Chapter Four

Voice of the Voiceless

The voiceless group in society emerges out when a person lacks the ability to stand out and demand human dignity on his own like the privileged class. In an era where issues related to human rights are under critical focus, literary depictions of such voiceless groups have acquired great importance. These literary depictions start giving an outlet for the tears, anguish and anger that resides inside the mute society. The center or ruling group can subdue and suppress the lower class but their voice can never be silenced forever. It is a fact that the voice which resists exploitation becomes aware of both their strength and dignity in the society. Through the writings of dedicated social activists, the voiceless are able to speak and write.

The age-old existence of oppression, despair and suffering is common in the lives of voiceless people across countries and continents. The rights to live as human beings with dignity are denied to them. Literature has been a useful tool to project voices of protest that fight for the rights of poor, innocent victims. Dalits, Adivasis and people from the scheduled caste tribes are the worst affected all over the country. They are segregated by means of caste and exploited by the social and economic tradition of the country.

Writers concentrate on the aspect of rebuilding society on values which promote honour, dignity, justice and equality. After centuries of silence, the Dalit writers turn inward and talk about their own experiences. The words of the critic Archana proves how, “The time has come for Dalit writers not only to lament their subjugation but also to simultaneously celebrate with pride to the dauntless spirit of
the Dalit Women” (245). This kind of literature has to shoulder an immense responsibility. It must be a literature of commitment with a powerful and pungent language of resistance. The voices of such writers focus on the marginalized, oppressed people and empower them to question and contest in existing power structure of society.

The future of the voiceless group is bright and certainly new reforming waves are blowing for their radical development through the literature of protest. The voice fighting out for the voiceless should be heard by society and the mainstream as well. The role of a writer is to highlight the reality of the society through his writings and help the voiceless or suffering section in this world. The article “Literature should become the voice of voiceless” states like this, “Literature doesn’t become literature unless it becomes the voice of the voiceless. We have a great responsibility of bringing forth the voices of marginalised and deprived community.”

Some of the products that speak out against cruelty and human dignity for the marginalized are Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula*, Clarence Majore’s *Such was the Season* and *Emergency Exit*, Ismael Read and Al Young’s African journal *Quilt* and Alice Walker’s *The Colour Purple*. All these novels are the narratives of resistance and point out their struggle for identity as well as a rightful place in a hostile society. Writers become powerful when they express their anger against injustice and start feeling the pulse and pain of society. Their mission is to unfold the truth of the microcosm world with inspiring accounts of spectacular struggles by popular movements that refuse to lie down and die.

The writer and activist, Arundhati Roy is one such powerful person whose novel, *The God of Small Things* has brought out the inferior status of a woman in society. In this novel, she also projects the caste-ridden world. The suffering section
or the oppressed group gains importance in the eyes of Roy. Roy’s essay “The Greater Common Good” is based on the Sardar Sarovar dam project that displaced a number of people from their rural home lands. David Jeffers is of the opinion that “Roy’s account of the Narmada conflict in “The Greater Common Good” and Power Politics presents an Indian state that is perpetrating violence upon its citizens. The project itself is a form of structural violence; economic and social politics produce suffering for those who will be displaced” (159).

In the beginning of the essay “The Greater Common Good,” Roy quotes from Jawaharlal Nehru’s speech to people who were displaced at the time of Hirakud dam project in 1948. Nehru’s words go on like this, “If you are to suffer, you should suffer in the interest of the country . . . .” (7). While reading this, Roy stood on a hill and laughed at these words. She had already crossed Narmada by boat from Jalsindhi and reached the mainland, from where she saw the low hills surrounded by the Adivasis’ hamlets of Sikka, Surung, Neemgavan and Domkhedi. Those homes were fragile and airy in appearance. Roy was able to see their fields and forests behind their huts. The little children were found running after the goats throughout the landscape like ‘motorized peanuts’ in the words of Roy. At that time, she felt that dam building sanctioned long back by the court was only to be destroyed in the monsoon waters of the Sardar Sarovar reservoir.

Roy has been neither an anti-development person nor a strong holder of custom and tradition. But, her curiosity about the happenings in the Narmada valley only left her to the high hills of Narmada. She waded across the frozen watery ground filled with “. . . hope, anger, information, disinformation, political artifice, engineering ambition, disingenuous socialism, radical activism, bureaucratic
subterfuge, misinformed emotionalism, and, of course, the pervasive, invariably dubious, politics of International Aid” (8) as expressed in The Cost of Living.

The ground was filled with armies ready for battle against the masses in Narmada. Roy, filled with curiosity, postponed the reading of Don De Lillo’s big book and joined with Joyce and Nabokov to collect reports on drainage and irrigation. They collected information from journals, books and documentary films about why a dam was constructed and what the benefit of it was. Roy has fully been aware that the people are ignorant of the facts about the Narmada valley. There are two sets of people – one set knows a lot and the other knows nothing about this. For the last ten years, the protest against the Sardar Sarovar dam has not only represented the Narmada issue, but more than that. The battle at first has begun over the fate of a river valley, but later on, it has led to grave doubts regarding the entire political system.

Occasionally, there floats a disconnected piece in the puzzle with emotional questions about the government’s callous treatment of displaced people from the NBA (Narmada Bachao Andolan activities). Roy has written quite a lot on this subject. This has a special interest for the reader community. Newspaper reports are always based on isolated aspects of the project. But the government’s secret documents and hijacked aspects of the issue are guarded fiercely from the eyes of the public. The engineers of that construction then refused to discuss the things about politics, when they presented some of their proposals. Roy is not in favour of disconnecting politics from economics as such a separation would be like breaking up a good orchestra. The orchestra cannot perform well, if individual musicians take the upper hand. If this happens, people can listen only to the noise and not the music.

At a public meeting, in the submergence zone of the Pong dam in 1961, Morarji Desai expressed like this, “We will request you to move from your house
after the dam comes up. If you move it will be good, otherwise we shall release the waters and drown you all” (13) as Roy quotes Desai’s words in *The Cost of Living*. It is the story that Roy also wants to discuss. In the primary school text books, there is a famous speech by Jawaharlal Nehru which reveals that dams are the temples of modern India. The children are taught from their young age that big dams will save the people of India from hunger and poverty. In the past, Nehru and his followers were involved in the business of building dams across India. Dam building was then considered as equivalent to a nation building. The only reason to feel suspicious about this matter is the enthusiasm among the nation builders.

Roy pictures out how by building new dams and new irrigation systems, they have taken control of small village communities and allowed them to undergo destruction. As a result, now India has gained the status of being the world’s third largest dam builder. According to the reports of the Central Water Commission, there are three thousand six hundred big dams, built after Independence. Nearly, six hundred and ninety five more are under construction. Roy finds that forty percent of all the big dams across this globe has been built in India.

Roy, in *The Cost of Living*, also contemplates that “Yet one-fifth of our population-200 million people-does not have safe drinking water and two thirds-600 million-lack basic sanitation” (14). All the big dams started well, but ended badly previously. Once upon a time, everyone loved it and was welcomed by all the groups, namely Communists, Capitalists, Christians, Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists. At that time, dams moved men to poetry. But it will not be the same anymore. Throughout the world, there is a movement growing against big dams.

The first world countries have understood the problems of big dams. The fact is that it does more harm than good to people. They are a government’s source of
accumulating wealth and deciding who will get and how much water. It is like stealing water, land and irrigation away from the poor and gifting it to the rich. These reservoirs are responsible for displacing large number of people and leaving them homeless. Even, while looking at the ecological point of view, dams cause floods, water logging, and salinity. Big dams are responsible for earthquakes and spread of disease. The earth is being wasted away with such projects. Debarati Bandyopadhyay appreciates the way Roy deals with the things and expresses that Roy:

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\text{( . . . has written so much and for so long a period against . . . the destruction of the lives and livelihood of millions of villagers subsisting on and with the ecology of the Narmada valley?) In other words she is an activist writing for a positive change in the state of affairs that can effect an improvement in our environment, physical as well as human societal. Arundhati Roy is unabashedly political in her writings for the sustenance of the environment. (5)}
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At a private lecture, N.C. Saxena, the Secretary to the planning commission has expressed his view that the number of people displaced in a particular region comes around fifty million. Roy manifests that of the fifty million people in that region, forty million are displaced by dam projects. Though it is not the official information, she is bold enough to state how a government can rise up against a group of about fifty million people. It is like stumbling upon a mass grave in that region. The fifty million people are more than the population of Gujarat. The huge percentage of the displaced is Adivasis, who constitute 57.6 percent of the displaced, of the Sardar Sarovar Dam. If this list includes the Dalits, Roy says that it will become more obscene. The nation builders are not affected by the victims as they are the ethnic
others. Due to lack of proper measures for displacing people, India’s poorest group is suffering in the hands of the government.

