

## **CHAPTER III**

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### RESISTANCE AGAINST NEO-IMPERIAL INJUSTICE

Globalization and neo-liberalism which were supposed to herald one unprecedented era of opulence and affluence, of homogenous progress and prosperity – instead have thrown most of the third world countries and the former Communist states :

into unprecedented poverty and violence, where the economic terrorism of corporate globalization, the political terrorism of fascist, corporate police states, and the cultural terrorism of fundamentalism and extremism spawn vicious cycles of violence, injustice, and fear.

(Shiva, *India Divided* 54)

When in one hand there is pathetic plight of a large number of people because of rural destitution, unemployment, deprivation, transportation, exploitation, then in the other hand, there is fabulous accumulation of wealth and money in the hands of a few.

The dismal picture of this wide disparity between shining India and destitute India gets clear when the bitter truth is exposed to us. It is to be noted that in the last 50 years around ‘50 million people’ (Salve) have been evicted from their homes to give room for the development projects; more than two hundred thousand debt-trapped farmers have committed suicide;<sup>1</sup> ‘42 percent of the world’s’ (Maginer) malnourished infants and children belong to this country; the food grain consumption ratio of ‘40 percent of the rural population’ (Roy, *Listening to Grasshoppers* 31) of India is similar to that of sub-Saharan Africa – on the other

side there are the business tycoons like Ambanis, Tatas, Birlas, Poonawallas, Mittals, Adanis. It is for these rich industrialists and businessmen Special Economic Zones (SEZs) are generated, dams are built, large tracts of farming land are appropriated, subsidy is granted, and dues and liabilities are waived.

The 2017 Oxfam<sup>2</sup> report states that just 57 top billionaires of India possess the same amount of capital as that of the down-line 70 percent population of the country. Mukesh Ambani's accumulated personal worth at present is \$35.2 billion.<sup>3</sup> The palatial 27-storied house, 'Antilia' he lives in - is considered to be the planet's second most extravagant residential property next to the Royal Palace of Buckingham.<sup>4</sup> Prosperity thus, instead of reaching to the contours, has become confined to the hands of a few oligarchs and tycoons.

The similar picture of what is happening in India is visible in the other parts of the globe too. As for example, in post-apartheid Africa, in the name of progress and development, rapid privatization of the essential infrastructure is going on in full swing. The welfare government's pledge to redistribute farming land to 'twenty-six million landless people' (Dynes) has not been fulfilled. The grim picture of racial discrimination gets clear when one sees that the lion's share of the farming land is controlled by the white farmers. The situation becomes even grimmer when one sees that in post-apartheid South Africa 'the income of 40 percent of the poorest Black families has diminished by about 20 percent' (Laurence). Two millions hapless inhabitants were supplanted from their habitat.<sup>5</sup> 'Six hundred die of AIDS every day' (Roy, *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* 176), and '40 percent of the population is unemployed' (Cauvin).

The structural adjustment policies of IMF which were supposed to help a country get rid of the financial crisis often led to hunger and riots. Bolivia, Somalia, Afghanistan, Morocco and a host of other countries have become the victims of such terrible conditions. However, Iraq seems to be the classic example of the devastating consequences of globalization and neo-liberalism. During the 1990s more than '500,000 Iraqi children had died' (Roy, *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* 225) because of the financial and commercial punitive measures imposed on Iraq by the US government.

What is happening in India, Africa, Iraq, Afghanistan, Argentina, Venezuela, Libya, Bolivia, Somalia, Syria etc. indicates no isolated examples of oppression and suppression; rather they are a part of the diabolical mechanism of corporate globalization. At the domestic level through homeland security laws or through the rise of divisive ethnic or religious fundamentalist ideologies society is divided in such a manner that imperial powers can swoop down and rule the fragmented country. At the global level through World Bank, World Trade Organization, trade related treaties like GAT, GATT etc. there is the re-emergence of neo-liberalism and the global dominance of US imperialism.

Everywhere, therefore, there is growing resentment against the ugly, manipulative nature of US imperialism, neo-liberalism and contemporary state capitalism that are destroying the delicate fabric of equality, sustainability, democracy and pluralism. Political activists, authors, actors, film makers, environmentalists, intellectuals, concerned citizens – all over the globe are raising their voice to expose the web of falsehood so as to resist the tentacles of corporate globalization and neo-liberalism. Even Joseph Stiglitz<sup>6</sup>, who was the Ex-Chief

Economist at the World Bank and the winner of the Nobel Prize for Economics in 2001, stated that :

I saw firsthand the devastating effect that globalization can have on developing countries, and especially the poor within those countries. I believe that globalization – the removal of barriers to free trade and the closer integration of national economics – can be a force for good and that it has the *potential* to enrich everyone in the world, particularly the poor. But I also believe that if this is to be the case, the way globalization has been managed, including the international trade agreements that have played such a large role in removing those barriers and the policies that have been imposed on developing countries in the process of globalization, need to be radically rethought. (Stiglitz ix-x)

