



ARUNDHATI ROY'S "THE END OF IMAGINATION" :AN APOCALYPTIC VISION OF NUCLEARISATION

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Abstract:

"If you take away love the world is a tomb".

Yes! If a person acknowledges or accepts Nuclear War it means that he lost his love for humanity and started digging the graveyard. Arundhati Roy is one of the Anti-War Feminists who condemned India's Nuclear-weapon policy. 'The End of Imagination' is a manifesto where Roy uses her fame to promote awareness of the dangers of nuclear weapons, refuting the arguments of local politicians to justify the nuclear tests carried out by the governments of India and Pakistan. The End of Imagination (1998), translated to Portuguese by Asa Literatura, 1999. Roy clearly denounces these nuclear tests as nationalist propaganda to raise popular support for the elites in power, risking peace and other social priorities (like education) in the name of political opportunism.

ECO-CENTRICISM IN 'THE END OF IMAGINATION'

Her concern for Ecology is revealed when she presents the condition of our cities and forests, our field and villages which will burn for days. As a result the rivers became poisonous and the air filled with fire balls. The wind spreads the flames. Ultimately everything in the world burned and the earth will be covered by smoke and one day it will shut out the sun. As a result the humanity experiences absolute darkness, there will be interminable night.

She continues her vision by talking about the freezing temperature and nuclear winter. 'When the world is filled with absolute darkness the temperature of the world will drop to far below freezing and nuclear winter will set in. If anything affects the air it will result in water contamination.' She threatens the reader by her elaborate picture of the new world where water will turn into toxic ice which contains poison and the contamination of ground water because of radioactive fallout which seeps through the earth. Finally most living things, animals and vegetables, fish and fowl will die. "Only rats and cockroaches will breed and multiply and compete with foraging, relict humans for what little food there is.

Then she talks about the rest of the humanity which escapes from the above said calamities Those human who still alive are burned and blind and bald and ill, carrying the cancerous carcasses of their children in their arms and will be searching for the way to go, food to eat, water to drink and air to breathe. Roy's prophetic vision of the future seems to be imaginary because as human beings we used to think about immediate results. But as a writer her concern for our heirs is noteworthy. She might have read through the consequences of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the scientific researches which stated about the aftermath effects of nuclear war.

EFFECTS ON THE CLIMATE

A major nuclear war would deposit millions of tones of dust in the stratosphere. Some sunlight would be absorbed or reflected away from the earth by the dust, causing a decrease in the earth's

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temperature. This in turn could conceivably trigger a major climatic change. For example, lowered temperatures could cause an increase in snow and ice near the polar caps, thus an increased reflection of light, and further lowering of temperatures.

Another possibility is that decreases in ozone or increases in oxides of nitrogen levels in the stratosphere, caused by nuclear war, could lead to climatic change. A reduction in ozone levels by a factor of two could cause a decrease in surface temperature of one half to one degree centigrade, but including oxides of nitrogen in the calculation reduces this effect. According to The National Academy of Sciences a study of a nuclear war with the explosion of many more high-yield weapons than are presently deployed, the danger of climatic change from dust or oxides of nitrogen is almost certainly less than assessed in their report.

If the nuclear war occurred during the agricultural growing season of the northern hemisphere, food production could be virtually eliminated for that season. This could greatly increase the chance of mass starvation in the north, though it is possible that stored food and changes in dietary habits could prevent this. This could lead to extinction of species and unpredictable changes in the balance of life on earth. Another effect of the fires would be production of large amounts of oxides of nitrogen and reactive hydrocarbons in the lower atmosphere, changes in lower atmospheric dynamics, and creation of ozone and other potent air pollutants.

AN ACT OF GENOCIDE

The aim of Roy's prophetic vision is not to threaten but to make us to think the necessity of fighting against nuclear weaponisation. She considers that the use of nuclear weapons is anti-humane. In other words it can be worded as 'genocide'. Terrorism has been defined as a crime against humanity. Death by stoning has been called a crime against humanity. Rape, abortion, electro-convulsive shock, and the slave trade have been defined as crimes against humanity. Using weapons of mass destruction should certainly be added to this list. All members of the United Nations by becoming Contracting Parties to the 1948 Convention on Genocide accept the following statement: Genocide is a crime against humanity. If Genocide is a crime against humanity, then the pre-calculated, pre-meditative use of nuclear weapons -- even in self-defense -- must also be a crime against humanity.

