



## Power Politics

*Arundhati Roy*

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Arundhati Roy—"India's most impassioned critic of globalization" (*New York Times*)—has expanded the compelling first edition of *Power Politics* with two new essays on the U.S. war on terrorism. A Book Sense 76 choice for November/December 2001 and *Los Angeles Times* "Discoveries" selection, *Power Politics* challenges the idea that only experts can speak out on such urgent matters as nuclear war, the privatization of India's power supply by U.S.-based energy companies, and the construction of monumental dams in India.

**Arundhati Roy**, the internationally acclaimed author of *The God of Small Things*, brings her keen novelist's eye to her analysis of the tragic events of September 11 and the military response, starting with the U.S. bombing of Afghanistan.

## Power Politics Details

Date : Published April 1st 2002 by South End Press (first published September 1st 2000)

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Author : Arundhati Roy

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## From Reader Review Power Politics for online ebook

### **Malaika says**

This book was recommended to me by Suman. It's a collection of essays by the author of The God of Small Things, sharing her views about globalization and security all over the world, but particularly in India.

It's non-fiction and there is an excellent essay in it called The Algebra of Infinite Justice about the 9/11 attacks, global poverty and the convoluted biased media and all the spin surrounding politics.

The rest of the book was okay, although I was a little bit annoyed by the tone.... My reservation about this book is that it doesn't offer solutions, just articulates the problems (well) and I think it isn't broad enough intellectually. I thought that she didn't acknowledge other perspectives in the power/development debates that it addresses, just so that I knew she knew them at least.

Arundhati Roy is a great writer and inspires me to get going on writing myself.

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### **Samantha says**

Complex and heavy subject matter still relevant today. Gave me new insight on things I had never considered. Powerful book, wonderfully written.

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### **Jeff says**

I am definitely late to the debate about most of the stuff Roy is talking about in this book--10 years late, basically. But it's still amazing to read her stuff. She has a way of being angry without letting bitterness overwhelm, and her sarcasm offers up just a little bit of humor-as-relief while discussing the horrendous power dynamics at play in the world.

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Now that I've finished this, I'm going to gobble up anything else she's written, and hope to find some stuff that's more current. She's amazing.

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### **Ruth says**

It's a few political essays about the negative effects of globalization, mostly from the perspective of India, since Roy is from there. I was most interested in the first chapter (about the impact of dams), and the last one (about the warmongering of the U.S.), although all the essays had something new in them.

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## **Chris says**

I don't think Arundhati Roy would like what Goodreads is doing.

I read this with some trepidation, after hearing some friends talk about Roy's political views. I actually found the essays about the dams in India to be the most interesting, mostly because of the relation to China. I also enjoyed the comments on writing. I do wish, however, some of the ideas had been a little clearer. She's against globalization which is fine, but then suggests that the UN Commission on Dams should have a say - isn't that globalization too? (Also, I refuse to believe that misogyny was a western import to India. Though I found the comments about education to be otherwise sadly true). The 9/11 essays were written shortly after 9/11 and, for the most part, are true in reporting facts. Didn't like the hint at the conspiracy theory though and there was that pesky generalization thing again (and the UN thing). Still thought provoking.

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## **Punit Soni says**

Arundhati Roy is pissed and rightly so. Power Politics, her book of essays deals with topics ranging from 9-11 to mega-hydroelectric projects in India providing a voice to something we all feel at one time or the other; that something is not right amidst all these economic success stories. Somewhere the stink is rising and as we sniff around trying to ascertain the cause, Arundhati points to the rotting carcasses of those left behind. We look around and hope that something could be done. Arundhati is doing it.

Over the years, since the popular success of her "God of Small Things", the Booker prize winner has steadily become more and more involved in Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA), using her clout and credibility to drum up support for the tribals whose lives are being submerged in the rising waters of Narmada. This book deals with that issue and much more.

Arundhati is her usual pithy self, terse, to-the-point and caustic. She minces no words and makes no excuses. She does not soften the blow nor does she hide her lack of neutrality on the subject. It is refreshing to see a writer taking sides and not curling up underneath the soft underside of impartiality.

If there is an issue with this book, it is its short length. A collection of three essays is not my idea of a satisfying read nor are the matters helped by the fact that it is priced almost as much as a regular book. It has a lot of potential but still comes off as being half a book, some sort of an introduction to ideas which have not yet been put down.

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## **Chris says**

Having experienced the 1999 World Trade Organization riots in Seattle first hand: some of my floor-mates were on national TV for knocking down the NIKE sign while wearing Nike's, in watching the news one night after being downtown I found that I had been less than a block away from the mass arrest of over 200 people, my campus was surrounded by a police blockade at midnight one night due to the false report of a violent mob) this book speaks greatly to me about the reasoning behind the sometimes violent protesting.

The essays in this book describe the plight of the lower castes in having to deal with BIG ELECTRICITY flooding their homes and farmlands, and other government measures taken in the name of globalization and modernization, and how civil rights can be both touted and ignored by a government who would consider jailing a writer for telling the truth and joining in non-violent protest and solidarity with those that 'have no voice'. This book is a must read!!!!!!!!!

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### **Marilyn McEntyre says**

Another superb, thoughtful set of essays on what Peter Dale Scott calls "deep politics." A reminder not to be naive about how decisions often get made behind the scenes by people who control more money and power than we like to think, and about the strenuous challenge of keeping those in power accountable. Indian politics become her lens for reflecting on global politics in ways relevant to us all. She's eloquent, intelligent, and courageous. She and Vandana Shiva are two Indians to know about, even if you don't know anything else about India and Indian politics.

