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A CRITICAL STUDY OF SOCIETAL CONCERN OF ARUNDHATHI ROY IN
THE ALGEBRA OF INFINITE JUSTICE

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Abstract

Arundhati Roy is a major political thinker and a notable writer whose works are concerned with marginalized and under privileged people of India. *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* was published in 2001. In this collection of essays, Roy tells about the 9/11 attacks and US government's war against terror. *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* is a collection of her political writings over the past five years. In her collections, Roy addresses her angst about terrorism, globalisation, nuclear disarmament, and global capitalism. Her treatises are against the construction of dams and the testing of nuclear weapons, and her controversial views on terrorism are single-minded and uncompromising. Common people's struggles for the basic needs are represented in her essays.

Keywords: Arundhati Roy, The Algebra of Infinite Justice, Terrorism, War, Peace, Politics, Democracy.

A realist actually reflects the cultural, social and human behavior around the globe. Through her own rule of grammar and syntax breaking the conventional rules (Kumar 89), she represents the concerns of contemporary everyday world. Social realism refers to depicting real events that are part of our daily lives. According to the encyclopedia, realism means the general attempt to depict things accurately, from either a visual, social or emotional perspective. According to Wikipedia, realism in arts is an attempt to represent the subject truthfully without artificiality and avoiding artistic conventions, implausible, exotic and supernatural elements.

Arundhati Roy's *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* elucidates about nuclear war. Nuclear war is just another kind of war. India and Pakistan discuss the finer points of politics and foreign policy and both governments have devised a bigger bomb which is of immense hand grenade with which they will annihilate the enemy and protect from all harm. Roy says that people deliberately believe, and they deeply yearn for magic. Further Roy tells that: "Our cities and forests, our fields and villagers will burn for days. Rivers will turn to poison. The air will become fire. The wind will spread the flames. When everything there is to burn has burned and the fires die, smoke will rise and shut at the sun. The earth will be enveloped in darkness. There will be no day.

Only interminable night" (5). She strongly believes that "war and killing achieve nothing but loss and that a noble end is assured only if the means to attain it are of a place with it and also noble" (Prasad 119).

Roy explains that after nuclear war even water will turn into toxic ice and groundwater will be contaminated and most living things will die only rats and cockroaches will breed and multiply and compete with foraging and relict humans for what little food there is. Roy says that after the impact of nuclear war, people will be burned and people will be blind and bald and ill and people will carry the cancerous carcasses of children in their arms. Where shall they go? What shall they eat? What shall they drink? What shall they breathe? The head of the health, Environment And Safety Group of the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre in Bombay has a plan as a safety measure for a nuclear war. He suggests taking iodine pills and people should remain indoors, and they should consume stored water and food and avoid milk. Infants should be given powdered milk. People in the danger zone should go immediately to the ground floor and also to the basement. People have to live with these levels of lunacy. This is similar to trapped in an asylum where doctors are deranged. In her view, the nuclear bomb is the most anti-democratic, anti-national, anti-human and this is an outright evil thing that man has ever made. This bomb is a man's challenge to God, the almighty. The world is 4,600 million years old, but it could end in any minute with a trigger of a bomb. Roy tells that: "we have the power to destroy everything that you have created." (29)

Roy insists upon America's grief at what happened had been immensely public. It will be a pity if they ask why 11 September happened. Americans use it as an opportunity to usurp the whole world's sorrow to mourn and avenge only their own American places the international coalition against terror before it invites countries actively participate in "Operation Infinite Justice" (156). It was pointed out that this could be seen as an insult to Muslims. Muslims believe that only Allah can meet out infinite justice and was renamed 'Operation Enduring Freedom' (156). The ruling

Taliban government shelters on Osama bin Laden, who is the man being held responsible for the 11 September attack. Osama bin Laden is America's family secret. He is the American president's dark doppelganger. America would have had to invent Osama Bin Laden. Terrorism is the symptom but not the disease.

Roy emphasizes that terrorism expands its wings across borders. It has no boundary nor does it have any linguistic and cultural limitations. Millions were killed in Korea, Vietnam and Cambodia. Tens of thousands of Iraqis were killed in operation desert storm and thousands of Palestinians have died fighting Israel's occupation of the west bank and millions of people died in Yugoslavia, Somalia, Haiti, Chile, Nicaragua, Salvador, the Dominican Republic and panama. All hands of all terrorists, dictators and genocides who the American government supported, trained, bankrolled and supplied them with arms are claiming victory.