Arundhati Roy, another voice of global dissent, since the appearance of her much debated novel has channelized all her might and energy to transform herself into an author-activist whose primary concern is to spill the beans of the insidious means and methods of appropriation and exploitation by which the centre/power appropriates the margin. The post-modern world, for Roy, is virtually a world of globalization, economic liberalization, corporatization and privatization and in this world the first world countries – basically America and her allies, are exploiting the third world countries for their own hegemonic interest through the several means of ‘base’ and ‘superstructure’. Agencies like International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, World Trade Organization (WTO) and the treaties like General Agreement on trade (GAT), Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights

(TRIPS) are but the tools and tentacles of the hegemon for their methodical and systematic invasion to perpetuate their domination and control over the third world countries.

Under the given circumstances, leaving aside all the moral hypocrisy and false sentimentalism, an outspoken Roy engages her in a polemical expose to dismantle the grand narratives of globalization that brought about disastrous consequences in the lives of billions of non-American people. An in-depth study of her texts brings home the fact that she has drawn from multiple paradigms of critique – from Marxism to Post Colonialism, from Environmental Feminism to Subaltern Studies – so as to expose and unmask the veiled face of the imperialists /capitalists /hegemon and their tentacles and then to narrativize the possible methods of resistance and the subsequent reconstruction. It is interesting to note that Roy has often been criticized for bringing together multiple perspectives in a dynamic, complex tension. As for instance, noted literary critic Graham Huggan, while assessing Roy as a postcolonial environmentalist, argues that on whose behalf Roy is speaking is not clear :

...of whom Roy believes herself to be speaking for (Adivasi “oustees”? The Narmada Bachao Andolan? International environmental activists and “eco-warriors”? The Indian people?) – an open question that blurs the boundaries between the underclass victims of ecological disaster and their privileged supporters, and that makes Roy vulnerable to the criticism that she is silencing those on whose behalf she wishes to speak. Roy’s tirade against the state

seems to want to claim a victory for the people. But which people?

(Huggan, *Interdisciplinary Measures* 70)

However, on the contrary it can be said that such complexity is the forte of her position. In this regard Susan Comfort has justly argued that :

In the mixture, what emerges is an environmentalist critique that operates on several levels simultaneously. One puts emphasis on the loss of a sustainable way of life and ecological poverty on a local level, while another critiques the development state as an agent of capitalist expansion and bourgeois appropriation at the national level as well as in a neoliberal global context. (Comfort 129-30)

Roy's crusade against destructive development and neo-imperial injustice can be best understood when her work is juxtaposed with the broad socio-historical and political context they belong to. Therefore, an overview of the global shift affecting India is of enormously topical significance.

The genesis of this current crisis probably predates the 15<sup>th</sup> century with the 'Age of Discovery' or 'Age of Exploration' when the European explorers undertook sea-voyages in search of new trade routes in the coastal areas of Africa, Middle East and Asia. However, the main impetus came from the Industrial Revolution of 1688. It had a lasting effect on class structure, urbanization and life style because it brought about a paradigm shift. With the expansion of trade and commerce the capitalist people needed new markets to sell their products. And that led to the Eurocentric invasion in the other continents. The invaded countries gradually became the colonies of the imperial powers. India, for example, became the colony of Great Britain.

The colonial masters with their unbridled greed started to exploit the indigenous people in India. They established a system of land-use that was particularly designed to generate as much revenue as possible. Economist Samir Amin<sup>7</sup> has rightly observed that the colonial masters methodically set up ‘forms of private ownership of agricultural land that denied the majority of the peasantry access to it’ (Amin 1).

Moreover, the fertile land which had been cultivated and managed by the peasant community to produce agricultural products for the sustenance of life was by force turned into ‘cash-cropping tracts producing indigo, jute, or cotton to supply the British textile industry, while once diverse forests so important to peasant-based agroforestry were destroyed and replaced with single-crop forests of sal, teak, or deodar’ (Comfort 122). The consequences were disastrous. ‘India, which in the seventeenth century was the ‘agricultural mother of Asia and the industrial workshop of the world’, had, by the eighteenth century, been reduced to penury and famines’ (Shiva, *India Divided* 18).

