

Challenging Power and Redefining Progress Arundhati Roy's Critique of Neoliberalism, Militarization and Environmental Injustice

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Abstract

This study examines how Arundhati Roy critically articulates power dynamics in her groundbreaking writings *The Greater Common Good* and *Power Politics: The Reincarnation of Rumpelstiltskin*, offering a thorough analysis of neoliberalism, militarization, and environmental injustice. By dissecting modern development theories, Roy reveals structural oppressive mechanisms that disproportionately affect ecological systems and vulnerable groups. The study shows the complex relationships between economic exploitation, environmental degradation, and social marginalization by critically examining the ways in which corporate interests and state-sponsored policies work together to sustain structural violence. The research examines the rhetorical construction of development via a postcolonial feminist perspective, exposing the systematic commodification of natural resources and the dispossession of indigenous population by neoliberal ideology. Roy's philosophical intervention highlights grassroots resistance as a transformative political approach and centers the realities of marginalized people, challenging prevailing narratives. Large-scale infrastructure projects, like the Sardar Sarovar Dam, are symbolic representations of modern power structures that put economic expansion ahead of the wellbeing of people and the environment, as the analysis shows. The ethical implications of development theories are critically examined in this study, which adds to larger academic conversations about social resistance, political economy, and environmental justice. Roy's writing are regarded as an important intellectual critique that reveals the normalized violence present in international capitalism systems and provides substitute ideas of progress, sovereignty, and ecological interdependence.

Keywords: Arundhati Roy, Neoliberalism, Environmental Justice, Power Politics, Development Critique, Postcolonial Feminism

Through her sharp literary and political writings, Arundhati Roy presents a radical criticism of the current global power structures, establishing herself as a significant intellectual figure who cuts across traditional disciplinary boundaries. Roy, who born in Shilong, India, on November 24, 1961, is not only a distinguished novelist who won the Booker Prize but also a powerful public intellectual whose academic and activist works subvert the dominant discourses of environmental exploitation, state-sponsored militarization, and neoliberal development.

Roy's intellectual path stands out for its strong dedication to exposing systematic injustices, particularly those that affect underprivileged groups in postcolonial settings. Her writings, power politics and *The*

Greater Common Good, serve as critical theoretical contributions that methodically dismantle the rhetorical devices underlying the notions of advancement and development. These essays are not merely scholarly assessments; rather, they are potent narratives of resistance that focus on the experiences of environmental activists, Adivasi communities, and people who have been systemically deprived by modern capitalist systems.

Arundhati Roy's study is significant because it offers a thorough critique of neoliberal governance by integrating several theoretical stances, including feminist theory, environmental justice, postcolonial studies, and critical political economics, her method stands out for being interdisciplinary, fusing literary eloquence with a strong commitment to social justice, rigorous political analysis, and ethnographic observation.

Arundhati Roy's revolutionary critiques of modern power structures and neoliberal development paradigms may be found in her key writings *The Greater Common Good* and *Power Politics*. By combining thorough theoretical research with activist work, Roy reveals the complex connections between political institutions, business interests, and global financial institutions that support social injustice and environmental degradation.

Roy's approach combines theoretical critique, empirical data, and personal accounts to show how development initiatives, which are frequently presented as advancing the "greater common good", really conceal processes of marginalization and displacement, especially for vulnerable and tribal populations. By exposing how it frequently justifies resource exploitation, ecological damage, and social displacement while undermining sustainable practices and alternative knowledge systems, her work questions the language of progress.

The author's capacity to go beyond criticism and present a revolutionary vision of development based on underrepresented voices, ecological sustainability, and just power structures sets her scholarship apart. She suggests other avenues for advancement while offering resources for comprehending and contesting power dynamics by fusing academic analysis with real-world activity. Roy's observations are still essential for tackling the worldwide problems of social justice, environmental justice, and sustainable development.

In *The Greater Common Good*, Arundhati Roy provides a convincing critique of major infrastructure projects, as demonstrated by her examination of the Sardar Sarovar Dam. She painstakingly explains how these initiatives, which are frequently hailed as representations of national advancement, actually represent structural violence against ecosystems and people that are already at risk. Recognizing how these initiatives disproportionately affect underprivileged groups including tribal communities who experience cultural degradation, dislocation, and loss of livelihood is at the heart of her argument. Roy contends that the deliberate disregard for the social and environmental consequences associated with these supposedly progressive development projects is at their core.

The metaphor "Big Dams are to the rivers what nuclear power plants are to the earth" (*The Cost of Living* 1999. P. 22) perfectly capture her criticism. This striking analogy highlights the detrimental interrelationship between industrial growth and natural ecosystems and highlights the long-term effects of such initiatives. Large dams, according to Roy, radically alter rivers, ecosystems, and the livelihoods of people who depend on them, just as nuclear power plants endanger the environment with radiation and garbage. Her metaphor emphasizes the irreversibility of the harm done to the environment and the communities that were forcibly unrooted in the name of progress.