The US government launched air strikes against Afghanistan. Little boys stopped clamouring for new video games. Terrorism cannot be excused whether it is committed by religious fundamentalists, private militia, people's resistance movements or whether it is dressed up as a war of retribution by a recognized government. The bombing of Afghanistan is not revenge for New York and Washington. It is another act of terror against the people of the world. Roy lists out the countries that America has been at war with and bombed since world War II: " China(1945-46,1950-53), Korea(1950-53), Guatemala (1954,1967-69), Indonesia(1958), Cuba(1959-60), The Belgian Congo(1964), Peru(1965), Laos(1964-73), Vietnam (1961-73), Cambodia(1969-70), Grenada(1983), Libya(1986), El Salvador (1980s), Nicaragua(1980s)Panama(1989), Iraq(1991-99), Bosnia(1995), Sudan(1998), Yugoslavia(1999). And now Afghanistan." (171)

Roy highlights that the Taliban has the latest weaponry. Many of the young orphaned boys joined Taliban. They had guns for toys, they never knew the security and comfort of family life, and they never experienced the company of women. They don't know about kindness and human compassion.

Furthermore, they have turned their monstrosity on their own people. She further says that insurgents cross the borders into Kashmir but Pakistan praises them for freedom fighters whereas India calls them terrorists. India denounces countries that sponsor and abet terrorism, but the Italian army has in the past trained separatist Tamil rebels asking for a homeland in Sri Lanka that is LTTE. The LTTE is responsible for a numberless act of bloody terrorism. India refused to help LTTE and completely ignored for a variety of political reasons. She fears that this could have enraged LTTE suicide bomber to assassinate the former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1991. The right wing government has banned the students' Islamic movement of India and tries to revive an anti-terrorist act which had been withdrawn after the human rights commission reported that it had been more abused than used. Millions of Indian citizens are Muslim by alienating them anything cannot be gained in India.

Both India and Pakistan conducted nuclear tests in 1998. Nuclear war is a real possibility. If nuclear weapons exist, then Delhi will be the target. She says that: "My friends and I discuss prophecy, the documentary about the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. 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."(208)

Roy highlight social problems in this collection of essays. People are affected by so many diseases like cancer because of nuclear bombs. Terrorism is the real thing. People are in the threshold of horror. War is an acceptable solution to terrorism. Terrorists have the power to trigger a nuclear war in the subcontinent. People will be caught under displacement, dispossession, starvation, poverty and disease. She quotes what Home Minister said: "Our Home Minister says that Amartya Sen has it all wrong-the key to India's development is not education and health but Defense" (209)

Roy expresses that there is obviously Pakistan-sponsored cross-border terrorism in

Kashmir but there are other kinds of terror in the valley that is nexus between jihad militants, ex-militants, foreign mercenaries, local mercenaries, underworld Maoist, security forces, arm dealers and criminalized politicians and officials on both sides of the border. India is a Hindu country, but Muslims are murdered. In India, no one knows what a nuclear bomb is, and also no one cares to explain about nuclear bomb what the Home Minister said, "Education is not a pressing priority"(211)

In the greater common good chapter, Roy tells about Adivasi children and their fragile homes in Surung, Neemgavan and Domkhedi and also discusses the big dams in Narmada valley. She feels terribly sorry for the people who are broken every day, at almost every river and every forest, mountain, missiles and bombs. She further claim that big dams and bombs weapons of mass destruction and fears that governments can use the weapons to control people. They are both malignant indications of a civilization turning upon itself. They scramble the intelligence that connects eggs to hens, milk to cows, food to forests, water to rivers, air to life and the earth to human existence.

Thus, Roy has explained about nuclear war which displays such contempt for music, art, literature and also defines civilization. It is not just the one million soldiers on the border who are living on hair-trigger alert and also all people are on hair-trigger alert. Terrorist violate everything that is humane. They alter the meaning of life itself. People tolerate the men who are using nuclear weapons to blackmail the entire human race. Because of nuclear wars people suffer under displacement, dispossession, starvation, poverty and disease. Arundhati Roy says that if nuclear weapons exist, nuclear war is a real possibility and Delhi is a prime target. India and Pakistan conducted nuclear tests in 1998. Roy's writing mirrors her fiction, and involves between polemic and sentiment. She is talking about the death of the world and also about one country's terrorist being another's freedom fighter. She is always passionately intense in her expressions.

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