In the wake of independence the Indian leadership, aiming to build modern India, intensified rapid industrialization and agricultural production. As they were enamoured by the western model of development so the means adopted were ‘a series of government-led initiatives managed from the top down, including such enterprises as steel mills, hydroelectric power, fertilizer and pesticide production’ (Comfort 123). It is to be noted that the so-called architect of modern India, Jawaharlal Nehru regarded the mega reservoirs as the ‘Temples of Modern India’ (Sharma 42) and while visiting the Bhakra dam site he expressed his wonder in the following manner : ‘What a stupendous, magnificent work, a work which only that

nation can take up which has faith and boldness' (D'Souza xv). The remark of Nehru amply testifies how the fetish of building mega dams had gripped the psyche of the then policy makers – how it had become a part of romantic valorization. International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank – which are but the tools of western invasion – were also ready to provide financial assistance to carry out these projects.

Enormous development projects of such kind were, however, often hotly debated and discussed as they drained away resources from the country, displaced millions of people, caused pollution and wrecked havoc on the environment. According to Ramachandra Guha and Madhav Gadgil<sup>8</sup> :

...the devastation to the environment extends from the coastal areas where traditional fishing practices have been replaced by industrial-style trawling, which has resulted in overfishing; to inland waterways that have been dammed or polluted with industrial waste, untreated sewage, and agrochemicals; to forests where rampant deforestation has caused flooding and the loss of species diversity; to farmlands, where once a tremendous variety of legumes and grains were cultivated, that have been converted to monocultural fields of cash crop and heavily treated with pesticides and fertilizers. (Comfort 123)

The crisis, however, deepened during the 1990s when India opened her market to the foreign countries by signing in the GATTs and GAT. And with this came the terms – globalization, neo-globalization, liberal economy, corporate globalization. At that time globalization was lauded as the panacea for the social discord and malady. It was expected to herald a new era of homogenous growth, of equality, democracy and

justice for all. At this point it must be noted that GATTs, GAT, globalization, liberalization etc. are but the subtler means of the former colonial masters to retain their hold on the hegemony. The Marxist notion of cultural hegemony as propagated by Antonio Gramsci is the proposition that the hegemons for their imperial dominance often use implicit means of power rather than direct military force to perpetuate their control over them. In this case globalization and neo-liberalism have been presented in such a manner as if they would produce a world of manifold benefits for everybody, a more prosperous, stable and benevolent world.

But very soon the accounts of real suffering, deprivation, exploitation, stark poverty and pathetic plight of a large section of people began to surface. Things began to fall apart when the pledge of shining India instead resulted in the glaring discrimination between two Indias – one showing the gloomy picture of homelessness, rural destitution, unemployment, deprivation, land estrangement, exploitation; and the other - the concentration of fabulous wealth and money in the hands of a privileged few. Moreover, this conglomerate of the rich is so powerful that they run the virtual government undermining the democratic set up. The police, the judicial system, the administration and even the different platforms of media are appropriated to serve the elite interest. Vandana Shiva has justly stated that :

After two decade of corporate globalization, we now have evidence of its ecological and social costs. A deregulated financial economy gave us the financial crisis; a deregulated food economy has given us a food crisis; a deregulated mining economy has turned every mineral-rich area into a war zone. (Shiva, *Making Peace* 5-6)

She thereafter calls for a radical switch from this ‘earth-degrading, human-degrading’ (Shiva, *Making Peace* 12) commercial money-generating mechanism to ‘earth-centred, human-centred systems which reduce the ecological footprint while increasing well-being’ (Shiva, *Making Peace* 12).

Arundhati Roy’s appearance into the literary firmament coincides with this. After penning down her solo paperback for which she was honoured with the prestigious Booker Prize, the novelist Roy immediately re-defines her role as an essayist and political-activist who is committed to ‘expose the machinations of transnational corporations as well as the cruelties of privatization and development politics’ (Comfort 119). Having viewed the pathetic plight of a large number of people, displaced miserably by the Sardar Sarovar Project, with utmost rapidity she devotes herself to Narmada Bachao Andolon. It will hardly escape anybody’s notice that the Narmada Valley Project is a gigantic enterprise that aimed to construct 30 mega reservoirs, some 135 moderate-sized reservoirs and 3,000 small reservoirs. Among the 30 large-sized reservoirs 2 will be extremely large and multipurpose in nature. They are the Sardar Sarovar Project (SSP) and the Narmada Sagar Project (NSP) in Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh respectively. The SSP became a case study for Roy and thereafter she has narrativized her angry impassioned critique in “The Greater Common Good” where she has renounced the fetish for building gigantic dams at the expense of millions of human lives and nature. However, what is Roy’s constant concern is that these development projects are often non-sustainable schemes. Besides taking a heavy toll on life and nature, they are also draining away huge amount of public exchequer. Moreover, it is the impoverished people – the Adivasis, the dalits, the tribals who are sacrificed in the name of growth and

progress. Growth thus has become 'all-exclusive' for the urban elites instead of being 'all-inclusive'.