Roy’s concern for displaced people makes her think of the plight of those millions of people. Their means of livelihood is unknown to the world outside. Here, she presents an incident that appeared in the Indian Express. It gives an account of how “. . . Adivasis displaced from the Nagarjuna Sagar Dam project are selling their babies to foreign adoption agencies. The government intervened and put the babies in two public hospitals, where six infants died of neglect” (19) as manifested in the book *The Cost of Living*. The Indian government gives least importance to rehabilitation policies. But there is the land Acquisition Act of 1894 which clearly reveals how a government is not legally bound to provide a displaced person anything but a cash compensation paid by an Indian government official to an illiterate Adivasi. It is not easy to reach him and even the postman demands a tip for delivering a letter.

In the other cases, most Adivasis do not have formal title to their land and so cannot claim any compensation. According to Roy, the displaced people do not exist in history. Some of them have been displaced three or four times with reasons like construction of a dam, a uranium mine or a power project. When people start rolling from place to place, there is no other resting place. The great majority settle down in the slums on the periphery of the great cities. These poor people are not entirely destroyed or taken to gas chambers but the treatment they receive is exactly equal to the concentration camp in the Third Reich. The people are not held captive rather it redefines the meaning of liberty. There is no end to this nightmare. Roy is sad to find them “. . . uprooted even from their hellish hovels by government bulldozers that fan out on clean-up missions whenever elections are comfortably far away and the urban rich get twitchy about hygiene” (20) as it is presented in the book *The Cost of Living*. 
In cities like Delhi, the people are shot by the police for shitting in public places. An incident like this took place two years ago when the police shot three slum dwellers. This can be compared to the French-Canadian wars of the 1770s. During that war, Lord Amherst exterminated many of Canada’s native Indians by providing them blankets infested with small pox virus. Even now in India, these pathetic people have found similar ways of achieving their ends. Roy expresses how the millions of displaced people in India are nothing but refugees of an unacknowledged war. Just like the nations, white America, French Canada and Hitler’s Germany, the Indian government is suppressing the displaced people.

When the question as to why they indulge in such monstrous action comes, they simply say that it is done for the sake of greater common good. This is carried out in the name of progress and national interest. Roy feels that behind this progress, there are a number of things left unanswered and ignored. She tries to follow the direction in which truth is hidden under a story. It is a fact accepted by Roy that India has progressed since 1947, when colonialism ended and India was free. According to the report, 51 million tons of food grains were produced in 1950. The state granaries were also overflowing with 30 million tons of unsold grain in 1995. When the granaries were overflowing, forty percent of India’s population, that is 350 million people were living below the poverty line.

Roy thinks how, “Indians are too poor to buy the food their country produces. Indians are being forced to grow the kinds of foods they can’t afford to eat themselves” (22) as manifested in the book The Cost of Living. Kalahandi district in Western Orissa is best known for starvation deaths. According to Roy, India has progressed, but most of its people have not yet reached those heights. The leaders of the country are interested in developing nuclear missiles to protect the nation from the
threat of China and Pakistan. Some of the questions in Roy’s mind are, “But who will protect us from ourselves? What kind of country is this? Who owns it? Who runs it? What’s going on? (22). Now she feels that it is the right time to spill out a few state secrets. Her target is to puncture the myth about the inefficient, corrupt Indian state.

Roy is not ready to accept carelessness as a reason for the disappearance of fifty million people. The Indian state is not a state that has failed. There is probably a precise method that is 100 percent man-made. The Indian resources like land, water, forest, fish, meat, eggs, and air have been ruthlessly redistributed to a favoured few. It is clearly accomplished by protecting the cadres of ‘paid up elite.’ The government manages to keep the secrets that concern the daily lives of one billion people. These secrets are enclosed in government files which are accessible only to ministers, bureaucrats, state engineers and defense strategists. On the other hand, no one else is ready to dig deep in order to find out the genuine details.

According to Roy, India does not live in its villages but dies in the villages. Indian people have been kicked around in the villages and the Indian village lives only to serve the big cities. In the Indian flag, there is a hole that needs to be mended and Roy once again comes to the story of Narmada valley to bring about some kind of magic embedded in it. The wells of Narmada are situated upon the platform of Amarkantak in the Shahdol district of Madhya Pradesh. The pathway consists of 1300 kilometres of beautiful broad-leaved forest, considered to be the most fertile agricultural land in India. It is a home to twenty five million people who live by the river valley and linked to the ecosystem by an ancient, intricate web of interdependence. Narmada valley was targeted for water resource development, nearly thirty years ago. This is one of the reasons why it has been captured and dismembered.
The Narmada valley project is one of the most ambitious river valley development schemes conceived in human history. There is also a plan to build 3200 dams to reconstitute Narmada and her 41 tributaries into a series of step reservoirs. This is an immense plan to control flow of water. The plan includes 30 major dams, 135 medium and the rest small. It is decided that two of the major dams will be multipurpose mega dams. According to Roy, the Sardar Sarovar in Gujarat and the Narmada Sagar in Madhya Pradesh will hold water more than any other reservoir in the Indian subcontinent.

The Sardar projects are considered by the government as the most studied project in India. But, when the tribunal first announced its award and the Gujarat government informed about its plan to use the share of water, there was no mention of drinking water being provided to villages like Kutch and Saurashtra. All of a sudden, this project ran into political trouble and the government discovered the idea of quenching the thirst of parched throats in Kutch and Saurashtra. This turned out to be the whole point of the Sardar Sarovar project.

In Roy’s opinion, the water from the two rivers that is, the Sabarmati and the Mahi, both of which are miles closer to Kutch and Saurashtra than the Narmada, have been dammed and diverted to Ahmedabad, Mehsana and Kheda. The places, kutch and Saurashtra have not got a drop of it. The official number of people who would be provided drinking water by the Sardar Sarovar canal fluctuates from 28 million in 1983 to 32.5 million in 1989 to 40 million in 1992 and down to 25 million in 1993. According to Roy, in 1979, the number of villages that would receive drinking water was zero. Then, in the early eighties, it came around 4,790 and in 1990 it was 7,234. Finally, it was 8,215 in 1991. These were the figures that the government released till
the year 1991 and it included 236 uninhabited villages. They were not concerned about the lives and future of vast number of people.

At first, the number of families that was estimated to be displaced by the Sardar Sarovar reservoir was over 6,000 in 1979. Then it grew to 12,000 in 1987. Later it suddenly increased to 27,000. At the end, the government had to acknowledge that 40,000 families would be affected by this dam construction in 1992. Recently, the official figure has oscillated between 40,000 and 41,500. This is not the actual figure according to Roy, as the reservoir is not the only thing that displaces people. The Narmada Bachao Andolan reports the fixed actual figure to about 85,000 families, that is, half-a-million people. The cost of the project is inflated from Rs. 5,000 crores to Rs. 20,000 crores. This is an official estimate and NBA has concluded it to be Rs. 44, 000 crores.

The first dam to be completed on Narmada was the Bargi dam near Jabalpur in 1990. This dam cost ten times more than was budgeted and the land submerged was three times more than the estimated amount given by the engineers. Here 70, 000 people from 101 villages were supposed to be displaced, but finally without warning, nearly 162 villages were submerged. Even some of the resettlement sites built by the government were also submerged. The people were thrown out like rats from the land where they lived for many centuries. When the dam submerged the villages, they removed what they could and watched their houses being washed away. A group named Friends of River Narmada in the net article “A Brief Introduction to the Narmada Issue” argues thus:

Large numbers of poor and under privileged communities (mostly tribals and dalits) are being dispossessed of their livelihood and even their ways of living to make way for dams being built on the basis of
incredibly dubious claims of common benefit and “national interest.” For us, this is simply immoral and therefore unacceptable. No purported benefits can be used to justify the denial of the fundamental rights of individuals in a democratic society.

Without any rehabilitation policy, one hundred and fourteen thousand people were displaced and some were given only a meagre cash compensation. Some people actually got nothing and a few moved to the government rehabilitation sites. One of the sites at Gorakhpur was mentioned by the government as an ‘ideal village.’ In this rehabilitation site, five people died of starvation between 1990 and 1992. The rest of the people lived a life illegally on the forests near the reservoir or travelled to the slums in Jabalpur.

