of someone who could be the key player in the parliament attack case. The key player inside the case might be the prosecution witness 62 named Akbar. He was the head constable of the Parimpora police station, who signed the Seizure Memo of Afzal’s arrest. At one point of the
trial, Afzal described in a letter to Sushil kumar, the Supreme Court lawyer the words spoken by Akbar. When Akbar came to Sri Nagar to testify about the seizure Memo, he spoke to Afzal in Kashmiri language that his family was alright. And Afzal immediately understood that it was a threat posed to him by the real culprits.

Afzal went on to say that after his arrest in Sri Nagar, he was taken to Parimpora police station and underwent heavy torture. The police explained how his non-cooperation would lead to serious consequence in his family. Roy also describes how he underwent torture in the Special Task Force Camp, with electrode in the genitals and chillies and petrol in his anus. Afzal gave the name of a Deputy Superintendent of Police, Dravinder Singh who asked him to do a small job in Delhi. It is in that same letter, he mentions some phone numbers from the charge sheet which can be traced back to the Special Task Force Camp in Sri Nagar.

Afzal’s story gives a glimpse of life in Kashmir. There are different reactions in books and newspapers that innocent Kashmiris are killed in the crossfire, whenever the security forces carry out a strong battle against the militants. Roy, in the book Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy, also portrays another version where, “. . . Kashmir is a valley awash with militants, renegades, security forces, double crossers, informers, spooks, blackmailers, extortionists, spies, both Indian and Pakistani intelligence agencies, human rights activists, NGOs and unimaginable amounts of unaccounted – for money and weapons” (74).

Roy is at a loss to find out who is working for whom. In comparison to everything else, the truth in Kashmir is more dangerous. As she digs deep for truth, what she gets is bitter and disgusting truth. Those who are deep inside the pits are the so called Special Operations Group and Special Task Force which Afzal talks about. These are some of the ruthless, fearful elements of Indian security forces in Kashmir.
Apart from normal forces, the group operates in a twilight zone where policemen, surrendered militants and common criminals do business with each other. They are predators, preying on local population in rural Kashmir. Their first victims are thousands of Kashmir men who rose up in revolt in the early 1990s, and later turned as surrendered militants. After their surrender, these militants are trying to live a normal life which is not allowed by the security forces.

Afzal is a person who crossed the border in 1989 to be trained as a militant when he was 20 years old. But he returned without proper training but with a rough experience. Once he came back, Afzal put his gun down and enrolled himself at the Delhi University. Roy reveals how he surrendered to the Border Security Force without having any practice as a militant. It was at this point that nightmares began for him. His surrounding environment turned his life into hell.

In Roy’s opinion, what people learn from Afzal’s story is that, it would be not just stupid, but insane to surrender their weapons and submit to the vast range of myriad cruelties, that the Indian state has to thrust on them. The Kashmiri people are enraged by Afzal’s story because it is their story too. What happened to him may happen to thousands of young Kashmiri men and their families. The only difference Roy finds between him and others is that many of them caught by police are burned, electrocuted, blackmailed and killed without proper investigation.

Their final death is not after court’s order, but bodies are thrown out from trucks for the passersby to see. Afzal’s case is telecast in medieval theatres as a means of fair trial and the benefits from the free press. All these celebrations only project a so called democracy filled with lies and defects in procedural norms. Even after Afzal has been hanged, Roy’s questions in the book Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy like “Who attacked the Indian parliament? Was it Laskhar-e-Toiba?
Jaise-e-Mohammad? Or does the answer lie somewhere deep in the secret heart of this country that we all live in and love and hate in our own beautiful, intricate, various and thorny ways?” (76) remain unanswered. Roy expects that the parliament must order another inquiry into this December 13 attack case and the family of Afzal must be given protection during this inquiry. At the end of the essay, Roy seems to say that she is not happy with the hanging of Mohammad Afzal without probing deep into the truths of his case. No one will forgive the government for such legal mistakes in the democratic India.

On February 15, 2014, the Hurriyat Conference chairman stated that Afzal Guru’s hanging was a tragic incident for his family as well as the entire Kashmir. According to Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, the Hurriyat Conference chairman, the execution of Afzal Guru has revealed the true picture of Indian democracy and on the other hand it has given strength and commitment for the Kashmiri nation to carry on with the struggle.