As a social-activist, Roy is also critical about the myopic vision of our political leadership who are unable to understand or simply not paying heed to the sinister designs of western imperialism. The debts provided by World Bank or other international funding agencies are only entrapping the country in further debt. The bitter reality is exposed when Roy states that :

Between 1947 and 1994, the World Bank's management submitted 6,000 projects to the Executive Board. The Board did not turn down a single one...India is in a situation today where it pays back more money to The Bank in interest and repayment instalments than it receives from it...According to the *World Bank Annual Report* (1998), after the arithmetic, India paid The Bank \$478 million more than it borrowed. Between 1993 and 1998 India paid The Bank \$1.475 billion more than it received. (Roy, *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* 76-77)

This brazen picture only suggests the stark reality that while big dams are debt-traps for a nation they are gold-mines for the political leaders. Obviously the truth is – the adverse impacts of big dams are greater than their benefits. There is no doubt that big reservoirs are constructed to store up water for future use. Quite logically, the normal flow of water in river bed gets spoiled, and this in turn, adversely affects the entire ecology of the concerned area. Moreover, as the reservoir behind the dam grows, it inundates the plants and vegetation that used to be in the area. Therefore, it is now an established fact that large hydroelectric dams

are producer of green house gasses. Moreover, huge amount of public exchequer is also squandered as the dam would automatically lose its storage capacity because of natural sedimentation after a certain period of time. They also increase seismic activity. Because of these lurking dangers the lucrative business of building big dams is not going well in the first world countries. So what to do? Import it to the third world countries. Roy justly states that :

In the first world, they're being decommissioned, blown up. The fact that they do more harm than good is no longer just conjecture. Big Dams are obsolete... They're a Government's way of accumulating authority (deciding who will get how much water and who will grow what where). They're a guaranteed way of taking a farmer's wisdom away from him. They're a brazen means of taking water, land and irrigation away from the poor and gifting it to the rich. Their reservoirs displace huge populations of people, leaving them homeless and destitute. Ecologically too, they're in the doghouse. They lay the earth to waste. They cause floods, waterlogging, salinity, they spread disease. There is mounting evidence that links Big Dams to earthquakes. (Roy, *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* 57-58)

Vandana Shiva, another prominent voice of dissent of the present time, also succinctly points out this brazen business of commoditization of the basic human rights – particularly of water. She writes :

Water privatization projects are a major World Bank-mediated political and financial scam, locking public utilities and citizens into

a system where the public pays a global corporation super-high tariffs for water that has been provided through the services to our public utilities. First, the World Bank uses its loans as a conditionality for privatization. Second, it reduces the universal access system of public utilities to a privileged access to industry and 24 x 7 supply to rich urban areas. Third, it diverts limited and scarce groundwater from rural areas to urban areas...Fourth, it is forcing governments and public utilities to increase water tariffs and to commodify water, subverting people's fundamental right to water as part of the right to life. Fifth, since World Bank Projects are based on non-sustainable water use, they are failing, as is clear in the case of the Sonia Vihar plant in Delhi and the Veeranam project in Tamil Nadu. World Bank loans are failing to bring water to people; they are successful only in guaranteeing contracts and profits for water corporations like Suez, Vivendi, Bechtel. (Shiva, *Making Peace* 83-84)

Contextually, it may be remembered that even Jawaharlal Nehru, who was one of the staunch advocates of building mega dams, got disillusioned with this ideology in his later life. In a speech he himself admitted that :

For some time past, however, I have been beginning to think that we are suffering from what we may call "the disease of gigantism". We want to show that we can build big dams and do big things. This is a dangerous outlook developing in India...And it is the small irrigation projects, the small industries and the small plants for electric power,

which will change the face of the country far more than half-a-dozen big projects in half-a-dozen places. (Sharma 52)

Among the English spy movies those of James Bond are particularly hot favourite among the people. The blockbuster *Quantum of Solace* is particularly relevant here. The basic theme of this movie is how ‘Quantum’, a corporate conglomerate is building dams in Bolivia to get monopoly of control of its fresh water supply. It also shows the powerful underhand configuration of these corporate giants which are exploited to topple any legitimate government by coup or by conspiracy.

Leaving aside the reel life in real life too, during the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the Bolivian government was virtually privatizing the public water supply system by leasing it to Bechtel, a corporate firm of US – the initial measure Bechtel implemented was to ‘triple the price of water’ (Roy, *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* 225).