Roy criticized the research centre which advised the people to give powdered milk for children instead of cow's milk, which is natural. Faced with catastrophes of this magnitude, the head of an atomic research centre in Bombay recommended that, in case of nuclear attack, people retire to the basement of their homes and take iodine pills. As Roy scathingly remarks, governmental preparedness is a sham; it is "nothing but a perilous joke in a world where iodine pills are prescribed as a prophylactic for nuclear irradiation".

ROY'S VIEW OF 'DETERRENCE'

Roy is of the opinion that the very existence of the nuclear weapons is a threat to humanity. She condemns the government which escaped from the issue stating that nuclear weapons are about peace not war. The credit of changing cold war into the third world war goes to the theory of 'deterrence'. Fundamentally it has few flaws. Here she talks about the psyche of the suicide bomber and she questions about the death of Rajiv Gandhi. Deterrence presumes a complete, sophisticated understanding of the psychology of the enemy that nuclear bombs are only for the fear of annihilation. But if any country which is not deterred what is the use of the theory of deterrence.

Deterrence theory is an elaborate, abstract conceptual edifice, which posits a hypothetical relation between two different sets of weapons systems – or rather, between abstractions of two different sets of weapons systems, for in fact, as both common sense and military expertise tells us, human error and technological imperfection mean that one could not actually expect real weapons to function in the ways simply assumed in deterrence theory. Because deterrence theory sets in play the hypothetical representations of various weapons systems, rather than assessments of how they would actually perform or fail to perform in warfare, it can be nearly infinitely elaborated, in a never ending regression of intercontinental ballistic missile gaps and theater warfare gaps and tactical "mini-nuke" gaps, ad infinitum, thus legitimating both massive vertical proliferation and arms racing.

Arundhati Roy's another important view of 'deterrence' coincides with Marxist Criticism. She said that as deterrence is premised on fear, fear is premised on knowledge. She has listed down some countries which are like India and Pakistan, If all those countries stated proving their power by nuclear tests what will be the future. Since everyone has borders and beliefs, every country will like to have nuclear tests. In future countries can trade bombs for food. As a result our larders are bursting with shiny bombs and our

bellies are empty. Roy's ironical picturisation of the new world order brings us back to the period of British colonization. She says that in future nuclear technology goes on the market and one day the prices of the nuclear weapons fall and not just governments, but anybody who can afford will buy nuclear weapons such as "businessman, terrorists perhaps even the occasional rich writer (like myself)"

She criticizes by thanking the men who created the theory of deterrence, because in future even a petty trouble maker and rumor-monger, use nuclear weapon for his delight. Roy as a writer states that "We can be victims of the predatory imagination of every green card seeking charlatan who surfaces in the west with concocted stories of imminent missile attacks"

She compares nuclear weapons as "the ultimate colonizer and whiter than any white man that ever lived. The very heart of whiteness". According to her in future one who is having more number of nuclear weapons will rule the world. Nuclear weapons pervade our thinking, control our behavior and administer our society and inform our dreams. In brief Roy is against the theory of deterrence because it is foolish to spread the view that it is only harmful when it is used.

To conclude her idea of deterrence she warns that the bomb is not in our backyard but it is in our body. No one has the right to pollute the atmosphere. Though there has been no nuclear war the very existences resulted in radioactive fallouts if the people keep on passive without protesting it the future will be terrific. It is a right time to stand up and speak on our own behalf. Never mind of saying it again.

The reasons given by Indian officials for the development of nuclear capability have been primarily three: the looming danger of China; the ongoing conflict with Pakistan; and the Western example of nuclear power politics. None of these reasons stand up to scrutiny. Regarding China, Roy comments, the last military confrontation happened over three decades ago; since that time, conditions have by no means deteriorated but rather "improved slightly between us." Relations between India and Pakistan are more tense and perilous, especially when the focus is placed on Kashmir. However, here the geographical proximity itself undermines nuclear programs on both sides. In Roy's words: "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 the rain." Hence, any nuclear attack launched by India against Pakistan will be "a war against ourselves." Somewhat more tricky—but ultimately equally fallacious—is the reference to Western power politics and the obvious hypocrisy involved in Western nuclear policies ("bombs are good for us, not for you"). Although containing more than a kernel of truth, the charge of hypocrisy and duplicity does not vindicate India's nuclear arsenal. "Exposing Western hypocrisy," Roy asks mockingly, "how much more exposed can they be? Which decent human being on earth harbors any illusions about it?" While protesting self-righteously against nuclear proliferation, Western regimes have in fact amassed the largest arsenal of nuclear devices and other weapons of mass destruction; and they have never hesitated to use this arsenal for their own political advantage: "They stand on the world's stage naked and entirely unembarrassed, because they know that they have more money, more food, and bigger bombs than anybody else. They know they can wipe us out in the course of an ordinary working day." As one should note well, Roy's point here is to criticize India's nuclear program, not to shield Western hypocrisy and war-mongering.