Omar Abdullah, another political personality expressed his concern over the Indian government’s procedures in carrying out this execution. That the Indian government did not allow Afzal to meet his family before death and to bid a final farewell was indeed a tragedy. In a net article “Afzal Guru: Kashmir anger over hanging,” Omar Abdullah talks to CNN-IBN news channel and points out how, “India would have to prove to the world that Guru’s hanging was not “a selective execution.”” As a result, hundreds of police and paramilitary personnel have been deployed in towns and cities across Indian-administered Kashmir in order to prevent unrest following Afzal’s death.

The essay “How deep shall we dig” is about a democratic nation caught in the cross-currents of neo-liberalism and Hindu-nationalism. In this essay, Roy pours out
her heart saying that to live in Kashmir is to “... live with, the endless killing, the mounting ‘disappearances,’ the whispering, the fear, the unresolved rumors” (213) in the book *An Ordinary Person’s Guide to Empire*. There seems to be no connection between what is going on and what others are being told about the happenings in Kashmir. Incidents like the burning of Sabarmati Express in Godhra, the December 13 attack on Parliament, and the massacre of Sikhs by terrorists in Chittisinghpura, had little or no investigation. Towards the end of any investigation, the terrorists who were killed by the security forces had later turned out to be innocent villagers.

According to Roy, previously, the U.S. government used lies and fabricated the facts about the September 11 attacks to invade not one country but two that is Afghanistan and Iraq. She feels that strangely the same strategy has been used by the Indian government not against other countries, but against its own people.

In the last decade alone, the number of people killed by the police and security forces have gone up from tens to thousands. In a satirical vein in the book *An Ordinary Person’s Guide to Empire*, Roy expresses that as long as people who are killed are labelled gangsters, terrorists, or extremists, their killers can walk around as saviours in the name of national interest, and does not need to give answers to anyone. What is disturbing but true is, if people in a nation turn out as gangsters and extremists, there is something wrong that drives them to take such extreme steps. The Indian government has introduced the enactment of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) to harass and terrorize people. Mishra in his web article “What is Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA)?” discusses how the “Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) is meant to deal with the crimes like subversion, insurgency and terrorism.” This act has been adopted in ten states.
As far as Roy’s understanding, the law can be applied to everyone. It need not necessarily concentrate only on an Al-Qaeda terrorist caught with explosives, but can even track down an Adivasi playing his flute under a neem tree. It can even target Roy as well as the readers. In *An Ordinary Person’s Guide to Empire*, Roy cites an example of how in Jharkhand, there are 3200 people who are poor Adivasis but mentioned as Maoists and undergoing criminal charge under POTA. The people arrested under POTA have to face police torture instead of police investigation. Once Roy was a member of People’s Tribunal on POTA. She listened to various testimonies from prisoners about the harassment in the democratic nation, India. The Indian police station poses as the cruelest one where people are being forced to drink urine, being stripped, humiliated, given electric shocks, burned with cigarette butts, having iron rods put up their anuses to being beaten and kicked to death as expressed by Roy in the book *An Ordinary Person’s Guide to Empire*. The cases under POTA prove that majority of the accused are either poor people or Dalits, Adivasis and Muslims.

Roy goes on to show how a person found guilty under POTA cannot get bail until he proves himself as innocent. In the net article “What is Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA)?,” Mishra also states that “. . . suspects can be detained under POTA for a period of six months without being charged and for three more months with the permission of a special judge.” This rule applies to all the citizens of India, who wait to be accused for a crime. Sometimes, people are being forced to believe that POTA has been misused. On the contrary, POTA has been used only for the crimes specified by the Indian government. The Malimath committee has already recommended to bring normal criminal law in line with the provisions of POTA. This
will put an end to the killing of criminals and support the chase for the terrorists who are free to roam around the country.

Roy’s essay “How Deep Shall We Dig” points out how, in Jammu and Kashmir and many other north eastern States, the Armed Forces Special Powers Act allows the officers and junior commissioned officers of the army to kill any person on suspicion of creating trouble in public or anyone carrying a weapon. The words to be noted here is “on suspicion of.” This paves way for torture, rape, death and disappearance in these States. But it should be remembered that India retains its name for legitimate democracy in the International Community. Next, Roy traces the origin of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act. The Act is a crude version of the Law passed by Lord Linlithgow in 1942 to control the Quit India Movement. Further, it was used on Manipur in 1958, on Mizoram in 1965, on Tripura in 1972. The enactment of the Law had its counter effects, when the whole of Manipur reacted to that problem. Roy, in the book *An Ordinary Person’s Guide to Empire*, puts it thus, “what more evidence does anybody need to realize that repressive measures are counter-productive and only exacerbate the problem” (220).