The construction work of the Sardar Sarovar dam site had continued since 1961, and began to work properly only in 1988. At that time, no one, not even the government or the World Bank, was aware of the presence of a woman by name Medha Patkar, wandering through the villages to be submerged and asking the people whether they had any idea about the plans that the government had for them. Medha Patkar arrived in the valley and opposed the construction of the dam some years ago. She did not have any idea as to how many villages would submerge. Her main concern was that the displaced villagers must be resettled in a proper, humane manner.

This fight has been going on for twenty years and now, Roy is not sure as to how long it will last. Roy is not in favour of the struggle being crushed or allowing it to die and thus brutalizing people. She feels that if it happens, the ragged army will lose the precious thing embedded in it, which is of course the fighting spirit. The government has already spent Rs. 7 500 crores, but continuing the project would
mean spending good money for bad. But saving Rs 35, 000 crores of public money is probably enough to fund local water harvesting projects in every village in all of Gujarat. Salman Rushdie supports her claim and reveals like this, “Arundhati Roy and the Narmada Valley campaigners have long argued that alternative methods are capable of meeting Gujarat’s water needs; the WCD report echoes this view, stressing the need to focus on renewable energy, recycling, better irrigation and reducing water losses” (385) as Roy expresses in the book *The Cost of Living*.

The inhabitants of the nineteen villages in Gujarat have already been scattered to 175 separate rehabilitation sites. Due to lack of proper rehabilitation package, many social links have been smashed and communities have been broken up. The resettlement story is filled with callousness and broken promises. The government has given land to some people and the others have not received it. The people who received the land, have found it to be stony and uncultivable. Other poor Adivasis have been driven out from their land by the owners without being paid. Some of the people resettled on the periphery of other villages have been robbed, beaten and chased away by the host villages. There are instances where displaced people from two different dam projects have been allotted the same land. Roy presents one case where the displaced people from Ukai dam, Sardar Sarovar dam and the Karjan dam have been resettled in the same area. These people have to fight among themselves for resources like water, grazing land and jobs. Some of the unfortunate people from the Sardar Sarovar dam often find themselves in news now as they have a case going on in court. In other places, where there is no help from the press or NBA, there are no traces of their struggles.

It can be said that it is the government which chooses their destiny. Ultimately the government authorities decide as to who do live, die, prosper and who do not. To
show the capability of a nation, the government can press a button and destroy the earth. They snatch a river away from one and gift it to another. The deserts, forests are felled and planted somewhere else. The government uses intelligence to fracture the thoughts of people and destroys their faith in ancient things like earth, water, forest and air. When all these things take place, there will be nothing left in it. Ultimately, the people have to turn to the government for support. Even though the government authorities hate them, the people are forced to love them. Their trust never changes though everything is squeezed out from their bodies. People will vote and do as per the wish of the above said authorities. This is because the government is a God or mother and father to them. The High Courts will not listen to their problem. The voiceless is the helpless group that has suffered a lot while the others have gained. As retaliation to this essay, “The Greater Common Good,” the Supreme Court has condemned Roy and her group asking them to stop publishing articles on Narmada River.

In the next essay “On Citizens’ Rights to Express Dissent,” Roy argues about free speech and the rights of a person to express dissent against injustice. She begins this essay by mentioning about the criminal petition filed by five advocates in the Supreme Court of India on February 2001. The accused persons are Medha Patkar, the leader of the Narmada Bachao Andolan, Prashant Bhushan, the legal counsel for the NBA, and Arundhati Roy. This petition blames them of committing criminal contempt of court order by participating in a demonstration outside the gates of the Supreme Court to protest against its judgment on the Sardar Sarovar dam constructed on the Narmada River. Regarding this petition, Salman Rushdie wants to know why the Supreme Court decides to entertain the lawyers’ petition, and take action against the three activists with criminal contempt notices. In doing like this, it has ignored its
own set rules and procedures. Then, the Supreme Court sent notices to the three accused, ordering them to appear in court on April 23, 2001. Usually, the maximum punishment granted for committing contempt of court in India is imprisonment for six months.

The original petition is not drafted properly like the FIR. The offences committed by Prashant Bhushan, Medha Patkar, and Arundhati Roy are less when compared to the lies projected by the five advocates. Its contents are completely false. The FIR has been lodged in a police station in Tilak Marg without registering the case. Roy’s words reveal the things like this, “No policemen ever contacted me, there was no police investigation, no attempt to verify the charges, to find out whether the people named in the petition were present at the dharna . . .” (90) in Power Politics. The unpleasant news is that the Supreme Court also has entertained such a petition, asking them to appear in the court on April 23, 2001. The order has further stated that till the case gets over, they have to go there without fail.

In the eyes of an ordinary citizen, the punishment for an uncommitted crime would seem to have begun with these appearances. Roy feels that the petition is absolutely wrong and contrary to what has happened. First of all, Roy is not the leader of the Narmada Bachao Andolan. She accepts that she is not only a writer but also an independent citizen with independent views on the cause of the Andolan. Her idea has not been to give petition in public interest and Prashant Bhushan, the lawyer has never represented the case. Roy has never incited anyone to murder or shout slogans against the court. At the utmost, she has found her name being spelled wrong.

On the 13th of December 2000, Roy heard about a group of people gathered outside the gates of the Supreme Court. When she arrived there, it was about 11:30 a.m. and the gate no. C was closed. Then she found nearly four to five hundred people,
most of them were Adivasis, who had come to protest against the Supreme Court order that the construction of the dam could be proceeded. The people were scared that they might lose lands and homes to the rising waters of the reservoir during the monsoon. If they were left destitute without any place of shelter, they would suffer endlessly. Those people travelled all the way from Narmada to convey their grievances to the court. Their wish was to express dissent on the view that people had been resettled properly by the government. They requested the registrar of the court for a meeting with the Chief Justice.

Roy’s exact words during that dharna according to FIR was, “(I do not even need five minutes to tell you why I’m here. I’m here because I support you)” (93) as expressed in Power Politics. This was spoken by her as Medha Patkar asked Roy to address the gathering. It was easy to verify her words as there were a lot of film and television crews shooting the event. The people who came to the meeting had cloth bands hung around their necks like ‘Project - Affected at 90 metres.’ When it became clear for the people that the meeting with the Chief Justice was not going to take place, they grew disheartened. Many people gave speeches against the court. The rest spoke about corruption in the judiciary.

Roy did not intervene in that as she was not a policeman or a public official. Her concern was then towards the functioning of one of the important institutions in the country. After all, she is a writer who would like to bring out intricate details for the reader. Once again Roy repeats that she has not raised slogans against the court and expresses like this in the book Power Politics, “I did not, as the petition claims, say “Supreme Court bika hua hai” (the Supreme Court has sold out)” (94). Actually, she went to the dharna angered by the Supreme Court’s majority verdict on the Sardar Sarovar project. The court was well aware that not even a single village had been
resettled and Madhya Pradesh had sent a written affidavit that it had no land to
resettle them. Still the Supreme Court has ordered violation of the fundamental rights
to life and livelihood of hundreds of Indian citizens, mostly Dalits and Adivasis. As a
result of this Supreme Court judgement, these unfortunate citizens will lose their
homes, livelihoods and histories.

It is the right of the people of Narmada valley to protest against what they
consider to be unjust and unfair judgement. Roy also feels that she has every right to
participate in the protest meeting outside the gates of the Supreme Court. She is of the
opinion that the judgment in the Sardar Sarovar case is flawed and has violated the
human rights of Indian citizens. The activist Medha Patkar, the lawyer Prashant
Bhushan and Arundhati Roy are considered to be the carriers of the voice of the
Andolan to the world outside. Roy finds it strange that this is the third time she has to
face legal harassment in connection with her writing.

During the Supreme Court hearing, on July 1999 they found her essay “The
Greater Common Good” as an offensive one against the Sardar Sarovar project. This
essay was published by Roy in *Outlook* and *Frontline* magazines. In the three
hearings held in the Supreme Court, they discussed the topic, whether the dignity of
the court had been affected by Roy’s essay. Without giving her an opportunity to be
heard, the Supreme Court, on 15th of October 1999 passed an insulting order against
her. The order was a kind of warning not to continue writing on such controversial
topics. Previously, another criminal case filed against Roy in 1997 was for corrupting
public morality in a district magistrate court for the book *The God of Small Things.*
Roy replies in *Power Politics* thus:

As a writer I wish to state as emphatically as I can that this is a
dangerous trend. If the court uses the contempt of court law, and
allows citizens to abuse its process to intimidate and have as writers, it will have the chilling effect of interfering with a writer’s imagination and the creative act itself. The fear of harassment will create situation in which even before a writer puts pen to paper, she will have to anticipate what the court might think of her work. It will induce a sort of enforced, fearful self-censorship. It would be bad for law, worse for literature and sad for the world of art and beauty. (98)

Roy has already written and published several articles on the Narmada issue. None of them has purposely been written to show contempt for the court. Even though the Supreme Court gives its judgement on the Sardar Sarovar dam, she will continue to express how it is economically unviable and ecologically destructive. Those who wish to criticise or denounce this have the rights of free speech and expression. In the recent years, the Supreme Court has passed judgements on many issues like closure of polluting industries in Delhi, the conversion of public transport buses from diesel to CNG, and permitting the construction of the Sardar Sarovar dam. According to Roy, all these judgements have affected the lives of millions of people in India.

