



The portrait of the imperial beast in arundhati roy's non-fiction

Dr. KJ SIBI

IQAC Coordinator, Department of English, Shivprasad Sadanand Jaiswal College, Arjuni-Morgaon, District Gondia, Maharashtra, India

Abstract

This paper connects the dots of the portrait of the imperial beast which slowly engulfing the entire earth in its supreme command through an invisible agenda. The approach and propaganda of the new empire are very attractive, therefore, it is deceitful and people with low intelligence cannot understand the diabolic planning of the imperial beast. People have seen only political terrorism but it is only the by-product of economic terrorism. Third world countries welcome the corporate globalization and accommodate their policy for multinational interests. Extra-ordinary charismatic leaders bow down before the power of the imperial beast and sacrifice the national interest and citizens' interest. Nevertheless, their development, their freedom and their justice do not have the real meaning. Their freedom means freedom to dominate and loot the wealth and annihilate the poor. Ultimately, the gap between the rich and the poor is widening very fast. Their development means the accumulation of wealth in their hands for more exploitation. However, Arundhati Roy hopes that things will become worse and then better.

Keywords: imperial beast, corporate globalization, economic terrorism, neo-liberalism, new empire

Introduction

The entire earth is under the shadow of the imperial beast. It is a very delicate situation for all third world countries. Arundhati Roy says, "We are trying ourselves into an intricate economic and strategic web. Once we're in, there's no out. We're in the belly of the beast. Once you're there, you eat pre-digested pap. You behave. You do what you're told, buy what you're sold. If you disobey, you're in trouble. Already, you can see the signs." (The Shape of Beast, p83) She understands the network and the strategy of the imperial beast that is slowly engulfing the whole world. Their instant imperial mix democracy is more dangerous because of their freedom.

In her conversation with Anthony Arno, she says, "The dots have been joined and the shape of the beast has emerged." (The Shape of the Beast, p63) Only the people who have sharp intelligence can only understand the presence of the web of the imperial beast and its agenda and different devices to conquer the whole world under its control. How languages are twisted to its advantage for achieving the targets? Arundhati Roy in her non-fiction has intelligently portrayed. The world is controlled by three of the most secretive institutions: International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization. Their decisions are made in secret, their heads are appointed behind closed doors. Nobody knows how these institutions are empowered to make decisions on behalf of the world.

In the essay, *Peace is War*, she writes, "Today, the project of corporate globalization has increased the distance between those who take the decisions and those who must suffer them even more. For the poor, the uneducated, the displaced and dispossessed that distance puts justice out of reach." (An Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire, pp.111-112) According to Arundhati Roy, 'The Operation Infinite Justice' was nothing but operation infinite injustice and 'Operation Enduring Freedom' was nothing more than

operation enduring subjugation of the bewildered Iraqi people. All the accusations such as storage of biological, chemical and nuclear weapons of mass destruction turned out to be the most ludicrous lies. The US Government's commitment to give freedom and democracy to the Iraqis was gimmick played for the multinationals.

Arundhati Roy believes that Palestine and Kashmir are the festering, blood-drenched gifts of imperial Britain to the modern world. As early as 1937, Winston Churchill spoke of the Palestinians as the dog in a manger. Many Israeli Prime Ministers denied the existence of Palestinians, after forcibly occupying their territory. The Palestinians are forced out of their land and driven into refugee camps. They are humiliated and brutalized daily. Their homes are demolished and their children shot dead. They are non-citizens in their homeland. This cruelty is being enacted by a race that had been without a homeland for centuries. Young Palestinians were unable to bear the indignity and unable to contain their anger turn themselves into human bombs. After each bombing by a desperate individual, they are even more brutalized. Israel's staunchest ally has been Imperial America that was metamorphosed from the old British Empire.

Arundhati Roy has found a soul mate in Noam Chomsky. He has spent a great part of his life to expose the fraud that the American establishment has been. The swindles done in the names of democracy and freedom by the American empire could not go well with him. After the September 11 attacks in New York and Washington, President George W. Bush expounded reasons for the hatred in the minds of the American detractors, "They hate our freedoms, our freedom of religion, and our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other." (An Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire, pp.51-52)

The powerful elite deliberately and successfully blurs the distinction between the people and the Government. The

terrorists also freely use the words 'us' and 'them' and also the term 'freedom' to make themselves feel one in cause with the innocent and ignorant ordinary people. What Noam Chomsky has done was to unmask rationally and empirically the ugly, manipulative, ruthless universe that exists behind that beautiful, sunny word 'freedom'. He lays bare the dizzying maze of corridors that connects the Government with big business as well as the business of managing public opinion.

Free speech, free market and the free world have nothing to do with freedom. The meaning of their freedom is to freedom to murder, freedom to annihilate, and freedom to dominate other people. For them, freedom means freedom to finance and freedom to sponsor despots and dictators all over the world. Their freedom is to train, arm and shelter terrorists in their custody. They have another meaning of freedom in which they have the freedom to topple democratically elected governments across the world. They have the freedom of using mass destruction of chemical, biological and nuclear. The most terrible thing of all these, their freedom to commit these crimes against humanity in the name of justice, in the name of righteousness and freedom. In everything, the US government refuses to judge it by the same moral standards by which it judges others. In other words, it uses moral standards only as the greatest weapons to subdue poor nations.

Arundhati Roy thinks that war on terror is the visible side of the economic terrorism deceptively unleashed by neo-liberalists of the modern world. This economic terrorism devastates the lives of the millions of people around the world by depriving them of food, water, electricity, medicine and even education in the name of privatization. Neo-liberalism being exported by the New Empire is, in fact, the new incarnation of the colonialism of the Old Empire. Those who have cloned this new child of economic philosophy from the dead and rotten colonialism are the white masters and those who readily import this malformed and malevolent child are the native elites who were once the pillars of the Old Empire. New racism and new fascism go hand in hand with this new economic philosophy to plunder the underprivileged, by dispossessing them off everything. The new empire is arriving in the life of the poor people in the third world countries in the form of military intervention, in the form of exorbitant electricity bills, the water supply being cut off, dismissed from their jobs and uprooted from their lands.