Roy becomes a peacemaker between India and Pakistan. She stresses that if try to bomb on Lahore, Punjab will be destroyed. In the same manner if Karachi is bombed, the result can be seen in Gujarat, Rajasthan and Bombay. A war against Pakistan will be a war against India. She proves that as we are brothers and sisters it is advisable to follow the principle of unity in diversity.

Roy gives a clear account of the position of India and the areas to develop. Her argument is that India has to be improved in various fields. Instead of concentrating on such issues which take India to the path of development, the Government spent its money on nuclear –tests which is a path of devastation.

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 safe drinking water."

Roy is of the opinion that India is poor, and filled with morally bankrupt politician, since it has greater number of illiterate. "illiteracy is not just sad, it's downright dangerous". She insists that we can create fire among people not by splitting the bomb but by lifting a light among them as Gandhi did. It is not right on the path of any country to think over its past calamities created by another country, it won't heal its wound. Roy proves to be an efficient writer by her use of short and long sentences which gives emphasis as well as beauty to her ideas he wanted to convey. She said that it is prude to encourage the things what we

love instead to destroy what we hate. Though India has experienced brutality from the world it has some beauty left. The thing wanted from India is to nurture the beauty it received with grace from others. Repeatedly she emphasizes that creation and deployment of bomb is a threat to humanity whether we use it or not. "Making bombs will only destroy us. It doesn't matter whether we use them or not. They will destroy us either way." It is a challenge to God that human beings have the power to destroy what HE has created. She makes an appeal to the readers who are not religious that "This world of ours is four thousand, six hundred million years old. It could end in an afternoon."

CONCLUSION

The beautiful planet 'earth' created by God, for the sake of human beings is at the risk of nuclear catastrophe, which is far greater than we think. Nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism have added dimensions through which human race will be annihilated at a cruel level. The Biblical warnings of the dangerous consequences to be faced by mankind prove to be right.

Roy's apocalyptic vision in 'The End of Imagination' can be associated with the Bible. Her vision is proved in the Bible as a sign of second coming of Jesus Christ. When Roy talks about interminable night one is reminded of Matthew 24 which predicts the second coming of the son of man. "Soon after the terrible of those days, the sun will grow dark, the moon will no longer shine."

Roy's picturization of the people who escaped from nuclear-war as blind, bald, ill and carrying the cancerous carcasses of our children can be linked with the warning given in Zechariah -14 verses 12 "Their flesh will rot away while they are still alive." There is a direct reference in Revelation 8 verses 16 to 19 about nuclear war which will produce fire, smoke and sulphur.

And in my vision I saw the horses and their riders: they had
breast plates red as fire, blue as sapphire, and yellow as sulphur.
The horses' heads were like lions' heads, and from their mouths
came out fire, the smoke, and the sulphur coming out of the horses'
mouths.

As Roy said If nuclear wars are considered as Man's challenge to God the result will be far more terrible than she depicted. Bible says troubles and persecutions are the symbols of the last days which predicts the second coming of Jesus Christ. Mark 13 says "countries will fight each other, kingdoms will attack one another".

Arundhati Roy's 'The End of Imagination' is a manifesto of anti-nuclearisation. She has justified her winning of Booker prize by writing such a piece which speaks for the welfare of humanity. Her ideas are an eye-opener for the people those who are unaware of the forthcoming calamities if we opt for nuclear-tests. Her aim of her vision is not to create an atmosphere of horror but to give awareness to the reader. And to conclude it is the right time to act against nuclear war otherwise we will meet the end within an afternoon.