Besides renouncing India’s fetish for building big dams, the single other thing that Roy has consistently been concerned with is American imperialism and its devastating repercussions on the lives of several non-American people. A discourse analysis of her texts manifests itself clearly how she has been persistently and stridently vociferous against American hegemony that operates, overtly and covertly, through the means of IMF, World Bank, WTO and the treaties like GAT, GATT, Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights etc. Roy is, therefore, committed to :

...deconstruct the Empire by exposing the invisible mechanisms of its architecture, analyzing its moral assumptions, economic

underpinnings, cultural penetration and legal implications, identifying its agents whoever they may be and wherever they function and decoding its rhetoric in order to hammer out strategies of resistance to reassert the values of human dignity, social justice and peace. (Ganapathy-Dore 80)

In her effort to expose the mechanisms of new imperialism Roy has left no stone unturned. To make the laymen aware about the mechanisms of it, Roy in her essay, “Do Turkeys Enjoy Thanksgiving?” has even drawn a parallelism between old and new imperialism. Old imperialism was motivated primarily by the Industrial Revolution of 1688. With increased productions European nations started to invade other countries – Asian and African basically, for new sources of raw materials, cheap labour and for markets to sell their products. And in course of time as the European nations were vying with each other so the question of supremacy arose inevitably. At length the world thus witnessed the rise of two mighty empires – the British and the French.

The mighty colonizers tried to perpetuate their reign by means of tricks, force and through policy implementation. They even racially discriminated the colonized people by propounding the ideology of ‘white man’s burden’. Through this ploy they thus endeavoured to legitimize the enforcement of European version of civilization among the subjugated countries for their hegemonic control over them.

The power dynamics, however, began to change during the 1930s. Britain and France being on the wane now the world witnessed the rise of another pair of global powers – the USA and the USSR.

The new powers were preoccupied with bitter face off without direct confrontation for almost forty-five years. It is to be noted that USA is a liberal democracy that follows the principles of capitalism, while the USSR is a federal state that follows the ideals of communism. Quite logically their hegemonic conflict was both - ideological as well as geopolitical. During the Cold War there was bitter rivalry between these two super powers. They locked horns over everything – be it science or industry; sports or space exploration. This bitter hegemonic conflict posed threat to the sovereignty of other nations as they were often dragged into the conflict – especially when it was doubted that the concerned nation’s policies might disrupt and unsettle the power equation. However, with the fall of USSR during the early part of the 1990s, the US became the world’s sole hegemonic power. And with this the post-modern world started to witness ‘the paranoia and ruthlessness of power’ (Roy, *An Ordinary Person’s Guide to Empire* 14).

The US then had the obvious intention to perpetuate its legacy. Its domination, therefore, applied several means and methods of appropriation and subjugation. World Bank, IMF, WTO, GAT, Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights etc. became the tools and tentacles of appropriation and exploitation. In the name of growth and development economic liberalization, privatization, globalization, corporatization became the dominant policy of governance.

In the world of corporate globalization democracy thus has been subverted. Commoditization and privatization being the dominant mode of governance democratic set ups have been effectively manipulated and appropriated to serve the

elite interest. Roy in another essay, “Instant-Mix, Imperial Democracy” has succinctly pointed out this subversion:

Politicians, media barons, judges, powerful corporate lobbies and government officials are imbricated in an elaborate underhand configuration that completely undermines the lateral arrangement of checks and balances between the constitution, courts of law, parliament, the administration and, perhaps most important of all, the independent media that form the structural basis of a parliamentary democracy. (Roy, *An Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire* 155)

Roy's concern is also echoed in the words of another major voice of global dissent, Vandana Shiva who unmask the shady business of corporate globalization by saying that :

...a handful of corporations and a handful of powerful countries seek to control the earth's resources and to transform the planet into a supermarket in which everything is for sale. They want to sell our water, our genes, our cells, our organs, our knowledge, our cultures, and our future. (Shiva, *India Divided* 12)

American imperialism thus has invaded all the nations which the regime authority considered either to be of great geo-strategic value or rich in mineral resources. And if that independent nation is not willing to succumb or open up its market for foreign direct investment – there will be either the creation of designer civil unrest so as to enable the Empire to swoop down and manipulate or direct war will be waged. And then in the name of post-war reconstruction the juicy contract deals will be signed by the corporate giants. It is noteworthy that since post 2<sup>nd</sup>

World War America, for her own hegemonic interest, has been at war, at least, with 18 countries :

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). (Roy, *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* 244)

– not to mention the several coups, proxy wars, covert and overt operations engineered by it. American way of life thus has devastating consequence on the lives of the billions of non-American people. The people of Iraq probably know it better than anybody else. They have already paid and are still paying a hefty price for no fault of their own. Iraq has been invaded and attacked by America several times. The US-led UN sanctions also wrecked havoc on the lives of the Iraqi people. During the 1990s more than ‘500,000 Iraqi children had died’ (Roy, *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* 225) because of the financial and commercial restrictions imposed on them.

Roy also points out in detail how the new Empire has brought into being other subsidiary heads like militant nationalism, religious bigotry, racism, fascism and terrorism to disintegrate society for the fulfillment of its anti-human mission. New Imperialism thus has nothing to do with Old Imperialism; it only deals in brutality, shameless accumulation of power, illegal occupation, genocides and designer wars.