Finally, she wishes to reaffirm once again that as a writer, she has the right to express all opinions and beliefs. The contemporary of Roy, Salman Rushdie wants to know whether the Supreme Court “… in this case against free speech … prepared to act as the ‘muscle’ for a particular interest group . . . . Only by abandoning its pursuit of Arundhati Roy and the Narmada Valley campaigners can the Supreme Court escape this judgement” (386). Roy feels that the petitioners have to pay for the damages as they have wasted their time by filing cases with false charges in the Apex Court. They have to apologize to the citizens awaiting the judgement of the Supreme
Court in all important matters. The people depend more on the government and the Supreme Court for right judgement.

The brutal Police action against Adivasis in the forests of Wayanad in Kerala has been discussed by Roy through a letter to the Chief Minister in her essay, “You Have Blood on Your Hands, Sir.” This Muthanga atrocity is a historical struggle in Kerala and a fight for justice by the poorest, subjugated community. The problem Roy highlights has been supported by the views presented in the web article “Preliminary Report on Muthanga” by Justice Suresh and Justice Shamsuddin of People’s Judicial Enquiry Commission that “the real issue is one of land rights, and the Adivasis and Tribal all over the country, despite five decades and more of freedom and a liberal, humanistic constitution, have been left with no rights on land in their own traditional, hereditary and natural areas or habitat.”

The real fight is between the powerless and the powerful. Muthanga Sanctuary has once been used as a eucalyptus plantation for Grasim’s Gwalior Rayons factory. Here, in this sanctuary, the Kerala police has opened fire on hundreds of Adivasis. Roy, in her net essay “You Have Blood on Your Hands, Sir” mentions how she has visited the Sultan Bathery hospital where the wounded have been admitted and some adivasi settlements close to the sanctuary. She has also visited the Calicut jail and met C.K. Janu and Geethanandan, both of whom are recovering after having been badly beaten by the Police.

The Kerala police firing on hundreds of people including women, children, old people and infants is similar to the incident in Jallian Wallah Bagh. Previously, the reported death toll number was two. But, the reports of people predicted a greater number. If the community had had any concern for the mainstream political party, the way they handled the issue would have been different. The Adivasis were not
considered as human beings at all. As per the reports in the net article, “The Truth Behind the Muthanga Incident,” the government had failed to respond to their protest and solve the issue by peaceful means.

The police justified their action saying that they were provoked by a hostage drama and opened fire on people. In spite of this reason, Roy’s opinion in her net essay “You Have Blood on Your Hands, Sir” is that “To open fire like that with no attempt to negotiate shows a deep lack of respect for human life - not just adivasi lives, but also the lives of the policemen and the forest officials who were taken hostage. It is not the way governments in the past have dealt with kidnappings and hijackings by real militants.”

Roy spoke to many survivors of the Muthanga incident. The people were not worried about their injuries, but of the small children who were missing. One man lost his child who fell off from his arms during the lathi charge of police. Roy also finds some people struggling in pain due to the loss of their loved ones in the sanctuary. The pathetic thing is that no effort has been taken by the government to put the list of the missing people. The people who have lost their loved ones are filled with grief and uncertainty over what has happened to them. Here, Roy, in her web essay “You Have Blood on Your Hands, Sir,” raises a question like this, “Can you even bear to think how you would feel in their place?”

Even after this incident, the police are terrorizing Adivasis in this region. The policemen enter into the settlements of Adivasi people and arrest the men and drag them away. In the net essay “You Have Blood on Your Hands, Sir,” Roy says, “Their families have no idea what has now become of them. When we approached the villages we found ghost-settlements with only a few frightened women and children. The men who remained all ran away.” The villagers have had a tough time persuading
the police and making them believe that they are not informers. The words of Madhulima Singh in the net article “Muthanga Incident: NWC Indicts Kerala Govt.” provide the details of women subjected to physical assault and molestation by the policemen. The press people have also recorded the molestation of Sarojini, a deaf and dumb girl, Karuppa, Kavita and others.

In addition to this, the journalists and cameramen were threatened and denied entry into the sanctuary after the firing. The media were not aware of the happenings inside the firing area for nearly fifteen hours. During that period, the police arrested a lecturer K. K. Surendran, a member of DIET (District Institute for Educational Training) for sympathizing with the Adivasis. That lecturer was later tortured in jail. And now, the reports reveal that he has a broken ear drum. Recently, Surendran has been sent to Kannur jail.

As a result of this police action, adivasis are now frightened to go to work. This poorest community, according to Roy, has to face starvation deaths in their villages. They are now denied the opportunity to work anywhere and employers are also scared to appoint them. Some of the people have lost their ration cards in the police firing. The people are not able to withstand the cruelty meted out to them by the government. In this essay “You Have Blood on Your Hands, Sir,” Roy writes to the Chief Minister, representing the case of voiceless people and asking suitable reply for them and her revelation in this essay goes like this, “You have blood on your hands, Sir. You need to make amends. And quickly.”

“Operation Green Hunt’s Urban Avatar” is an essay on Roy’s feelings for the Maoist organisation. Her voice always supports the voiceless victims and she stands firm in her decision. The headlines about Roy’s views on Maoists, quoted in the web essay “Operation Green Hunt’s Urban Avatar” are, “Arundhati backs Maoists, dares
authorities to arrest her. I am on this side of line. I do not care... pick me up put me in jail, she asserted.” As per the report on Roy, she has saluted the people of Dantewada after 76 CRPF and police personnel have been killed in a deadly attack by Maoists. But Roy’s own words in the web essay “Operation Green Hunt’s Urban Avatar” prove her status like this, “The suggestion that I saluted “the people of Dantewada” after the Maoists killed 76 Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) is a piece of criminal defamation.” Roy finds the death of the 76 CRPF men as something tragic. The fact is that all these men are pawns in the war of the rich against the poor.

At a meeting in Mumbai, Roy expressed that she was not in favour of the killing of ordinary people. In his net article “Scattered Truths, Bitter Seeds,” Vasanth Kannabiran says, “Operation Green Hunt, the anti-Naxal squads with a license to kill’ and ‘answerable to none’ will set out to annihilate Maoists. And since the Maoists are not tattooed or branded, only the number of dead will be a decisive indicator.” The dead people can be adivasis, Maoists or police personnel. The reason for why Roy has to support the resistance of Maoists is that, the people have suffered a lot in the hands of the government. In her web essay “Operation Green Hunt’s Urban Avatar,” Roy asks “What the CRPF was doing with 27 AK-47s, 38 INSAS, 7 SLRS, 6 light machine guns, one stengun and a two-inch mortar in tribal villages.”

Roy has a close link with the Maoists as she has passed through their forests during a visit to meet them. This experience is written by Roy in her famous non-fictional piece “Walking With the Comrades.” In this essay, she mentions Maoists as a band of outlaws who were found in and around West Bengal, Bihar and Odisha border. These people used to live in the jungles and fought against British Sponsored East India Company through their guerilla style attacks. The name given to them was cowboys, or more or less compared to the Robin Hood of fables. The Maoists fought
for the welfare of their villagers. They helped the poor by giving money taken from
the rich. Hence, the poor people looked upon them as saviours. The web article,
“Scattered Truths, Bitter Seeds” by Kannabiran shows how the Maoists carry the
burden of the people. Despite all the confusion, violence, mistakes and the problems,
the ordinary people still place their hope for liberation from poverty, dispossession
and exclusion on the shoulders of the Maoists. And this is a responsibility they bear
to help them practically.

After the freedom struggle, the Maoists did not receive any kind of support
from the government. Their original decision to develop as a police force was not
given any importance. Police and soldiers were selected only from the rural
populations and not from the Maoist Community. When the police force became
corrupt, the Maoists decided to take law at their hands. They joined with the naxal
groups and fought for the rights of the people.