In her essay, *When the saints go marching out*, she cites the story of Teresa Naidoo in Durban, South Africa. When her husband had died of AIDS, she didn't have money to buy a coffin. Her two small children were HIV positive. The government disconnected her water supply because she had not paid her water bills and rent arrears for her tiny flat. Arundhati Roy charges that the post-apartheid government of South Africa under Nelson Mandela genuflected before the Market God. The consequent corporatization of basic services meant that millions have been disconnected from water and electricity. The income of forty per cent of the poorest Black families diminished by twenty per cent. Two million people were evicted from their homes and six hundred die of AIDS every day. The forty per cent of the population is unemployed. On the other hand, this same government officially asked the US court not to force the company to pay reparations for the role they played during apartheid on the pretext that it will discourage foreign

investment.

The New Imperialism like the Old Imperialism relies for its success on a network of agents-corrupt local elites who serve the Empire. In her essay, *Do Turkeys Enjoy Thanksgiving?*, she points out that the Maharashtra government offered Enron profits amounting to sixty per cent of India's entire rural development budget, funds enough for infrastructural development for about five hundred million people. The irony was that the government used to pay Enron this huge sum for not producing electricity as the electricity produced by it was twice costlier than the electricity produced by others. Nowadays, the New Imperialists need not risk malaria, diarrhoea, tropical diseases or early death. They could conduct it on e-mail. According to Arundhati Roy, the cornerstone of New Imperialism is New Racism. She asks, "Why else would it be that rich countries that spend over \$ 1 billion a day on subsidies to farmers demand that poor countries like India withdraw all agricultural subsidies, including subsidized electricity?" (*An Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire*, pp.203-204)

In her opinion, no individual nation can withstand the powerful process of corporate globalization on its own. The agents of neo-liberalism are so powerful that the heroes of our times become weak-kneed before them. Extraordinary and charismatic giants are rendered powerless on the global stage when they seize power and become the heads of the states. She cites the examples of President Lula of Brazil and Nelson Mandela of South Africa. After they assumed power, they instituted a massive programme of privatization and structural adjustment to suit the projects of multinationals, which, in turn, left millions of people homeless, landless, jobless and without water and electricity.

Such leaders, once in government, become hostages to a spectrum of threats; the most malevolent among them is the threat of capital flight that can topple down any government. The free market, or rather the bonded market, requires the services of the state very badly to push through deals and administer projects in their countries, such as Enron, yielding enormous profits to the multinationals. Corporate globalization needs a loyal, corrupt and authoritarian government in poor countries to create a good investment climate for them to drain the wealth out of these countries. It's no wonder that the New Imperialism has been supporting and installing dictators and despots like Saddam Hussein and Pinochet. This ruthless globalization tends to widen the disparity between the rich and the poor.

In conversation with David Barsamian, *Seize the Time*, she tells that the situation is so alarming that 500 billionaires have more money than the GDP of hundred and thirty-five countries. This disparity has been ever-widening. The rift between the rich and the poor in the United States is also widening. Arundhati Roy understands the dangerous world awaiting for all of us. Who will fight with this imperial beast? She fights as a crusader against these forces. She has become the champion for the rights of the underprivileged class not only in India but in every country of the world. Since she hails from India, she has a greater understanding of Indian society. Her struggle is not localized, not nationalized but globalized. Just as the earth is divided into the northern and southern hemisphere, the world's population is segregated into the rich and the poor. She is pained at the injustice meted out to the poor class by the

rich.

Many of the people think that there is no alternative to stop the march of this imperial beast in the world. In her conversation with Shoma Chaudhary, '*There's a fury building up...*' Arundhati Roy presents an alternative vision. The present world is a sum of an infinite number of decisions that have been made: economic, ecological, social, political, pedagogical, ideological etc. For each of those decisions that were made, there was an alternative. For any high dams, there can be less high dams. For every corporate contract, there is an alternative. For every repressive law, there is an alternative. A country cannot be run like a corporation. All policies cannot be guided by commercial interests and motivated by profit. Citizens are not employees to be hired and fired, governments are not employers. Newspapers and TV Channels are not supposed to be boardroom bulletins. Corporations like Monsanto and Wal-Mart are not supposed to shape India's policies. Signing our resources like forest and rivers over to giant corporations to increase GDP growth only increases the efficiency of the terrible exploitation of poor again and indecent accumulation of wealth again by the rich, leading to the deep divide between the rich and poor and to a kind of social conflict in every part of the world. The keystone of the alternative world that the violation of the fundamental rights of the citizens should not be allowed. The growth rate would be preferred second. Otherwise, according to Arundhati Roy, democracy has no meaning under the instant imperial mix democracy. The true democracy is for equitable distribution of wealth. She wonders why taking from the rich is called appropriation and taking from the poor is called development.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that Arundhati Roy is an optimist. She is confident that small people in the world can stop the movement of the imperial beast in some extent by awareness and participation of the people. She hopes to dismantle all those are big, big bombs, big dams, big ideologies, big contradictions, big countries, big wars, big heroes and big mistakes. Perhaps, there is a small world down here for small things, small people. She believes that the time has come, "Perhaps things will get worse and then better. Perhaps there's a small god up in heaven readying herself for us. Another world is not only possible, she's on her way. May be many of us won't be here to greet her, but on a quiet day, if I listen very carefully, I can hear her breathing." (An Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire, pp.44).

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