It is strange that the Indian government is reluctant to investigate the evidence available in serious cases. This is because of the offences listed in POTA as mentioned by Mishra in the web article, “What is Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA)?” which includes “. . . inviting support for a terrorist organization, addressing a gathering or a mob of terrorism sympathizers or assisting in arranging a meeting where support is invited or expressed for a terrorists organization.” These offences force them to give importance to the killing of people in an effort to eliminate criminals. A lot of evidence and eyewitnesses are there in the cases like the massacre of 3000 Sikhs in Delhi, the murder of Muslims in Bombay in 1993, the murder of
Shankar Guha Nyogi and so on. Roy holds these sources of evidence to be of no use, when the State government is actively involved in wiping out extremists through POTA.

At this juncture, Roy gives another information that corporate newspapers present the GDP Growth Rate as phenomenal and unprecedented. The shops are overflowing with consumer goods and government storehouses abound with food grains, while the “farmers steeped in debt are committing suicide in their hundreds. Reports of starvation and malnutrition come in from across the country” as expressed in the book *An Ordinary Person’s Guide to Empire* (221). But, Roy finds that the government has stored 63 million tonnes of grains and allowed them to rot in store houses. It only shows that they are unwilling to help the poor but have exported twelve million tonnes to other countries at a subsidized price. The preferred model of lifestyle in modern age is malnutrition and permanent hunger. Roy is able to analyse how, in the last five years, the most violent inequality of rural-urban distribution has increased since independence. But in urban India, there is a huge availability of shops, restaurants, airports, railway stations and hospitals.

The election promises come true in TV monitors as though India shines and feels good. Roy, in the book *An Ordinary Person’s Guide to Empire*, makes a sarcastic comment that India will really shine only if “you only have to close your ears to the sickening, crunch of the policeman’s boot on someone’s ribs, you only have to raise your eyes from the squalor, the slums, the ragged broken people on the streets and seek a friendly TV monitor and you will be in that other beautiful world.” (222). Roy finds it hard to understand which world is real and which is virtual. Her view is that laws like POTA have been used to wipe off the poor people from the country in order to make India shine.
Roy rightly states that a new kind of secessionist movement is taking place in India. It is a movement where a small section of people becomes wealthy by amassing everything including land, rivers, water, security, fundamental rights with the right to protest from a huge group of people. Roy considers that the India Private Limited is gradually gaining control from the India Public Enterprise. The public assets like water, electricity, transport, telecommunications, health services, education and natural resources are maintained with public money for decades and now given for sale by the state to private corporations. Seventy percent of the Indian population spends their life in rural areas and depends on these natural resources. Roy proves how snatching away of all these assets from poor people and selling them to private companies results in dispossession and impoverishment.

The India Private Limited is being owned by few corporations and multinationals. The CEOs of these companies control the country, its infrastructure, resources, media, and journalists and provide nothing to the poor people. These CEOs seem to be more powerful than the Prime Minister of India. In a disturbed mood Roy asks in the book *An Ordinary Person’s Guide to Empire* as follows: “If the Indian state chooses to mortgage its responsibilities to a handful of corporations, does it mean that this theatre of electoral democracy that is unfolding around us right now in all its shrillness is entirely meaningless? Or does it still have a role to play?” (225). Voting in election is to choose a political party to whom people would invest the powers of the state.

Roy comes back to discuss the dangerous cross-currents of neo-liberal capitalism and communal neo-fascism. While putting an end to neo-liberal capitalism, she starts using the word fascism that causes offence. This word reminds her of the government’s open support to a pogrom against the members of the minority
community, where two thousand people have been killed. She further mentions how women of the same community have been publicly raped and burned alive. The authorities refuse to punish the responsible persons for the crimes. Roy’s dilemma is whether the government calls this as fascism. The painters, writers, scholars and film makers who protest against these issues are either abused, threatened, burned or destroyed. In her net article “Arundhati Roy’s Statement in YJL Conference,” Roy gives an example as follows:

Dr. Binayak Sen, who has worked as a civil rights activist with the People’s Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) and a doctor in the area for more than 30 years, was arrested last May, charged under the CSPSA, the UAPA, and the Indian Penal Code (IPC). He has been in prison for eight months . . . . By imprisoning someone like Binayak Sen the government is trying to close out the option of peaceful resistance, of democratic space.

