



The Checkbook and the Cruise Missile: Conversations with Arundhati Roy

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A skillful interviewer can reveal aspects of a writer's voice in simple yet telling ways. As a novelist, Arundhati Roy is known for her lush language and intricate structure. As a political essayist, her prose is searching and fierce. All of these qualities shine through in the interviews collected by David Barsamian for *Globalizing Dissent: Conversations with Arundhati Roy*. New and devoted readers will find that these exchanges, recorded between 2001 and 2003, add to their appreciation of Roy's previous work.

Whether discussing her childhood or the problems of translation in a multilingual society, Roy and Barsamian, the producer and host of Alternative Radio, engage in a lively and accessible manner. Speaking candidly and casually, Roy describes her participation in a demonstration against the Indian dam program as, "absolutely fantastic." She jokes that her Supreme Court charge for "corrupting public morality"—in the case of her novel *The God of Small Things*—should have been changed to "further corrupting public morality." She calls on her training as an architect to explain what she means by the "physics of power." Like a house of cards, she argues that "unfettered power . . . cannot go berserk like this and expect to hold it all together."

Roy has been acclaimed for her courage (Salman Rushdie) and her eloquence (*Kirkus Reviews*), and her writing has been described as "a banquet for the senses" (*Newsweek*). She has found a readership among fiction enthusiasts and political activists. *Globalizing Dissent* captures Roy speaking one-on-one to her audience, revealing her intense and wide-ranging intellect, her very personal voice, and her opinion on momentous political events.

Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things* was awarded the Booker Prize in 1997. She is the recipient of the 2002 Lannan Foundation Prize for Cultural Freedom.

The Checkbook and the Cruise Missile: Conversations with Arundhati Roy Details

Date : Published March 1st 2004 by South End Press (first published February 1st 2003)

ISBN : 9780896087101

Author : Arundhati Roy , David Barsamian

Format : Paperback 120 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Politics, Cultural, India, Writing, Essays



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Bruce Cline says

The Checkbook and the Cruise Missile, conversations with Arundhati Roy, interviews by David Barsamian (pp 157). Roy is an Indian social commentator, journalist, and author. This book is a series of interviews of her thoughts about India, America, and the world. Rather than make what would be a pathetic attempt to summarize these wide-ranging conversations, I will quote several illustrative passages:

... all over the world, freedoms are being snatched away at a frightening pace. I think it's not just important but urgent for us to become extremely troublesome citizens...

... we have to rescue democracy by being troublesome, by asking questions, by making a noise.

Every person who gets ahead gets ahead by stepping on his brother, or sister, or mother, or friend.

Minku says

This is an interview-style book, with David Barsamian (who interviews everybody), and A-Roy tells it like it is about India, America, and the rest of the fucked-up world we live in.

Kerre says

Arundhati Roy is a really amazing writer and organizer. She is among a few outspoken writers that i feel presents both a well researched, thoughtful and not entirely hopeless view of our history and our current world. This interview doesn't really do that though, not sure if she just doesn't or is never given the chance, but she just skims the surface of most political issues. Not the best collection of her work.

Alan says

One of my favorite quotes:

“But still, how are you going to persuade a Naga sadhu—whose life mission has been to stand naked on one leg for twenty years or to tow a car with his penis—that he can’t live without Coca-Cola?” --page 17

Aliya says

To say that Arundhati Roy is brilliant, is an understatement. She marries intellect with pithy eloquence, saying so much in a few words.

It looks like Ms Roy has an opinion on everything: dams in India; corporate takeover of state responsibilities in India; sectarian politics in India; Bush and his wars in Asia; and the politics of division in India, be they of religion or caste or language. However, there is only one subject Ms. Roy pursues in the various issues she discusses, namely the politics of power.

I always enjoy her writings, even though they aren't exactly educational for me. However, it is extremely heartening to know that there is a voice such as hers in India, that unabashedly speaks the truth, without any agenda. Since it is the truth she speaks, often, her words remind me of a Qur'anic verse or hadith, and I smile as I nod my head, appreciating how spot on she is!

N.T. says

Read flying from the Midwest to the edge of the continent. It expands the mind of the Western (particularly American) reader with a through the looking glass perspective by an honest, open, and non apologetic writer and activist.

Nicholas Morley says

An excellent overview of Roy's sociopolitical worldview. The interviews wrap you in the warmth of a revolutionary woman in the midst of an India taking a turn for the fascist.

Hanisha Vaswani says

A book that will make you question all you see, hear, and think: your beliefs, the pre-digested rot you are fed by most media, ideas you've inculcated from your environment, your teachers, everything!

Doubly deadly if you're Indian.

Tina Shull says

I think one of the most important points in this book that I came away with was Roy's assertion that the 'farther away' decision making takes place in a community or a country (i.e. on a higher bureaucratic level), the more dehumanized the process becomes - leading to the neglect of the people the decisions directly affect. This was in regard to the movement to build dams in India, but it really hit home for me and can apply universally...