As days went on, the Maoists were projected as a national problem or threat to
India. In order to solve the mystery behind Maoists who were branded as terrorists,
Roy undertook a journey to their homeland. That journey prompted her to write a lot
about the history of Maoists. Roy, in her net essay “Operation Green Hunt’s Urban
Avatar,” said that people’s resistance against the corporate land grab consisted of a
band width of movements with different ideologies, of which the Maoists were the
most militant end and the government was labelling every resistance movement, every
activist, ‘Maoist’ in order to justify dealing with them in repressive, military fashion.

Roy understands that the various resistance movements including the Narmada
Bachao Andolan are fighting against a common enemy. In a fight like this, she would
favour the Maoists. Her words in the web essay “Operation Green Hunt’s Urban
Avatar” go on thus, “I think it is much more interesting to interrogate the resistant to
which we belong, I am on this side of the line. . . . But on this side of the line, we must turn around and ask our comrades questions.” The Maoists are labelled as terrorists on the basis of media reports. Their information available on press or TV has never been analysed by the people or the government. Any activist trying to bring out the truths is immediately given a warning that if she or he is not with the government, she or he is with the Maoists. The voiceless victims are always the target of the government. Even the activist who speaks for the poor is also threatened, beaten and thrown in jail. At present, the Operation Green Hunt has started knocking the doors of writers and analysts. So, in India, free speech has also come under the threat of being suppressed and censored.

Roy’s web essay, “9 Is Not 11” focuses on the massacre of innocent people. She comes forward and brings out the necessary details behind these attacks. Her idea is to speak out truths in order to save the lives of people under the clutches of government, terrorism and police brutality. The Mumbai blasts took place on November 9, 2008. Immediately after the horrible incident, the 24 hour news channels projected titles like, ‘India’s 9/11.’ When tension over the attacks was increasing, the U. S. senator John McCain asked Pakistan to arrest the people responsible for that. He went on to inform how there was a personal information about India’s preparation for air strikes on the terrorist camps in Pakistan. But Roy has a different opinion in her net essay “9 Is Not 11” because “. . . November isn’t September, 2008 isn’t 2001, Pakistan isn’t Afghanistan and India isn’t America.”

The cruelest attacks carried out on Indian towns and cities are the Mumbai serial bomb blasts. Roy mentions the places of attack such as Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Delhi, Guwahati, Jaipur and Malegon in which hundreds of ordinary people lost their lives or escaped with wounds. The people killed in the serial blasts were then found
on the railway station and public hospital. BBC report in the web article “Mumbai Rocked by Deadly Attacks” describes the gruesome look in this manner, “Local TV images showed blood-splattered streets, and bodies being taken into ambulances. One eyewitness told the BBC he had seen a gunman opening fire in the Taj Mahal’s lobby. “We all moved through the lobby in the opposite direction and another gunman then appeared towards where we were moving and he started firing immediately in our direction.”” Terrorists behind those attacks did not distinguish between the rich and the poor. In India, the war is still going on. The war has various shapes like the Dalit fights on the banks of Narmada, problems in West Bengal and Orissa as well as the pathetic condition of the slum dwellers in gigantic cities. All these kinds of war have never been reported on television like bomb blasts. There is a fierce unforgiving act that runs through the contemporary terrorist groups.

The words of Hafiz Saeed in Roy’s net article “9 Is Not 11” reveal how he would like to give India a tit-for-tat response and reciprocate in the same way by killing the Hindus, just like the killing of the Muslims in Kashmir. In response to this, there is the saying of Babu Bajrangi who reacts in a manner equal to Hafiz Saeed. He is one of the main partakers in the 2002 Gujarat genocide. It is not that Muslims or Hindus are targeted as victims in the war but the fact as seen in Roy’s net article “9 Is Not 11” is, “Dalits had been consistently targeted. Recently, in Kandhamal in Orissa, Christians were the target of two-and-a half months of violence which left more than 40 dead.”

Hafiz Saeed who lived the life of a respectable man in Lahore has been put on house arrest due to his fiery, jehad sermons. But Babu Bajrangi is out on bail and lives a respectable life. Roy finds the mastermind behind the Gujarat genocide is Narendra Modi, the one who has been elected twice as the Chief Minister. Roy is surprised to
find Suhel Seth, a TV Spokesperson who said “Modi is God” and she expresses it in the essay “9 Is Not 11.” The policemen who supervised and assisted the Hindu mobs in Gujarat have been rewarded. The RSS has 45,000 branches and seven million volunteers spreading hatred across India. Among the volunteers were Narendra Modi, A.B. Vajpayee, L. K. Advani, politicians, police and intelligence officers.

In the beginning of the Mumbai attacks, the members of Lashkar-e-Toiba were supposed to be at the back of it. Lashkar-e-Toiba denied its involvement then but still remains as the accused. The police reports reveal that the Lashkar-e-Toiba acts through an organization called ‘Indian Mujahideen.’ The persons arrested in the case of Mumbai attacks are Sheikh Mukhtar Ahmed, a special police officer and Tausif Rehman, a resident of Calcutta. Roy reveals that Pakistan’s involvement is far from being true when terrorists are working inside the country. Her words, in the essay “9 Is Not 11,” prove that in circumstances like these, air strikes to wipe out terrorist camps may destroy the camps but certainly will not affect the terrorists and even a war cannot do anything in this situation. An example for this is the Sri Lankan war between the government and Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eezham groups.

The Mumbai attacks were continuously telecast on 24 hour news channels. The journalists and anchors in the studio were giving an excited commentary on those attacks. The details of the blast were flashed by the articles like “Terrorist Attacks: Attack in Taj Hotel (Mumbai)” as follows:

Terrorists attacked the Taj Mahal Palace Hotel in downtown Mumbai in the evening of November 26, 2008 . . . . Large groups of hostages were taken inside the Taj Mahal Hotel. Fighting between commandos and the attackers continued at the Taj until the morning of November 29th, when the government officially declared the terrorist siege on the
city at an end. 32 people died in the attack at Taj Mahal. A total of 170 people died in the terrorist attacks. Nine of the gunmen were killed.

The above said attack ran for about three days and three nights, when a small group of young men armed with guns killed unarmed people irrespective of class, caste, religion or nationality. The security forces were helpless as they had to worry about the hostages. It was a different attack that time as the attacks were not the normal ones like suicide bombings or missile attacks. The new plans of the terrorists were telecast as ‘Die Hard 25.’ Gruesome killing of people went on and the TV ratings increased for each deadly picture. Throughout that nightmare, the terrorists made no demands and took no efforts to negotiate or discuss with others. The only purpose of the terrorists was to kill people and inflict much damage on innocent victims. In a desperate mood, Roy conveys her feelings in the net essay “9 Is Not 11” like this, “When we say ‘Nothing can justify terrorism,’ what most of us mean is that nothing can justify the taking of human life. We say this because we respect life, because we think it’s precious. So what are we ‘to make of those who care nothing for life, not even their own.”

Roy gives the instance of a phone conversation with one of the attackers named as Imran Babar. This Babar was then surrounded by police but he preferred to live one day as a lion than to die. His wish was not to change the world. On the other hand, terrorists are interested in killing people and spreading terrorism among the younger generation. Roy has a doubt in her mind and expresses that if the men are from Lashkar-e-Toiba, why did they kill a large number of people from Muslim community for whose rights they are fighting for.

The terrorists are heartless people who can never count even the individuals of their own community killed in an attack. They are satisfied only with a huge damage
irrespective of the religion they belong to. Even though the Mumbai terrorists were then condemned by TV anchors, their actions were magnified a thousand fold by its broadcasts. In India, there are a number of anti-terrorism acts. These anti-terrorism acts are not meant for terrorists but for people whom the government hates. The solution Roy provides in her web essay “9 Is Not 11” is that the “... only way to contain (it would be naive to say end) terrorism is to look at the monster in the mirror. We’re standing at a fork in the road. One sign says ‘Justice’ the other ‘civil war.’ There’s no third sign and there’s no going back. Choose.”

“Mr. Chidambaram’s War” essay begins with the description of the low, flat hills of South Odisha, a home to Dongria Kondh. The Kondh people worshipped the hills as living deities. Those hills were later sold for the bauxite available there. Selling of the hills provoked the anger of Kondh people as they thought them to be God. The people asked how much would be the protest if it happened to Ram or Allah or Jesus Christ. Niyamgiri hill was a home to the Niyam Raja who was otherwise known as the God of universal law. That hill was sold to a company with the name called Vedanta. Vedanta, according to Roy, is one of the biggest mining corporations in the world and is owned by Anil Agarwal, the Indian billionaire who lives in London in a mansion that once belonged to the Shah of Iran. Vedanta is only one of the many multinational corporations closing in on Odisha.