The great history of the oppressed and vanquished people is not recorded in India that belongs to Savarna Hindus. In An Ordinary Person’s Guide to Empire, Roy exposes like this, “If the politics of avenging historical wrong is our chosen path, then surely the Dalits and Adivasis of India have the right to murder arson and wanton destruction?” (227). ‘Pseudo-Secularists’ believe that archaeologists digging under Babri Masjid will not be able to find the ruins of Ram temple. If the remains of Ram temple exist there, Roy wishes to know what will be present beneath the temple. The answer may vary from a Buddhist stupa to an Adivasi shrine. This shows that Indian History has not begun with Savarna Hinduism. It is also a fact that Muslims are cruelly targeted as outsiders and invaders in a country, where the government is busy in signing corporate deeds and contracts for development with the government that once colonized India for centuries.
During the great famines of 1876 and 1892, millions of Indians died due to starvation while the British government was exporting food and raw materials to England. History has recorded the death figure to be between twelve and twenty nine million people. This gives rise to a very pertinent question in Roy’s mind, that is, why did not this figure arise any kind of political revenge on the part of Indian government? This question leads her to ask whether vengeance is only meant for these victims who could be easily targeted. The interesting point in this is, when Manmohan Singh, the then Finance Minister was preparing India’s markets for neo-liberation, L.K. Advani was going on his first Rath Yatra creating communal passion and paving way for neo-fascism.

Towards December 1992, the mobs destroyed Babri Masjid and in 1993, the Congress government of Maharashtra signed a power project with Enron. The era of privatization in India started with the Enron contract. Roy’s sarcastic comment in the book *An Ordinary Person’s Guide to Empire* is, “While one arm is busy selling the nation’s assets off in chunks, the others, to divert attention, is arranging a baying, howling, deranged chorus of cultural nationalism” (230). This is an extraordinary orchestra jointly conducted by the Congress and Bharatiya Janata Party government. Half of the amount got by privatization is given to finance Hindutva’s vast army like the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the Bajrang Dal and other groups. The frustration caused by dispossession of people due to the Corporate Globalization projects erupt into violence.

In order to stamp out people from their areas, police open fire on unarmed people mostly Adivasis. People have been killed in large groups in various places. Roy describes how, when it comes to the poor, and particularly, she expresses that Dalit and Adivasi communities are killed when they are trying to protect forest land
from dams, mining companies and steel plants. Those who are killed in these incidents by the police, are immediately named as people belonging to militant groups like PWG, MCC, ISI, and LTTE. This takes place when victims refuse to accept their condition and try to pick up arms to protect themselves.

POTA law is like an antibiotic medicine given for the disease of dissent. The other steps taken by the government involve court judgements that deprive the right to speech but provide the right to strike people, and the right to take possession of their livelihood. In the web article of Roy “Arundhati Roy’s Statement in YJL Confrence,” she questions, “How can there be even the pretense of free speech or freedom under laws like these? All over the country, not just journalists and writers, but anybody who disagrees with the government’s plans is being arrested, tortured, and imprisoned. Sometimes murdered.” These Acts seal all possible means of exit at times of disaster. Roy is surprised at the fact that when 181 countries have voted in favour of the U.N. including U.S. for increased Protection of Human Rights during the period of war on terror, India alone has abstained from voting. From this, Roy comes to understand that the stage is set for a full-fledged attack on Human Rights by India.

The pathway for non-violent civil disobedience has become weak. Several non-violent people’s resistance movements are now struggling, and have found out that they have come up against a wall and it is time to change the direction as armed struggle is the only path left. Leaving aside Kashmir and the Northeast, the other territories and districts like Jharkhand, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh are also controlled by the people who find no other choice but to take up arms in their hands. Others begin to feel that they must contest in electoral politics to enter inside politics and discuss the problems. Roy feels that the idea of taking up arms will only sprout more violence in the state. The other choice of entering into electoral politics
may not produce any result because, in all the issues like nuclear bombs, Big Dams, Babri Masjid problem and privatization, the Congress government draws the plans worked out by the Bharatiya Janata Party.

Elections that hold an important role in democratic India has not brought any radical change from inside. Her essay *An Ordinary Person’s Guide to Empire* goes on to state how it is “not because of that middle-class squeamishness – ‘Politics is dirty’ or ‘all politicians are corrupt’ – but because I believe that strategically battles must be waged from positions of strength, not weakness” (234). Any mainstream political party may pretend to represent the interests of both the rich and the poor. But it can satisfy only one group, one at the cost of the other. One group must be sacrificed to help the other. It is hard for the wealthy Indians to take interest on poor farmers. In case, if any political party represents poor people, it will also be poor. This party, according to Roy will have meagre funds. As per Indian electoral system, a political party cannot contest without funds. Though the poor are weak in the political and legal institutions, their strength outside these institutions is massive. Roy wishes for negotiations to take place outside. The poor people can step out and wage the best battle. Roy’s final conclusion to the problem is the outburst of an elected shadow parliament beyond the Lok Sabha, without whose support the parliament cannot function. The Shadow Parliament must develop an underground passage that shares only intelligence and information unavailable in the mainstream media. Fearlessly, they must disable the machine that is destroying the people. In spite of the violence closing in upon the people, change will occur only if the citizens fight for it.