Arundhati Roy challenges the prevailing development narrative that puts economic expansion ahead of the welfare of people and the environment by portraying these projects as a type of systemic violence. She draws attention to the ways in which these programs—which are frequently presented as crucial for the advancement of the country—are intended to enrich a select few at the expense of sustaining inequality and environmental damage. Through promoting development models that uphold ecological balance and the rights of underprivileged populations, Roy’s work challenges us to reevaluate what progress looks like. Her study forces readers to think about the moral ramifications of putting industrial growth ahead of the welfare of people and the environment.

Power Politics by Arundhati Roy exposes the collaboration between corporate interests and state mechanisms in sustaining systematic dispossession, providing a biting critique of neoliberalism. She challenges the common use of the rhetoric of progress to defend the exploitation of weaker groups and reveals it as a front for capitalist development. Roy shows how the government, along with private organizations, routinely transfers resources, especially land, from disadvantaged groups to businesses in the name of economic growth. She contends that this process is a planned act of violence ingrained in modern capitalism systems rather than being incidental or innocent.

Roy’s statement that encapsulates this dynamic. This claim emphasizes how neoliberal policies that put industrial growth ahead of social fairness and equity are purposeful and exploitative. Supporters of these policies often portray the eviction of underprivileged groups, particularly rural and tribal communities, as an unavoidable cost for achieving the so-called greater benefit. However, Roy challenges this justification by highlighting the severe ecological and human toll, including environmental destruction, cultural erosion, and the destabilization of communities.

She criticizes the structural processes that allow this dispossession, including deregulation, privatization, and the commodification of natural resources, among other legal changes. The essayist contends that the goal of these policies is to further marginalize people who are already at a disadvantage by consolidating money and power in the hands of a select few. Roy encourages a reconsideration of development strategies that put business before people and the environment by highlighting these power relations. Her writing is a potent call to action to oppose the inequalities that neoliberalism has sustained and to imagine inclusive, equitable, and sustainable alternatives.

The author’s research goes beyond merely criticizing social injustice and environmental degradation; it presents grassroots resistance as an essential and revolutionary political tactic against long-standing power structures. Roy highlights that resistance is a creative and proactive force that can imagine and implement different futures rather than only being reactive. Her emphasis on group unity highlights how oppressed populations may subvert prevailing narratives and regain control over their surroundings and lives.

In a moving remark, she conveys this vision: “Another world is not only possible; she is on her way”. I can hear her breathing when it’s silent”. Roy presents resistance as not only required but also already in motion in this passage, expressing a deep sense of hope and an inevitable outcome. She highlights that the seeds of revolutionary change are innate in group battle, driven by the tenacity of grassroots movements and a common dedication to injustice. The phrase “hearing her breathing” is used metaphorically to evoke a feeling of imminence and proximity to a new paradigm of ecological and social harmony.

Roy’s study highlights the potent opposition to neoliberal and extractive agendas provided by grassroots resistance groups that are based on tribal knowledge, local leadership, and community solidarity. She

draws attention to these movement's abilities to confront structural inequities, thwart environmental degradation, and present substitute coexistence models that put sustainability and equity first. By emphasizing these battles, Roy challenges the top-down methods of traditional development and governance and promotes a bottom-up strategy that gives the people most impacted by social and environmental exploitation more influence.

Her research demonstrates how small movements can lead to more extensive systemic change by bridging the gap between analysis and actively. Roy motivates a rethinking of development that satisfies both ecological balance and human ambitions by presenting resistance as a crucial component of environmental justice. She sees "another world" as a real possibility that can be achieved with teamwork and a steadfast dedication to sustainability and justice, rather than an idealistic fantasy. This viewpoint reinforces her position as a critical thinker and a supporter of revolutionary changes.

The experiences of the most marginalized sections in society are highlighted throughout Arundhati Roy's works, providing a crucial postcolonial feminist contribution. Her insightful study explores the intersections of social injustice, environmental degradation, and power dynamics in great detail, demonstrating how these factors work together to maintain systemic injustices. In his critique of the global neoliberal agenda, Roy show how profit-driven policies disproportionately hurt marginalized groups, especially poor and indigenous people. The privatization of natural resources, which are frequently already burdened by historical and systemic injustices. In addition to highlighting the socio-environmental costs of neoliberalism, Roy's focus on these lived experiences highlights the pressing need for inclusive, egalitarian policies that subvert hegemonic structures of privilege and power. This viewpoint promotes transformative social and environmental justice and connects global capitalism to localized oppression, hence enhancing postcolonial feminist discourse.

In conclusion, Arundhati Roy is a significant postcolonial feminist thinker and activist, as seen by her critique of neoliberalism, militarization, and environmental injustice. She highlights the systemic brutality of capitalist development and state-corporate collaborations by focusing on the lived realities of oppressed populations, particularly indigenous and impoverished communities. Roy exposes the exploitative character of progress narratives that put economic growth ahead of social justice and ecological sustainability in essays like *The Greater Common Good* and *Power Politics*. She criticizes resource commodification and displacement while promoting grassroots resistance, community solidarity, and ecological balance by fusing feminist philosophy, environmental justice, and political economics. Through her works, she firmly establishes herself as a transformative voice for environmental justice and systemic change, questions prevailing paradigms, and advocates for sustainable and equitable alternatives.

References:

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