In another essay, “Peace is War” Roy has made a critique on the subversive nature of corporate media. In a democratic country – media, the moral watch dog,

acts as an interface between the common man and the government. But neo-liberal capitalism that has unfolded in the shape of corporate globalization has simply subverted the role of media by just making it mouth-piece to serve its own purpose. In her essay, “When the Saints Go Marching Out” Roy has argued that corporate media not only just serves the capitalist interest but also circulates ‘paid news’. Suppressing the truth they often dupe the laymen by concocting parallel discourse of information by erasing the boundaries of real and unreal. The media houses are generally owned by the multi-national companies. For instance, in America the major broadcasting houses are controlled by a handful of prime consortiums. They retain exclusive control over the channel subscribers. What is more menacing is that even the online platforms are constantly being monitored by the media conglomerates. Liberty, personal rights and freedom – all are at stake. In India the ABP Group, one major broadcasting and publishing agency, at present owns several top-ranking ‘publications, three 24-hour national TV news channels, one leading book publishing business as well as mobile and internet properties’ (ABP Home Page).

Contextually, it is significant to note that Noam Chomsky, one of the global voices of American dissent, in the groundbreaking book – *Manufacturing Consent : The Political Economy of the Mass Media* critiques at length the deliberate manipulation of the mass communicative network system in US to serve the corporate interest. Instead of providing impartial narrative of the happenings to the mass, they become -

...effective and powerful ideological institutions that carry out a system – supportive propaganda function, by reliance on market

forces, internalized assumptions, and self-censorship, and without over coercion, by means of the propaganda model of communication.

(Herman and Chomsky 306)

In simple terms the book thus shows how US corporate media serves the elite interest subverting the principles of democracy. And this deliberate manipulation is done in such an agreeable manner that the viewpoint of those entering into the ministerial or governmental elite becomes plausible. They foster common collective endorsement to legitimize the dubious foreign policies of the US government. They also make it difficult for the common public to get the proper information by blocking them. The grand narratives which they generate are often false and they are meant to transport the common people to a world of seeming happiness and prosperity.

Besides the corporate media, Roy in her essays like - “Scandal in the Palace”, “Breaking the News” etc. also critiques how the mainstays of any democratic system – the independent judiciary and the parliament are also under the seize of corporate globalization. The vicious nexus is so powerful that they run the virtual government paralyzing the democratic set up. The nexus becomes evident when one checks the portfolios of the American top bosses. As for instance, erstwhile US Defense Secretary, Frank Carlucci is Carlyle Group’s Chairman and Managing Director and everybody knows that Carlyle Group<sup>9</sup> is one of the largest weapon manufacturers of the world. The other associates of Carlyle Group are ‘former US Secretary of State James A. Baker III, George Soros and Fred Malek (George Bush Sr’s Campaign manager)’ (Roy, *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* 257). It is an open secret that both the American top bosses – the President

George Bush and The Vice-President Dick Cheney had their early career in the US petroleum industry. On the other hand, in India the portfolios of Mr. Chidambaram, the CEO of Operation Green Hunt and Justice Kapadia, who gave forest clearance in India – also reveal astonishing facts. Justice Kapadia himself had ‘shares in Sterlite’ (Roy, *Broken Republic* 21) and everybody knows that Sterlite is owned by Vedanta Limited. As far as Mr. Chidambaram is concerned, before becoming the Finance Minister in the year 2004, he was, by profession, a corporate lawyer. He has defended the corporate interest more than the public interest. Moreover, he was also a member of the board of directors of Vedanta Resources. After being designated as the Finance Minister of the UPA government, one major decision he took regarding foreign capital investment was to allow the Mauritius-based multi-national mining company, Twinstar Holdings ‘to buy shares in Sterlite, a part of the Vedanta group.’ (Roy, *Broken Republic* 20). In an open letter published in *Outlook India* even it was stated that :

Is it wrong for “civil society” to conclude that both as home minister and finance minister you have been protecting corporate profiteers (by first allowing them to loot the mineral wealth belonging to the people and now securing these mines for them) and not protecting the interest of the poor and tribal people who are victims of corporate greed and crony capitalism of the political parties? (Agarwal)

These lateral entries or exits are the brazen examples of serving the interest of the corporate at the cost of public interest while being in the public sector and then get recruited by the corporate or vice versa.

Corporate globalization is, therefore, destroying the fabric of pluralism and tolerance. To fulfill its own purpose it has divided the society by sowing the seeds of inequality, exclusion, fundamentalism and violence. In the name of progress and development it has displaced millions of people since independence. Land, rivers, hills, forests – everything is being privatized and commoditized in the name of blind progress. Instead of all-inclusive growth, corporate globalization has generated a minority class of capitalist that feeds on the squeezing of a working class of majority; and that has become an engine of inequality and economic instabilities.