“A Perfect Day for Democracy” is a web essay by Roy, which focuses on the issue of Afzal Guru accused in the 2001 parliament attack and was later secretly hanged in Tihar jail. Another Kashmiri hanged in Tihar jail was Maqbool Butt. In the
web article “Why Afzal Must Not Be Hanged,” Haksar states like this, “the Kashmiris have not forgotten the injustice perpetuated on Maqbool Butt and they will not forget Afzal if he is hanged. Kashmiris protested against Afzal’s death not merely because he was a Kashmiri, but because he was denied justice.” Roy goes on to discuss how the wife of Afzal and his son were not properly given any information regarding his execution. The authorities sent information to the family through registered post. This news was given to the press by the Home Secretary. The Director General of Jammu and Kashmir police was asked to check whether the family of Afzal received the letter. These details are not a big deal when the accused is of no concern to the government. The death of Afzal has brought a rare unity in the nation among its political parties as they have come together to celebrate the triumph of law in the country. Roy’s opinion in the web essay “A Perfect Day for Democracy” is that “Even though the man was dead and gone, like cowards that hunt in packs, they seemed to need each other to keep their courage up. Perhaps because deep inside themselves they know that they all colluded to do something terribly strong.” She brings back the forgotten facts in order to deal with the truth surrounding the mysterious death of Afzal Guru.

In the same essay, Roy recalls the incident on December 13, 2001. Five armed men entered the gates of the parliament house in a white ambassador filled with explosive devices. All the five opened fire and came out of the car to resist the attack from the security personnel. In that fight, eight security personnel got killed along with a gardener. The retaliatory gun battle brought the death of all the five mysterious men. Afzal Guru was made to identify the dead men. One of the versions of confession by Afzal in police custody provides the names of those men as Mohammad, Rana, Raja, Hamza and Haider. These are the only details available
about the five dead men. Apart from this, L.K. Advani, the then Home Minister said that they seemed to be Pakistanis. Roy ironically comments on L.K. Advani in her net essay “A Perfect Day for Democracy” like this, “. . . he should know what Pakistanis look like right? Being a Sindhi himself.”

Afzal’s confession produced in the Supreme Court had many “lapses” and “violations of procedural safeguards.” On the basis of his confession, the Government of India immediately brought back its Ambassador from Pakistan and sent half-a-million soldiers to the Pakistan border. The Foreign embassies evacuated their staff from Delhi. All the above said commotions lasted for many months and they charged thousands of crores for the nation.

Roy once again goes back to the past incidents and discusses how, on the very next day of the attack on Parliament, the Delhi Police Special Cell declared that people behind the case had been traced out. On 15th December they arrested the supposed mastermind, Professor S.A.R. Geelani in Delhi, followed by Showkat Guru and Afzal Guru in a fruit market in Srinagar. The last person to be arrested in this case was Afsan Guru, Showkat’s Wife. Roy gives the headlines that appeared in media in her web essay “A Perfect Day for Democracy” thus, “‘DU Lecturer was Terror plan Hub,’ ‘Varsity Don Guided Fidayeen,’ ‘Don Lectured on Terror in Free Time.’” In addition to this, the Zee TV brought out a docudrama called ‘December 13th.’ It was based on the truths found in police charge sheet. This film was appreciated by the Prime Minister Vajpayee and L.K. Advani. But, the Supreme Court refused to screen it as the film would influence the judges. However, the film came out only a few days before the fast track court sentenced Afzal, Showkat and Geelani to death.