The anxiety over the hills is that, if it gets destroyed, the entire forests that cover them will also be destroyed. Along with the forests, the rivers, streams and the entire Dongria Kondh group will suffer. The problem is for the hundreds of thousands of tribal people who live in the heart of the forests in India. These regions are chosen in order to pay the price of progress. In the name of progress, the government has already announced Operation Green Hunt, a war against the Maoist rebels in the
jungles of central India. Kamal Kumar, in his net article “Analysis: India’s Maoist Challenge,” supports Roy’s view and makes it clear how the villagers living in these scheduled caste areas complain of intimidation by corporations’ private security forces and sometimes even the government’s own security. They say that they are threatened with violence, and are told to obey the orders to give up their land. The people have been prosecuted and imprisoned for asserting their rights. Wherever injustice takes place, people revolt. Such revolts are going around all over the country by the landless and the homeless especially Maoists. Roy names others as Dalits, workers, peasants and weavers. Maoists are not the only people revolting against the government. But the government considers them as the biggest threat. These Maoists are originally the members of the banned communist party of India.

The Maoists have led the 1969 Naxalite uprising in West Bengal. Their belief, as presented by Roy in the book Broken Republic is “the innate, structural inequality of Indian society can only be redressed by the violent overthrow of the Indian State” (6). The outsiders lack first-hand experience on the real nature of the Maoist movement in the forest. In Central India, the Maoists’ guerrilla army is made up of poor tribal people, who even after independence are denied access to education, health care or legal justice. These tribal people are mercilessly exploited by businessmen and moneylenders. The women in that group have been raped by police and forest department personnel. Roy is of the opinion that if the tribal people have taken up arms, they have done so because the government that has given them nothing but violence and negligence is there with the idea of snatching away the last thing they have, that is, their land. The people are not ready to accept that government is doing such things for development in that region. Wasting the time in watching TV, reading
newspapers and conducting SMS polls are not important to the Maoists. Their ideals or goals are to safeguard their homes and land.

The government has declared war on those people to safeguard its better or rich citizens. In order to wipe out the dangerous group, the special police with names like Greyhounds, Cobras and Scorpions are sent with a licence to kill them. An article from *The Hindu* quoted by Arun Kumar in his article, “Indian Government to Launch Major Military Offensive Against Maoist Insurgents” brings out the words of an unnamed government official that “You can’t make an omelette without breaking eggs” although he later conceded that “if we end up killing many more tribals in the process, there will be problems.”

Previously, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), the Border Security Force (BSF), and the Naga Battalion have been sent to bring havoc and commit atrocities in the remote forest villages. Indian government has supported the Salwa Judum and provided arms, rights to rape, burn and destroy the forests of Dantewada. It has brought about the death of 50,000 people and left 30,000 homeless. Many surveys have been done about the places the Indian government can attack with the helicopters of the Indian Air Force. This group has been given the right to fire in self-defense. In *Broken Republic*, Roy raises the following questions, “Fire at whom? How in god’s name will the security forces be able to distinguish a Maoist from an ordinary person who is running terrified through the jungle? Will adivasis carrying the bows and arrows they have carried for centuries now count as Maoists too? Are non-combatant Maoist sympathizers valued targets?” (11).

The people belonging to the war zones of Lalgarh, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Odisha described the arrests, torture, killing and corruption. In Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh, activists who spoke in support of ordinary people were branded as
Maoists and imprisoned. That action provoked them to anger more than others. The arrest of activists and humanists was one of the reasons for why people took up arms and joined the Maoists. The Supreme Court was not ready to review the meaning of public purpose in Land Acquisition Act, even when it was aware that the government was forcibly acquiring land in the name of public purpose and selling it to private corporations. The Naxalite insurgency is viewed by the Indian bourgeoisie as an obstacle to its plans of exploiting the minerals, forests, and other natural resources of the tribal areas where the naxalites have been doing their activity for many decades.

It is a fact that with the kind of money that is involved here, these companies can buy ministers and run their own NGOs, their own militia group and can even buy whole governments as expressed in the book Broken Republic. Even history records the details of how the mining companies have always won their battles against the local people. They have a merciless past but the tribal people have bounced back and fought with their lives to protect the land. The money involved here is four trillion dollars. Here, as manifested in the book Broken Republic, Roy finds a link between four trillion dollars and the companies which includes:

. . . the value of the millions of tons of high quality iron ore in Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand and the twenty eight other precious mineral resource including Uranium, limestone, dolomite, coal, tin granite, marble, copper, diamond, gold, quartzite, corundum, beryl, alexandrite, silica, fluorite and garnet. Add to that the power plants, the dams, the highways, the steel and cement factories, the aluminium smelters, and all the other infrastructure projects that are part of the hundreds of MOUS (more than ninety in Jharkhand alone) that have
been signed. That gives us a rough outline of the scale of the operation and the desperation of the stakeholders. (24)

P. Chidambaram, the Union Home Minister and CEO of Operation Green Hunt then represented several mining corporations. In addition to that, he was once a non-executive director of Vedanta and resigned from the position when he became Finance Minister in 2004. Once P. Chidambaram became the Finance Minister he cleared off the foreign direct investment to Twinstar Holdings, a Mauritius based company and helped them to buy shares in Sterlite that was a part of Vedanta group. When activists filed a case against Vedanta in the Supreme Court pointing out the violation of government guidelines, Justice Kapadia suggested that Vedanta should be substituted by the Sterlite. The same Kapadia according to Roy in the book *Broken Republic* gave clearance to Sterlite despite the “... Supreme Court’s own expert committee had explicitly said that permission should be denied, and that mining would ruin the forests, water sources, environment and the lives and livelihoods of the thousands of tribals living there” (30). The innocent people are still driven off their lands in order to get hold of bauxite from the flat hills and iron ore from the deep forest floor. This struggle of poor, tribal Maoists will continue till the government leaves the bauxite in the mountain. Roy’s feeling over the landless people is expressed here and she seems to justify their action of taking up arms against the government.

In the essay “When the Saints Go Marching Out,” Roy speaks about the accomplishment of the trinity of non-violence that is, Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King Jr. and the actions carried out by these persons in India, Africa and the U.S. The names mentioned in this essay are the people who fought against injustice and discrimination in their countries. Recently, the literate society uses the battles fought by these people as mascots to entice new masters. Roy reveals
like this in *An Ordinary Person’s Guide to Empire*, “Mohandas, Mandela, Martin. India, South Africa, the United States. Broken dreams, betrayal, nightmares” (174). All the icons of the past were commodified and used to promote prejudice, bigotry and inequity which they battled against. In this age, everything is put for sale and the icons are also on display purpose rather than the true motive they serve for. The above said three high priests of non-violent resistance in the countries represent the twentieth century’s liberation struggles. Roy in *An Ordinary Person’s Guide to Empire*, pictures the struggle of the trinity in this manner “... the colonised against coloniser, former slave against slave owner” (174).

Next, Roy goes on to portray the events that took place after the death of these icons. In March 2002, the right wing Hindu mobs killed about 2000 Muslims in Gujarat violence. This Gujarat was once mentioned as ‘Gandhi’s Gujarat.’ The innocent women were gang raped and burnt alive. Many Muslim tombs and shrines got destroyed in that commotion. In *An Ordinary Person’s Guide to Empire*, Roy’s words prove how the “Eye-witness accounts and several fact-finding commissions have accused the State Government and the police of collusion in the violence” (174) and also she expresses the thing that she herself has been present at a meeting where a group of victims has kept shouting for protection from the police.

Narendra Modi who was blamed for organising these riots once again became the Chief Minister of Gujarat on December 2002. On Independence Day that year, he wore the RSS cap while hoisting the national flag. This black Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh cap proclaims him as a member of the Hindu nationalist group. It also indicates that 130 million Muslims and a vast number of minorities in India live under the shadow of Hindu nationalism. The Hindu nationalists are not shy of admiring Hitler’s methods and introducing it among the innocent victims. An irony here is that
Narendra Modi once invited Nelson Mandela to be the chief guest for Gandhi Jayanthi celebration but he did not accept the invitation. The incidents that took place in 2002 happened in Gujarat, the native place of Gandhi who was an advocate of non-violence, Hindu-Muslim unity and secularism. The words of Mahesh Bhatt quoted in Someshwar’s net article “Modi versus the Mahatma: What is Gujarat’s message to India?” explain it thus:

For me, Gujarat will always be the land of the Mahatma who led us to freedom and who himself was a Gujarati. He was perhaps one of the proudest sons of Gujarat. It was the Mahatma who repeatedly said that Hindus and Muslims are the two eyes of the nation. The grouse that people like me have – that Modi did not field a single Muslim candidate – overtly spotlights that there is a strong Muslim bias in place. Let me repeat, I do not grudge Modi and his party the sweep in the state. But the mother of all questions is: Is this the kind of India we want to build, an India without its secular core?