The tragedy lies in the fact that the welfare government, instead of safeguarding these wretched of the earth, is playing the role of emissaries of the corporate giants. In the name of creating a good investment climate they are legalizing undemocratic and stringent laws. By executing such kind of acts like - Prevention of Terrorist Act (POTA), Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) – government can muffle and subjugate any common collective opposition or any kind of dissenting voice. There is no denying the fact that under the dictate of corporate globalization the basic principles of democracy and secularism, enshrined in the constitution, are threatened.

Besides critiquing the subversive role of corporate media, Roy has also debated at length in her essays like - “The Algebra of Infinite Justice”, “Come September”, “An Ordinary Person’s Guide to Empire”, “Baby Bush, Go Home”, “War Talk”, “War is Peace” - how America’s ‘War on Terror’ instead of wiping out terror has globalized it. It is noteworthy that on 11 September 2001 America was under attack when Al-Qaeda led terrorists demolished the iconic World Trade Centre and a section of Pentagon, the US Department of Defense. The carnage also

massacred more than 3,000 lives.<sup>10</sup> For Roy the ghastly terror-strike was a ‘monstrous calling card’ (Roy, *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* 234) from a world where severe injustice has been inflicted upon – that this attack was the symptom of the disease not the disease itself. But for the arrogant Bush administration the attack becomes a plea, a scope to launch offensive against some hostile states and thereby fructify its own hegemonic ambition. Therefore, in retaliation America soon launched its ‘War on Terror’, targeting Afghanistan, as according to intel report Al-Qaeda Chief, Osama bin Laden was then camouflaging there. The ambit of ‘War on Terror’ was later on extended to Iraq as it was repeatedly alleged that Saddam Hussein was providing safe haven along with logistical assistance to certain radical outfits ‘fighting the government of Turkey and Iran, as well as hard-line Palestinian groups’ (Heinrich). Iraq’s linkage to extremist organizations was further consolidated with the accusation that Saddam was secretly promoting weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The Bush government’s secret service officials became apprehensive of the fact that Saddam might share the WMDs with the radical hardliners and they in turn could launch devastating attacks against the US. So the US government launched the pre-emptive strike on Iraq.

There was no denying the fact that Saddam was a dictator and he had committed heinous crimes by using biological and chemical weapons on opponents<sup>11</sup> but the truth is that – like Al-Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden – he had been raised by the CIA of America during the 1960s for its own hegemonic interest. Since the rise of US imperialism, Iraq was always on the priority list of US foreign policy, both for its oil reserve and for its geo-strategic location. By thwarting the Russian hold over Iraq, the CIA handpicked Saddam during the 1960s to fulfill US’s

hegemonic control over Middle East. Saddam, therefore, got all kinds of US endorsement :

They financed him, equipped him, armed him and provided him with dual-use materials to manufacture Weapons of Mass Destruction. ...They supported the eight-year war against Iran, and the 1988 gassing of Kurdish people in Halabja. (Roy, *An Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire* 142)

But things began to sour during the 1991-Gulf War when Saddam invaded Kuwait by defying the American dictate. He thus became a liability – a dog who wouldn't obey his master anymore. Soon economic sanctions were imposed on Iraq and inspections of Iraqi weapons' facility were also conducted. This status quo, however, was changed in the year 1998 when Iraq put an end to its assistance with the designated officials of the U.N. weapons' inspection team. This gesture of Saddam Hussein, therefore, made it quite essential for the US foreign policy to topple him down from power.<sup>12</sup> Soon the US and its ally UK launched Operation Desert Fox - a bombardment campaign in Iraq to intimidate Saddam Hussein.

However, the terror attack of 9/11 in America changed the entire scenario. Since the rise of US imperialism it was the first time when mighty America was under attack in its own territory. The Bush administration then actively debated the issue of regime change in Iraq. Though Afghanistan was the prime target as Al-Qaeda Chief Osama bin Laden was hiding there, however, when he was not traced out from there, America re-directed its effort in Iraq – a member of the so-called Axis of Evil<sup>13</sup>. The official reason, highlighted behind this pre-emptive attack, was that : 'The United States of America will not permit the world's most dangerous

regimes to threaten us with the world's most destructive weapons' (The President's State of the Union Address).

The unofficial reasons were, however, more important. The pivotal unofficial deliberation was that the elimination of the hostile Saddam Hussein from power would definitely be a display of the advanced military capability of America. Simultaneously it would also demonstrate before the world an undented America and that would 'dispel any appearance of weakness following 9/11' (Karon). Daniel Lieberfeld<sup>14</sup> also pointed out the same logic behind the US aggression that it was to 'maintain unipolarity, maintain hegemony and avoid post-9/11 decline by demonstrating U.S. willingness to use force' (Lieberfeld 2). Even Chomsky stated that :

The Bush administration perceives the new phase of the "war on terror" (which in many ways replicates the war on terror declared by the Regan administration twenty years earlier) as an opportunity to expand its already overwhelming military advantages over the rest of the world, and to move on to other methods to ensure global dominance. (Chomsky, *The Essential Chomsky* 345)

Thus to the US government Iraq presented a much better arena than Afghanistan to showcase its military supremacy.