Her net essay “A Perfect Day for Democracy” explains how “. . . subsequently the High Court acquitted the mastermind,” Professor S.A.R. Geelani, and Afsan Guru.
The Supreme Court upheld the acquittal. But in its 5th August 2005 judgement it gave Mohammad Afzal three life sentences and a double death sentence.” Roy contradicts with the statements of senior journalists, that are nothing but lies. The journalists do know that Afzal was not one of the terrorists who stormed into the parliament House on December 13, 2001 and that he never opened fire on the security personnel to kill them. Even, the charge sheet given by the police did not accuse Afzal of performing it. According to the judgement given by the Supreme Court, there cannot be any kind of direct evidence in these cases but, in order to satisfy the collective conscience of the society, capital punishment must be “awarded to the offender.” The questions of Roy in her net essay “A Perfect Day for Democracy” are, “Who crafted our collective conscience on the parliament Attack case? Could it have been the facts we gleaned from the Papers? The films we saw on TV?” The lawyers and judges who conducted Afzal’s case will affirm that it is a fair trail, but Roy’s dilemma is whether Afzal has really received it.

The trial of Afzal in the fast track court began in May 2002. The trial took place after the foundations for his conviction had been strongly laid by the High Court and the Supreme Court. As it was a crucial stage in the case, the evidence presented could not be new. The witnesses and evidence would be from the past examination. Afzal confined to a solitary cell and without a lawyer could not defend his case. The fast track court appointed a junior lawyer for Afzal’s side towards the end. Unfortunately Afzal’s lawyer neither visited him in jail nor interrogated the witnesses in Afzal’s defence. Haksar in her net article “Why Afzal Must Not Be Hanged” narrates it thus:

The chart lists the 80 witnesses produced by the prosecution and shows that the lawyer appointed by the Sessions Court for Afzal did not
cross-examine 56 of those witnesses, even the most crucial ones. And even those who were done most inadequately, sometimes by merely giving one suggestion.

When the final chance closed his doors of argument, the judge expressed his inability to do anything further. From the beginning of this case, there were a lot of lies and fabrication of evidence. The first inconsistency that Roy mentions in her net essay “A Perfect Day for Democracy” is, “How did the police get to Afzal?” Records hold the information that S.A.R Geelani led the police to Afzal Guru. But, the court records reveal that the message to arrest Afzal went out before they captured Geelani. The High Court considered this as a “material contradiction” of the story and left it.

The other incriminating evidences against Afzal were a cell phone and a laptop. Those things were seized at the time of his arrest. His laptop and cell phone were not sealed by the police as per the law of the country. During the trial, Afzal’s hard disc of the laptop had been in use. This laptop contained some fake Home Ministry passes and some fake identity cards of the dead terrorists to enter the parliament. Along with this, it also had a Zee TV Video Clip of the Parliament House. The police reports went to suggest that Afzal had deleted all the information except the most incriminating bits and was about to meet Ghazi Baba, the chief of operations as per the charge sheet. Afzal’s Arrest Memos were signed by Bismillah, Geelani’s brother and Seizure Memos were signed by two men of the police department in Jammu and Kashmir. One among them tortured him in the past as Afzal was a surrendered militant.

The prosecution witness, Kamal Kishore identified Afzal as the person to whom he sold the SIM card on the 4th of December 2001. Roy points out how the original prosecution call records prove that the SIM has already been in use from
November 6\textsuperscript{th} 2001. The Piling up of lies and fabricated evidence goes on. It is noted down in the court records and the police are just chided for mistakes with a “gentle rap on their knuckles.” Roy’s conclusion about Afzal in the web essay “A Perfect Day for Democracy” is that:

Like most surrendered militants Afzal was easy meat in Kashmir - a victim of torture, blackmail, extortion. In the larger scheme of things he was a nobody. Anyone who was really interested in solving the mystery of the Parliament Attack would have followed the dense trail of evidence that was on offer. No one did, thereby ensuring that the real authors of conspiracy will remain unidentified and uninvestigated.

The hanging of Afzal Guru would have satisfied the collective conscience of society. Roy’s question is whether the cup of blood is only half-full and she leaves this question for the readers to decide.