The next person that Roy has mentioned in the trinity is, Nelson Mandela. He fought for the freedom of the Blacks in South Africa from the Whites. South Africa is called as the small miracle and the Rainbow nation of God. This nation is full of natural wealth and natural resources. But, Roy describes the present condition by revealing like this that the Rainbow has been privatized and auctioned to the highest bidders. It has further instituted a massive programme of privatisation and structural adjustment. The government’s promise to redistribute the agricultural land to 26 million landless blacks has been forgotten. Though 60 percent of the population exists as landless people, all the agricultural lands are owned by their 60 thousand white farmers.
The condition of the Black people after independence has become worse, their income has diminished, and more than 40% are unemployed. AIDS has killed many people and the survivors have been treated badly. In Roy’s words in *An Ordinary Person’s Guide to Empire*, “South Africa’s poorest must pay apartheid’s debts, so that those who amassed profit by exploiting black people during apartheid could profit even more from the goodwill generated by Nelson Mandela’s Rainbow Nation of God” (177). This shows that all the struggles of Mandela have lost their purpose. After the hard won freedom, the blacks sell their country again to the whites. It is a new kind of self-imposed slavery.

The third and last person in Roy’s trinity was Martin Luther King Jr. The life of Martin Luther King Jr. did not begin as a militant. Instead, he was a persuader or a believer at first. A year before his assassination, Martin Luther King Jr. delivered a speech at the Riverside church, New York City on April 4, 1967. During that meeting Martin Luther king Jr. made a statement that he could not speak of violence in prison without discussing the things about the violence in his own government, that is the greatest purveyor of violence in the modern world.

Martin Luther king Jr. was against the U.S. government’s racist war in Vietnam. He compared Vietnam War with the racist problems in the U.S. Bromwich’s web article “Martin Luther King’s Speech against the Vietnam War” states Martin Luther King Jr.’s words thus:

For those who ask the question, ‘Aren’t you a civil rights leader?’ and thereby mean to exclude me from the movement for peace, I have this further answer. In 1957, when a group of us formed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, we chose as our motto: ‘To save the soul of America.’ We were convinced that we could not limit our
vision to certain rights for black people, but instead affirmed the conviction that America would never be free or saved from itself until the descendants of its slaves were loosed completely from the shackles they still wear.

In 1967, he denounced the American invasion of Vietnam. But in Vietnam, the condition was exactly the opposite as the Negroes voluntarily fought for their country along with the whites inspite of the racial problems. At present, there is a large number of black people in the U.S. armed forces. They are also fighting for the same country which oppressed and enslaved the black people. The question of Roy in *An Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire* is, “Would he tell people today that it is right for the U.S. government to export its cruelties – its racism, its economic bullying and its war machine to poorer countries?” (183).

The dreams of the old icons or trinity have been replaced by the new ones. These new icons, Gandhiji, Mandela and Martin Luther King Jr. do not share the same feelings, thoughts or ideas like the old freedom fighters who took the lead for the poor people. The condition of old icons is like that of Mohammad Ali affected by Parkinson’s disease and pleading for old age pension. To fulfil the desires of these icons, the people should carry out the non-violent war once again. Roy’s essay “When the Saints Go Marching Out” also explains how it is a difficult task for the writers and freedom fighters to express the cause of innocent victims. Their voice is always suppressed in the 21st century by new money-minded dragons across the world.

The essay “War talk-Summer Games with Nuclear Bombs” is about the nuclear tests conducted by India and Pakistan and the reaction of the Western nuclear powers. Roy is against the hypocrites who denounce the nuclear test, as manifested in her web essay “War talk-Summer Games with Nuclear Bombs,” because “implicit in
their denunciation of the tests was the notion that blacks cannot be trusted with the Bomb.” The result of the test was that the families of diplomats were leaving Delhi and a huge number of the western journalists were arriving in New Delhi. Roy’s friends were asking her why she did not leave New Delhi as nuclear war was possible in that place.

Roy, as exposed in her net essay “War Talk – Summer Games with Nuclear Bombs,” is aware of the fact that “If nuclear weapons exist, then nuclear war is a real possibility. And Delhi is a prime target. It is. But where shall we go? Is it possible to go out and buy another life because this one’s not panning out?” Roy is not ready to leave the place because this is the place where her friends are, and another society would not welcome her with all her idiosyncrasies. This is the same reason why people huddle together and live in New Delhi. Once, Roy and her friends discussed a documentary about the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The destruction took place at the end of the Second World War. The web article “Casualties of War: The Short-and Long-Term Effects of the 1945 Atomic Bomb” by Felicia McCrary and Mona Baumgarten projects thus, “A bright light filled the plane” wrote Lt. Col. Paul Tibbets, the pilot of the Enola Gay, the B-29 that dropped the first atomic bomb. “We turned back to look at Hiroshima. The city was hidden by that awful cloud . . . boiling up, mushrooming.” For a moment, no one spoke.”

Roy explains the impact of the atom bomb in her web essay “War Talk – Summer Games with Nuclear Bombs” through these lines, “The fireball. The dead bodies choking the river. The living stripped of skin and hair. The singed, bald children, still alive, their clothes burned into their bodies. The thick black toxic water. The scorched, burning air. The cancers, implanted genetically, a malignant letter to the unborn.” She has also presented the case of a man who melted into the steps of a
building to become a mere stain on the staircase. While thinking about the effect of atom bomb, she imagines a mixed breed dog with multi-coloured toes. The dog she imagines will also become a stain in the staircase in case of an attack by nuclear weapons.

Next, she goes on to speak about the non-violent protest and hunger strikes carried out by her friend Medha Patkar and others in order to stop the government’s plan of building the Mann Sarovar dam. As it is stated in the web essay “War Talk – Summer Games with Nuclear Bombs,” their protest was against the Madhya Pradesh government’s decision of “bulldozing schools, clear-felling forests, uprooting hand-pumps, forcing people from the villages to make way for the Mann dam. The people have nowhere to go. And so, the hunger strike.” Roy is angry at the government’s indifference in this matter. The government that does not care about the wasting of the world through nuclear war will not worry about a wasted valley. All kinds of peaceful resistance in the form of hunger strikes are treated with contempt.

The issue of Kashmir according to Roy, is actually not a problem but a solution for India and Pakistan. Roy agrees that there is Pakistani terrorism in Kashmir but she goes on to say that that there are also various other kinds of terrorism and criminal deals on both sides of the border. Some of them are encouraged by politicians. She speaks of minority Muslims being killed because of the rising concept of India as a Hindu country. The International coalition against terror is also a useless organization. Though it preaches peace, it is bent on making war. Roy, in the essay “War Talk – Summer Games with Nuclear Bombs,” proves that while India and Pakistan fight for each other’s blood, the coalition is quietly laying gas pipelines, selling the weapons and pushing through their business deals.
Tony Blair’s peace machine to India was to carry out a business deal to sell Hawk fighter bombers. John Pilger, in his net article “How Britain’s Armaments Fuel War and Poverty” mentions like this, “In January, as the two countries prepared for war, Tony Blair arrived in the subcontinent on what was called a “peace mission.” In fact, as the Indian press revealed, he discussed the opposite of peace – a £1million deal to sell India 60 Hawk fighter-bombers made by British Aerospace.” The money spent for that could have been used to provide drinking water for one and half-a-million Indians.

In the eyes of Roy, Indians are unaffected by the nuclear bombs and the other factors because they have their own private worries like getting their fundamental requirements. The question posed to Roy in her net essay “War Talk – Summer Games with Nuclear Bombs” is, “Are you writing another book?” Roy feels that it is a question asked to criticize her. She is not interested in writing another novel because works of art and literature are the products of an atmosphere of peace and not war. Roy wishes to convey the truth that nuclear bombs violate everything that is humane. They change the meaning of life itself. Roy’s above said essay clearly and fearlessly voices her concern for the exploited.

In Roy’s essay “The End of Imagination,” she speaks about the nuclear tests conducted by India on May 1998 at Pokhran. The literary world has been expecting a new fictional work from Roy but she has taken the opportunity to inform the people about the terrible effects of nuclear weapons. She could not remain silent when India conducted the nuclear tests at Pokhran. According to Roy in the web article “Review of ‘The End of Imagination,’” “she would rather have her say and face the music, than accepting whatever is dished out to her with her head bowed.” The tests in fact pierced the heart of India and sowed seeds for the total annihilation of the society.
Roy has been committed to challenge the Government of India for having conducted the nuclear 206 tests without the consent of the people. She rose to the occasion with her timely essay, “The End of Imagination” in October 1998 to unleash pressure on the government.

