**INSPIRATIONBASE**

*A collection of ethical leadership speeches*

Arundhati

Roy

Arundhati Roy, an Indian author, political activist, and actress, is best known for her 1997 award-winning debut novel The God of Small Things. Since then, she has written mainly politically oriented non-fiction, focusing on India’s problems in a world of global capitalism. She is also well known for her engagement in both environmental and human rights issues, criticizing Indian legal authorities and India’s middle class. She has also faced legal prosecution by trying to prevent the construction of the Narmada dam project, which is portrayed in the 2002 documentary DAM/AGE; by supporting Kashmiri independence; and by defending a professor arrested for alleged Maoist links in one of her articles. In 2019, she cosigned an open letter that Afghan women ought to be involved in peace talks between the U.S. and the Taliban. Her outspoken advocacy for human rights was recognized with the 2002 *Lannan Cultural Freedom Award*, the 2004 *Sydney Peace Prize*, and the 2006 *Sahitya Akademi Award* from the *Indian Academy of Letters*.

(<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Arundhati-Roy>)

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| **AR 1*.*** *Arundhati Roy Interview: The Role of the Writer* | | | |  |
| I never accept that added profession of being an activist because I think that reduces what writers used to be. All writers, not all writers, but many writers write about the world they live in without needing to be called “activists.” That’s a very new word, and that word has been added on because the idea of what a writer is in the world today has been reduced into a commodity. You know, you are supposed to be an entertainer who lives between literature festivals and bestseller lists, or something. So for me, I am a writer. I write sometimes fiction , sometimes non-fiction, I write about the world I live in, sometimes in an exterior way, sometimes in an interior way, sometimes in all kinds of ways, which is what happens in one’s fiction, you know. So I would just say that the world is very busy classifying and codifying and putting people into silos […] especially today when majoritarianism is on the rise. It’s our job to be unpopular, you know; it’s our job to stand alone and say what we really think. Not as activists, but as writers. It’s not different from anybody else, you know. I mean, I think right now we are faced with the biggest challenge to our understanding that any human beings have ever had to face. I’m talking about things like artificial intelligence, which today we are told can write masterpieces and translate masterpieces. They can do surgery. It can do everything, so human beings are going to be unsure of what it really means to be a human being or a synthetic human being. Is it more real than a human? Human beings are going to become redundant; they are going to become surplus; they are going to be people who are not part of the production process and therefore a very precarious species. And all successful species on the planet have known to self-destruct, and maybe we are on the verge of that if we don’t watch out. | | | | |
| **Date** | 7/6/2018  Accessed on 3 May 2021 | **Source** | Louisiana Channel on YouTube  (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y2h5AlqYwVU>), min. 0:04 - 2:23; close captioning available | |

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| **AR 2*.*** *Arundhati Roy: Capitalism Is “A Form of Religion” Stopping Solutions to Climate Change & Inequality* | | | |  |
| […] [T]he thing is for me, it’s truly for so many years, people, let’s say in India, have been fighting this very idea of progress, of infinite growth, of this form of development, which has resulted now in what we call “jobless growth,” what everybody knows to be the case. You have nine individuals who own the same amount of wealth as the bottom five hundred million. This is what infinite growth has led to. Infinite growth for some people, you know. So I remember years ago I wrote an essay which ended by saying, “Can we leave the bauxite in the mountain?” Because I think that’s ultimately the question: can you look at the mountain and not just calculate its mineral worth? Can you understand that a mountain has much more than just the value of the minerals in it? And there is a civilizational issue, right, that for people who have lived there have known that mountain. They know that it sustains. […] It’s not just a question of who’s getting this place but how does, for example, that bauxite mountain, which stores water and waters the plants all around it, which grows the food, which sustains a whole population. But it’s meant for a corporation that’s given the mining contract. It’s just, how much does that bauxite cost, can we store it and trade it on the future’s market, you know? So this idea that you will never question your idea of progress. You will never question the comfort of the Global North, and by the Global North and the Elite South and the Downtrodden North, you know. So it’s like what I said, you know, the elite of the world have all succeeded into outer space. And they have a country up there, and they look and say, “What’s our water doing in their rivers, and what’s our timber doing in their forests?” So there is a psychotic refusal to understand that the survival of the species is connected to the survival of the planet, you know, because this sort of progress is a kind of church now. It’s not amenable to reason. So it’s very difficult to know how any conversation, any real conversation can happen, which is why I said yesterday that the only real conversation that’s happening is a conversation in which the language around climate change is being militarized because […] underneath every conflict which appears to be a conflict between a tribe and a tribe, or a country and a country, is increasingly climate change, is increasingly the shrinking of resources, and people collecting together to claim them, and therefore the growth of this kind of nationalistic or identity or tribal politics.  […] The connection is just capitalism, isn’t it? […] I’ll give you a very good example. Like a month or two ago the Supreme Court of India, based on a case that a wildlife NGO had filed, said that two million Indigenous people should be evicted from their forest homes with immediate effect. Why? Because that forest needs to be preserved as a sanctuary. But when for the last twenty-five years people were fighting against projects which were decimating millions of hectares and acres of forest, nobody cared. And it was the same people that were being displaced. Then it was for progress, now it is for conservation. But it’s always the same people who have to pay the price, you know. And when you’re talking about evicting two million of the poorest people, stripping them of everything they ever had, there’s little outrage. When the Congress Party announced it’s gonna have a scheme in which twenty percent of the poorest will get a living wage, everyone just exploded. Like, “How can you think of doing this?” Because it strikes at the core of unregulated capitalism, you know. Any sense of talk of equality or justice seems to just have the same effect that blasphemy has in religious societies, you know. That is what capitalism has become. A form of religion that will brook no questioning. | | | | |
| **Date** | 13/5/2019  Accessed on 3 May 2021 | **Source** | Democracy Now! on YouTube  (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UyCkFoSIwWg>), min. 1:22 - 4:50, 5:18 - 7:06; close captioning available | |

Collected by Daniela Ribitsch