Roy’s views on Kashmir are given in the essay “Azadi.” Roy begins the essay saying that Kashmiri people are said to be free for, the past sixty days. They are able to overcome the terror filled life under the constant watch of half-a-million heavily armed soldiers. It has become easy for them to rise and protest rather than remain as slaves to the millions outside. The Indian government faces a tough time after eighteen years of military occupation. Though militant movement has been crushed in Kashmir, there emerges another mass power of non-violent protest which the government finds difficult to manage. In the words of Roy, this one is nourished by peoples’ memory of repression over years in which tens of thousands have been killed, thousands disappeared and hundreds of thousands tortured in the past. When this kind of rage finds utterance, it cannot easily be tamed.
For eighteen years, the Indian State has done everything to suppress, intimidate and misrepresent the voice of Kashmiri people. The methods adopted are violence, torture, money, imprisonment, blackmail and elections. An announcement made on behalf of people is that Kashmiris are tired of violence and they demand peace. But they have not defined the kind of peace they expect from the government. The people yearn for freedom and not peace; the plain fact is that even in the darkest moments, it comes to light when the government initiates a move to transfer one hundred acres of the forest land to the Amarnath Shrine Board in link with multinational companies. This move is equal to dropping a lit match into the barrel of petrol. In the past, the Amarnath Pilgrimage attracted twenty thousand people who travelled to Amarnath cave for about two weeks. There was an increase in Islamic militant uprising in the year 1990, along with the spread of Hindutva in the Indian plains. This immensely increased the number of pilgrims to Amarnath Shrine. By 2008, the number rose to five hundred thousand groups. Their travelling expenses were often borne by Indian business houses. At first people believed that this increase was the result of the aggressive political movement carried out in a “Hindu-fundamentalist” Indian state.

The land transfer was not blown out as a main issue. As days passed the plan to build Israeli-style settlements began to change the demography of the valley. The people rose up and protested for days before the shutdown of the project in the entire valley. Roy, in the book *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy*, gives a picture of it thus, “Within hours the protests spread from the cities to villages. Young stone pelters took to the streets and faced armed police who fired straight at them, killing more than fifty of them.” (165). This protest resurrected memories of the uprising in the early nineties. There were weeks of protest, strike and police firing.
Dogra’s net article “Echoes in Hell” quotes the words of Salathia, the then president of Jammu Bar Association, which express as follows: “It’s a god-given opportunity for Jammuites to unite against years of injustice meted out by governments sitting in Kashmir.” The Hindutva group in India was blaming Kashmiris for creating all sorts of communal violence. In spite of the tough fight, five hundred thousand Amarnath pilgrims went back unhurt with the help of the Kashmiri local people. As a result of the strong protest, the government revoked the land transfer. The problem of land transfer has been solved once, but even now violence is going out of control as their real issue is freedom from military rule in Kashmir.

Revoking of land transfer paved way for massive protests in Hindu-dominated Jammu. During those protests, the Jammu-Srinagar highway, the only road-link between Kashmir and India was blocked by the people. Hence, army was deployed to ensure safe passage of trucks. In spite of their efforts, there was violence against Kashmiri truckers. Roy in the book Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy goes on to explain how “. . . Kashmiri truckers fearing for their lives, refused to drive on the highway. Truck-loads of perishable fresh fruit and valley produce began to rot. It became very obvious that the blockade has caused the situation to spin out of control” (166). The government’s request for the clearance of the blockade was of no use, as the damage had already been done. Supporting Roy’s point the web article “Hurriyat Leader Sheikh Abdul Aziz killed in Police Firing in Kashmir” states thus, “The fruit growers association claims that fruits worth crores of rupees were rotting, because of the alleged blockade of the Srinagar Jammu national highway, over the Amarnath row.”

Previous protests in Kashmir and their results prompt Roy to think like this as manifested in the book Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy as
follows: “. . . hadn’t anybody noticed that in Kashmir even minor protests about civic issues like water and electricity inevitably turned into demands for Azadi?” (166). The government of India strove hard to calm down the people in Kashmir, but it turned into a ‘deafening roar.’ Hundreds of people without weapons joined the protest to gain control of their cities, streets and villages. They fought against the heavily armed security forces with sheer display of courage. Having been raised in a playground of army camps, check posts and bunkers, the young generation understood the power of mass protest and started speaking for themselves. It was a powerful, committed and spontaneous protest of death which could not hold them back. Now, the common Kashmiri people take the responsibility of fighting for their own freedom instead of the armed militants.

The protest has reached its peak to such an extent, that the leaders have to act according to the words of people. Whenever a person publicly speaks something against the people, he is forced to apologize and correct the statement. Once, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, proclaimed himself as the Kashmiri Separatist Movement’s only leader at a public rally. This was a blunder committed by Geelani and he withdrew his statement later. Keeping this in mind, in the book *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy*, Roy states that whether they, “Like it or not, this is democracy. No democrat can pretend otherwise” (168). The struggle became tougher with more people joining the protest. Soon they demolished bunkers and stood straight in front of the soldiers’ machine guns with the words, “Hum kya Chahtey? Azaadi!” The cries of the people shook the entire valley like a roll of thunder during the storm. The city of Srinagar was completely shut down on 15th August 2008. Bakshi Stadium where the governor used to hoist the flag on Independence Day was almost bare with just a few officials. Several hours later people joined together in Lal Chowk and hoisted the
Pakistani flag. The greeting they expressed among themselves was “Happy, belated Independence Day,” which actually means Pakistan’s independence celebration must be on 14th August and the Kashmiri people treat India’s Independence day as “Happy Slavery Day.” The humorous and comical views of the people, according to Roy, have in fact helped them to survive in India’s prisons and centres of torture in Kashmir.

