

## **Environmental Humanity and Discriminatory Practices: Examining Arundhati Roy's Non-Fictional Works**

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### **Abstract**

This paper explores the environmental humanity and discriminatory practices against nature in the non-fictional works of Arundhati Roy. Renowned for her incisive critique of socio-political injustices, Roy's writings delve into the intertwined issues of environmental degradation and human rights violations. Through her works such as *The Algebra of Infinite Justice*, *The Greater Common Good*, *Walking with the Comrades* and *Broken Republic*, Roy exposes the detrimental impacts of modern development paradigms, advocates for the rights and knowledge systems of indigenous communities, and condemns the exploitative nexus between state and corporate interests. This study situates Roy's critique within broader theoretical frameworks like ecofeminism and postcolonial environmentalism, highlighting her contribution to the discourse on sustainable and equitable development. By analyzing Roy's profound insights, this paper underscores the necessity of integrating ecological sustainability with social justice, advocating for development models that respect both the environment and marginalized human communities.

**Keywords:** Environmental humanity, social justice, modern development, postcolonial environmentalism, sustainable development, environmental degradation

Arundhati Roy, an acclaimed Indian author and activist, has significantly contributed to contemporary discourse on environmental and social justice. While she is widely recognized for her fictional work, particularly *The God of Small Things*, her non-fictional works provide profound insights into the intersections of environmental degradation, human rights, and socio-political injustices. Roy addresses environmental humanity and discriminatory practices against nature, focusing on her incisive critique of modern development, her advocacy for indigenous communities, and her condemnation of state and corporate exploitation of natural resources.

Arundhati Roy's non-fictional works, including *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* (2002) and *Field Notes on Democracy* (2009), highlight the intrinsic link between environmental sustainability and social justice. Roy argues that environmental destruction and human rights violations are two sides of the same coin, driven by the same forces of capitalist greed and state complicity. In *The Algebra of Infinite Justice*, she critiques the global economic system that prioritizes profit over people and nature, illustrating how marginalized communities bear the brunt of environmental degradation. This perspective aligns with the principles of environmental humanity, which advocates for the recognition of the inherent value of all living beings and the interdependence of human and ecological well-being.

A recurring theme in Roy's non-fiction is her critique of modern development paradigms, particularly large-scale infrastructure projects that devastate the environment and displace vulnerable populations. In her essay *The Greater Common Good* (1999), Roy examines the social and environmental impacts of the Narmada Valley Development Project, which involves the construction of a series of dams on the Narmada River. She underscores the irony in the term "development," pointing out that such projects often lead to ecological destruction and human suffering rather than progress. Roy's critique extends to the broader discourse on sustainable development, challenging the notion that economic growth can be decoupled from environmental degradation. Her work calls for a re-evaluation of development priorities, emphasizing the need for models that are ecologically sustainable and socially just.

In *Walking with the Comrades*, Arundhati Roy highlights the severe environmental degradation caused by rampant deforestation and extensive mining in India's tribal regions. These activities not only destroy vast tracts of forest and disrupt ecosystems but also pollute vital water sources, leading to dire health and environmental consequences. Roy details how resource extraction devastates the land, impacting biodiversity and displacing indigenous communities who rely on these forests for their livelihoods and cultural practices. She also emphasizes the resilience and resistance of these communities, who fight against the exploitation and destruction of their environment in a struggle for survival and justice. Through her vivid narrative, Roy connects these environmental issues with broader social and political struggles, illustrating the deep interdependence between ecological preservation and the rights and well-being of marginalized populations.

Roy's advocacy for indigenous communities is a central aspect of her environmental activism. In *Broken Republic* (2011), a collection of essays on the Maoist insurgency in India, she delves into the struggles of Adivasis (indigenous people) against state and corporate encroachment on their lands. Roy highlights how these communities, whose lives are deeply intertwined with their natural surroundings, face displacement and cultural erosion due to mining, deforestation, and other forms of ecological exploitation. Her work amplifies the voices of these marginalized groups, drawing attention to their resistance and resilience. By documenting their struggles, Roy underscores the importance of recognizing indigenous knowledge systems and their role in sustainable environmental stewardship.

Roy's non-fiction also addresses the complicity of the state and corporate entities in environmental exploitation. In her essay *Capitalism: A Ghost Story* (2014), she critiques the neoliberal economic policies that facilitate the plundering of natural resources for profit. Roy exposes the nexus between the state and corporations, where policies are often designed to benefit a few at the expense of many. She argues that this exploitation is not only environmentally destructive but also socially unjust, perpetuating inequality and disenfranchising vulnerable populations. Roy's condemnation of this systemic exploitation highlights the need for political and economic reforms that prioritize environmental sustainability and social equity.

Roy's critique of environmental and social injustices can be situated within broader theoretical frameworks such as ecofeminism and postcolonial environmentalism. Ecofeminism, which explores the connections between the oppression of women and the exploitation of nature, resonates with Roy's emphasis on the intersectionality of environmental and social issues. In *Field Notes on Democracy*, Roy discusses how patriarchal and capitalist structures contribute to environmental degradation and social inequity, advocating for a more inclusive and equitable approach to environmental justice.

Postcolonial environmentalism, which examines the impacts of colonial and postcolonial power dynamics on the environment, also informs Roy's work. Her critiques of state and corporate exploitation reflect a postcolonial perspective that challenges the legacies of colonialism and imperialism in contemporary environmental practices. By highlighting the historical and ongoing injustices faced by indigenous and marginalized communities, Roy contributes to a nuanced understanding of environmental humanity that incorporates issues of power, identity, and justice.

## **Conclusion**

Arundhati Roy's non-fictional works offer a compelling critique of the discriminatory practices against nature and the intertwined injustices faced by marginalized human communities. Through her incisive analysis of modern development, advocacy for indigenous rights, and condemnation of state and corporate exploitation, Roy provides a powerful voice for environmental humanity. Her work challenges us to rethink our relationship with nature and to pursue models of development that are both ecologically sustainable and socially just. In doing so, Roy's writings not only illuminate the deep connections between environmental and social justice but also inspire action towards a more equitable and sustainable future.

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