Roy has got a burning passion for her country and she is ready to break her idolized self of being a winner of the coveted Booker Prize for fiction. She has a specific game plan in her mind as she enters into the new realm of non-fictional writing. Roy makes her idea clear in the book *The Cost of Living* thus:

I am prepared to grovel. To humiliate myself abjectly, because in the circumstances, silence would be indefensible. So those of you who are willing: let’s pick our parts, put on these discarded consumes and speak our second-hand play. But let’s not forget that the stakes we’re playing for are huge. Our fatigue and our shame could mean the end of us. The end of our children and our children’s children. Of everything we love. We have to reach within ourselves and find the strength to think. To fight. (94)

In *The Cost of Living*, Roy laments the fact as follows: “... my world has died. And I write to mourn its passing” (109). When the Pokhran test was conducted by the Government of India, the supporters of the then government wished to distribute the radioactive sand from Pokhran Desert as a holy ‘Prasad’ all across the country. Roy calls it ‘a Cancer Yatra’ to eliminate humanity from the world. The newspapers gave wide publicity to the nuclear tests and many of the papers praised the government for having conducted the nuclear tests as “Explosion of Self-esteem,” “Road to Resurgence,” and “A Moment of Pride” as expressed in the book *The Cost of Living*. 
The serious issue has been treated with much ease and pride; therefore, Roy is forced to come to a contention that “Everybody loves the bomb. (Therefore the bomb is good” (124) as it is revealed in the same essay. Both India and Pakistan build up nuclear weapons as they believe in the Theory of Nuclear EDeterrence10. Each and every country in the world is busy in building up its nuclear weapons for the protection and well-being of its territory. Roy prophesies that there will come a time when an ordinary man can afford to buy weapons as the prices fall and he can use it against his enemies. When nuclear technology enters the market, when it goes truly competitive and prices fall, not just governments, but anybody who can afford it can have their own private arsenal-businessmen, terrorists, perhaps even the occasionally rich writer like Roy herself.

The Government of India is keen on building up its nuclear weapons. Roy satirizes the Bhaba Atomic Research Centre’s idea of giving safety measures to tackle the bad effects of nuclear weapons in case of a nuclear war. It advises the people to take “. . . iodine pills . . . remaining indoors, consuming only stored water and food and avoiding milk. Infants should be given powdered milk. People in the danger zone should immediately go to the ground floor and if possible to the basement” (96-97) as manifested in The Cost of Living.

The Government of India is cheating the people without making them aware of the harmful consequences of nuclear weapons. The government has enough time and money to build up arms and ammunitions for safe guarding its territory. It is hard to find out exactly the cost of the nuclear programme. The amount which should be spent for this programme has been carefully hidden by both the countries. At the same time, the government neglects the poor people’s battle for survival.
In the name of developments, the Government of India has denied justice to its people especially the poor adivasis and tribal people. They live in forests, eat fruits, roots and leaves and make their own medicine from herbal plants. Though special Constitutional Rights have been guaranteed to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, the existence of these people is really in trouble as *The Cost of Living* exposes in this way, “Adivasis don’t really matter. Their histories, their customs, their deities are dispensable. They must learn to sacrifice these things for the greater good of the Nation (that has snatched from them everything they ever had)” (121).

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

> For India to demand the status of a Superpower is as ridiculous as demanding to play in the World Cup finals simply because we have a ball. Never mind that we haven’t qualified, or that we don’t play much soccer and haven’t got a team . . . We are a nation of nearly a billion people. In development terms we rank No. 138 out of the 175 countries listed in the UNDP’s Human Development Index. More than
400 million of our people are illiterate and live in absolute poverty, over 600 million lack even basic sanitation and over 200 million have no drinking water. (113-14)

The nuclear tests conducted in India hurt the feelings of Roy. The Government is answerable for carrying out the nuclear tests secretly and the authorities should be punished for sowing the seeds of hatred. Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the then Prime Minister of the country, justified India’s action on the basis of deteriorating security environment when India conducted the nuclear tests. India considers Pakistan as the deadly poisonous neighbour and the nuclear tests are being carried out so as to give a shock treatment to Pakistan. Soon after India’s nuclear tests in May 1998 at Pokhran, the Government of Pakistan retaliated in the same manner by conducting the nuclear tests. They have also proved that they are not eunuchs anymore. India and Pakistan build up nuclear weapons for the protection of their country. But all their aspirations go in vain when one country attacks the other. In *The Cost of Living*, Roy presents as follows:

Though we are separate countries, we share skies, we share winds, we share water. Where radioactive fallout will land on any given day depends on the direction of the wind and rain. Lahore and Amritsar are thirty miles apart. If we bomb Lahore, Punjab will burn. If we bomb Karachi – then Gujarat and Rajasthan perhaps even Bombay, will burn.

Any nuclear war with Pakistan will be a war against ourselves. (11-12)

Through this essay, Roy has brought out the perilous effects of nuclear weapons and the drastic extent to which it can lead the people into trouble. Bombs cannot satisfy the thirst and hunger of the poor. They can be used only for destructive purposes and finally they lead to the total annihilation of the society. Roy incites the
people to act against the policies of the government especially the nuclear proliferation policy. Roy corrects the mistaken notion that the nuclear weapons are harmful only when they are used. Here, Roy points out the adverse effects of nuclear weapons on the people. She manifests that it is a supreme folly to believe that nuclear weapons can turn deadly only when they are used. But the truth is that their very presence will bring about more havoc on people.

Roy criticises both the Congress party and the Bharatiya Janata Party for their keen enthusiasm in pursuing nuclear weapons. The government is teaching its people how to wage immortal war against the very elements of nature. Weapons of mass destruction aim at the extinction of human society. Atom bombs have no feelings and they lack space and time. Roy’s words, in the book *The Cost of Living*, explain how the making of bombs will destroy only the people of India. It does not matter whether they can use the atom bombs or not. India’s nuclear bomb is an act of betrayal by a ruling class that has failed its own people.

Roy’s “The End of Imagination” has achieved the intended meaning. It can spread the message wide and make it clear that nuclear weapons are harmful and they should be eradicated at any cost. Roy laments the death of her imaginative world or voiceless world in the book *The Cost of Living* and considers bomb as “Man’s challenge to God” (125). Kapadia sums up the stunning achievement of Roy’s essay “The End of Imagination” in the following words, “The article is an ideological statement, lucidly presented with an abundance of parody, irony and at times biting sarcasm. It is a vehement protest at the nuclear tests carried out at Pokhran in May 1998 and the subsequent attempt by the Bharatiya Janata Party Government to politicize the issue and present it as a national cause” (406).
Roy’s essays on the suffering humanity are influenced by the structural
devices of writers from post 1981 like the publication of Salman Rushdie’s
*Midnight’s Children* and by vast readings of other works. She brings out a method of
presenting factual reality in the lyrical mode. In the words of Vinod Kumar Singh,
these essays are:

... an eye opener. Arundhati Roy has used the oratorical method in
this essay. Aristotle speaking about oratory divides it into three
categories – forensic, deliberative and epideictic. This essay falls under
the forensic category because this category is used in defence of
individual freedom and resistance to persecution. (140)

In this world, many are left voiceless especially, the poor, the weak and the
vulnerable. It is not easy or simple to patch up their problems in the society. The first
step will be to prevent these problems that affect them much. Here, the words of
Desmond Tutu quoted in the article “Being a Voice for the Voiceless in Politics” go
like this, “As Christians, we need to not just be pulling the drowning bodies out of the
river. We need to be going upstream to find out who is pushing them in.”

This is often a hard and laborious task. But the figures in Bible like Joseph,
Daniel, Esther and Obadiah are the proofs for bringing about change in the political
scenario. The political role of Joseph has allowed him to save the Egyptian people as
well as his own family from famine. In the same way, Esther uses her influence with
Xerxes to save the entire Jewish people from genocide. These people as role models
have inspired Christians to be a voice for the voiceless in the realm of politics.
Another personality in the U.S., William Wilberforce is also a notable one whose
endless fight abolishes the slave trade.
There are many ways in which people can work for the well-being of others. They can write to the MP about the issues of concern and also get themselves into the political system by joining a party and seeking to work for change from the base level itself. It is only through politics that laws can be changed, policies can be reworked and voices can be heard. As Alison Hill rightly points out in her article, “Being a Voice for the Voiceless in Politics,” “Let us speak for the voiceless from within the political system and help make a difference in a world so scarred by injustice.”