On the next day, thousands of people undertook a march to Pampore, the village to meet Hurriyat leader Sheikh Abdul Aziz who demanded the reopening of Srinagar-Muzaffarabad. This highway was previously in use before the partition. As per the reports of the senior police officer, quoted in the web article “Hurriyat Leader Sheikh Abdul Aziz Killed in Police Firing in Kashmir,” “one person died on the spot while 30 other including Sheikh Abdul Aziz were injured. All the critically injured were shifted to Srinagar’s SMHS hospital, where Sheikh Aziz succumbed to injuries.”

Then, on 18th August 2008 people submitted a memorandum with a demand for three things. Roy mentions them in the book Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy as follows: “The end to Indian Rule, the deployment of a UN peacekeeping force and an investigation into two decades of war crimes committed with almost complete impunity by the Indian army and police” (169). The consequence of this memorandum made the police to seal the entire city on 17th August 2008. All the roads that led to Srinagar were blocked. The streets were cordoned and armed police took charge of those barriers. Those barriers were broken by the people who thronged Srinagar on vehicles like trucks, jeeps and buses. This took place on 18th August 2008 and the police had only one choice to carry out i.e. “... either stepping aside or executing a measure” (170) as expressed in the book Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy. They chose to step aside and
did not fire a bullet. Pakistani flags were hoisted everywhere by the people with the cry, “Pakistan se rishtakya? La illahaillallah. What is our bond with Pakistan? There is no god but Allah. Azadikamatlabkya? La illahaillallah. What does freedom mean? There is no god but Allah” (171) as manifested in the book *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy*.

Roy finds it difficult to interpret the meaning of freedom as it is impossible for her to understand it. She is stunned by the reply given by a young woman about freedom. According to that woman, the freedom in democratic India is the freedom of Indian soldiers to rape the women in Srinagar. The crowd repeated slogans and it took hours for Mirwaiz Umar Farooq and Syed Ali Shah Geelani to reach the podium. Mirwaiz Umar addressed the gathering and informed the public about the withdrawal of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, the Disturbed Areas Act and the Public Safety Act. These Acts were responsible for torturing thousands of people in Kashmir. Next he called for the release of prisoners and asked them to open the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road for free movement of goods and people. The fight also established de-militarization of the Kashmir valley.

As his address came to a close, Syed Ali Shah Geelani told the people that Pakistan was the home of Islam. Just as Pakistan once belonged to Kashmir, Kashmir now belongs to Pakistan. The people were listening to his words with interest and an old man standing near Roy, told her how “Kashmir was one country. Half was taken by India, the other half by Pakistan. Both by force. We want freedom” (174) as exposed in the same book. The Indian government will continue to hold on to Kashmir in spite of the protest. This non-violent struggle will be extinguished soon and it will reinvite armed military rule again. The troops will be increased from half-a-million to one million. Again massacres, assassinations, disappearances and arrests
will take place. The poisonous brew is ready to be stirred into the bloodstream of people in Kashmir. In the end of the essay *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy*, Roy has only one question in her mind as follows: “Does any government have the rights to take away people’s liberty with military force?” (177). Her final opinion is that India needs freedom from Kashmir just as Kashmir needs freedom from India.

This chapter has thoroughly cross-examined the contemporary problems and lapses of Indian democracy in social and political perspectives. Roy has beautifully analysed, and protested against the real happenings going on in the name of democracy in India. She is an apostle of people, who pleads for a right social order. Roy’s vision is to see India and the rest of the world in a harmonious environment. As said by Kumar, “It is our duty toward democracy that we should seek, nurture, enhance, reinvent and make it worthy of adoption by the succeeding generations” (258).

The concern of Roy for the voiceless victims makes her a saviour in the eyes of people. She is really a true voice of protest, who is ready to face any kind of punishment given to her. But her worry over the welfare of the fellow citizens will go on. In the next chapter “Voice of the Voiceless,” an overview of her attitude towards the downtrodden people is carefully examined and analysed. And this following chapter clearly presents how she becomes a voice of those who are denied the rights of speech.