Another significant motive that propelled the launching of the offensive in Iraq is to gain strategic control of the tilting balance of OPEC towards the 'euro as an oil transaction currency standard' (Clark 1). It is to be noted that Iraq is the second largest oil-producing country. Therefore, it was immensely necessary for the US government to gain exclusive strategic control over Iraq. This unspoken reason

got authenticated when Noam Chomsky dug at the deals that were crystallizing between Iraq's Oil Ministry and Western petroleum companies. He raised critical questions :

...about the nature of the US invasion and occupation of Iraq-- questions that should certainly be addressed by presidential candidates and seriously discussed in the United States, and of course in occupied Iraq, where it appears that the population has little if any role in determining the future of their country. (Chomsky, *It's the Oil Stupid*)

Roy is thus quite right in blunting the false claims of President George W. Bush which he made while launching Operation Iraqi Freedom that it was meant to liberate the Iraqi people from Saddam Hussein. That Bush was misguiding the world became evident when secret military report disclosed the fact that in spite of vigorous inspections of the Iraqi weapons facility by the designated U.N. officials – no credible evidence was found against Saddam Hussein. The bitter truth is that in spite of President Bush's accusation, the secret surveillance agencies of the US were unable to trace 'any link between Saddam Hussein and Al-Qaeda' (Clarke 2). That Bush administration's allegations were purposely fabricated was once again proved when the July 2015 Downing Street Memo was released by the UK government. In the Memo, Richard Dearlove (then head of British Foreign Intelligence Service M16) wrote that : '...the intelligence and facts were being fixed [by the U.S.] around the policy of removing Saddam Hussein from power'.<sup>15</sup>

Roy's constant concern against the global dictator Bush and his foreign policies thus came true. Indeed while launching the War on Terror, Bush had, in

reality, globalized terror. America's oil-greed had not only destabilized Iraq but it had led the entire region to chaos and anarchy also. It is true that Osama bin Laden has been killed<sup>16</sup> but the inevitable truth is - several other Ladens have been resurrected. Mother of all bombs<sup>17</sup> has been dropped but it has only globalized terror. Now along with America its allies are also fast becoming the targets of terror attack. Madrid, Brussels, Paris, Nice, Berlin, Manchester – everywhere there is bloodshed. The situation is even grimmer in the third world countries. Civil war is going on in many countries like Libya, Somalia, Yemen, Syria etc. Indian peninsula also is no immune to it. Indian Parliament has been attacked; the ghastly terror-attack in the economic capital of India, Mumbai has shown the fragile nature of our safety. The world has also witnessed the horror and cruelty of the extremist group, Islamic State of Syria and Iraq (ISIS).

Roy, however, has not restricted her by merely critiquing the devastating consequences of American imperialism; she has also narrativized ways to confront empire. In her essays like - “Public Power in the Age of Empire”, “Animal Farm II”, “Confronting Empire” etc. she has debated it at length. She has argued that the first step is to expose the insidious means and methods by which the empire appropriates the subalterns. The laymen, the hapless peasants, the Adivasis, the tribals, the farmers – who are always on the receiving end, who are gullible and can easily be duped by the grand narratives of growth and development should be made aware about the exploitative nature of corporate globalization. They have to be made united to regenerate the culture of protest so that the government will be compelled to desist from taking any arbitrary decision meant to satisfy the corporate greed at the cost of greater interests of common people. And here the writers, the authors, the

film-makers, the intellectuals, the print and social media – have a tremendous role to play because the strategy is :

....not only to confront Empire, but to lay siege to it. To deprive it of oxygen. To shame it. To mock it. With our art, our music, our literature, our stubbornness, our joy, our brilliance, our sheer relentlessness – and our ability to tell our own stories. Stories that are different from the ones we're being brainwashed to believe. (Roy, *An Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire* 86)

At present all over the globe corporate globalization is hotly debated and contested. Newer alternatives are being highlighted. Instead of earth-degrading, human degrading development there is gradual shift towards eco-friendly, human-friendly sustainable development. Even the subsidiary heads of Empire i.e. religious bigotry, fascism, terrorism are resisted by a large number of people throughout the globe. The classic example of refusing to fall in line with terrorism is Charlie Hebdo. On 7 January 2015 the publishing director along with 11 other members of this French satirical weekly newspaper were killed by the suspected Al-Qaeda terrorists,<sup>18</sup> yet they refused to fall back and continued its publication.