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### **Allison Frederick says**

India has undergone many dam projects as have many other developing countries. Foreign investment, flood control, irrigation canals, and energy production are the cited reasons for dam construction but critics claim that the devastation to the human population living in the flood zones and the ecological damage, as well as statistics stating historical dam projects provide significantly less energy output as expected, encourage extreme resistance to dam construction.

In India, massive protests in the form of hunger strikes, and donations of book royalties from famous Indian writer Arundhati Roy\* keep this debate in the news.

Book Review: "Power Politics", 2001, author Arundhati Roy, Indian female writer (also author of famous novel "The God of Small Things")

This book is a series of essays exploring water dam building and energy production in India, political response to September 11, 2001 in expectation of a U.S. war with Afghanistan, and free speech.

One essay from the book is called "The Reincarnation of Rumpelstiltskin." Roy provides statistics and arguments against the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Indian citizens who lived and farmed on lands where the Indian government wanted to flood in the construction of dams. Resistance against dams, the overall ecological damage being the primary grounds of argument, is a common one in the United States; however, in most cases, a dam displaces few people.

Roy opens our eyes to the plight of thousands and thousands of people living in India, most of them already poor and with little political influence who are forced to leave their homes and try to find a new way to support themselves. I am not in a position to assure you of the accuracy of her statistics and statistics can always be manipulated, but her image of the conditions of the displaced is well worth being aware of.

### **Arundhati Roy**

I sought out her work because an essay I was reading said that Roy believes that individuals should take responsibility for themselves and stop claiming to be a victim. Few people feel this way today as many of us

are tempted to blame the government, parents, spouses, or society for our own shortcomings. "Power Politics" is her only book I've read so far. Further research into her work leaves me impressed at her forthrightness, clarity of purpose, and commitment to others. She has been widely criticized for her actions and has also been taken to court. In response to criticism, she said:

"I am hysterical. I'm screaming from the bloody rooftops. And he and his smug little club are going 'Shhhh... you'll wake the neighbours!' I want to wake the neighbours, that's my whole point. I want everybody to open their eyes". \*\*\*\*\*

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### **LindaJ^ says**

There are five thought-provoking essays in the second edition of this small book by Man Booker winner Arundhati Roy.

The first two concern the mega dams built, being built, or scheduled to be built in India. Roy provides some devastating facts concerning the impact on rural India and its population of minorities, in which Western corporations are complicit. I was not aware of the mega dams, let alone their impact on tens of thousands of Indians. They are eye-opening. These two essays take of 2/3's of the book.

The other three essays are related to 9/11 and the "war on terror." The US government does not come off well in these. Unfortunately, I think she is right in much of what she says.

The book was published in 2001 but it does not feel out-of-date, especially given the continued presence of US soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan.

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### **Genine Franklin-Clark says**

Wow. These essays should be must reading for all Americans. They will, or should, pull you out of any narrow America-is-the-Center-of-the-Universe mindset you may have.

I've had, and will continue to have, disagreements with friends who believe that an American life is worth more than the life of anyone else. Where does that come from? How blind do you have to be not to see that America, too, has clay feet? That we aren't perfect? That we've done terrible things, and are continuing to do terrible things?

I'm glad I'm an American. Doesn't being an American, such a fortunate person, require the effort to make this country better, not to beat our breasts and scream "We're the best"!?

Or have we really become that place where Might makes Right? Please, no.

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### **Miranda says**

Interesting commentary and important issues brought to light, particularly about the construction and brokering of extremely damaging hydroelectric dams in India. Not necessarily ground breaking, but certainly relevant to this day despite the relative age of the publication.

I take issue with Roy's irregular capitalization and some of the more outlandish comparisons that are not necessarily appropriate and lean towards fallacies. However I recognize their place in a world where shock value is harder and harder to come by.

Quick read if you have a little bit of time and gets you thinking, so it's worth reading.

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### **Komal says**

This book REALLY hit home for me. My family is from the Narmada Area in India originally and I can see the direct results of the Dam project...the areas look awful. My mother took me to India for the first time when I was two and pictures of them then along the banks of the Narmada in our village and now look like two different regions. I even moved to India out of curiosity for over a year and lived along the Narmada (different village than the one my family is from) until 2006 and today the region is completely unrecognizable. The wild life in the area has died, the people are suffering, the water flow has changed the entire region...the fact that the locals litter like crazy and throw their garbage into the now semi-stagnant waters really only make things worse.

I loved this book and I wish there were more people fighting for the locals and MORE people educating them...you can't throw plastic bags in moving water ever - it just makes things worse.

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### **danah says**

"There is an intricate web of morality, rigor, and responsibility that art, that writing itself, imposes on a writer. It's singular, but nevertheless it's there. At its best, it's an exquisite bond between the artist and the medium. At its acceptable end, it's a sort of sensible co-operation. At its worst, it's a relationship of disrespect and exploitation."

"Isn't it true, or at least theoretically possible that there are times in the life of a people or a nation when the political climate demands that we - even the most sophisticated of us - overtly take sides? I believe that such times are upon us. And I believe that in the coming years intellectuals and artists in India will be called upon to take sides.

And this time, unlike the struggle for Independence, we won't have the luxury of fighting a colonizing "enemy." We'll be fighting ourselves."

"Is globalization about "eradication of world poverty", or is it a mutant colonialism, remote controlled and digitally operated?"

"...you'll find that a lot of dubious politics lurks inside the stables of 'expertise'."

"I'd say the only thing worth globalizing is dissent. It's India's best export."

"The American people may be a little fuzzy on where exactly Afghanistan is, but the U.S. government and Afghanistan are old friends."

"can you destroy destruction?"

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### **Bob says**

This is a political essay on Indian hydroelectric development, where I cannot begin to take a position and can only enjoy Roy's writing and analysis and assume it has a strong factual basis.

My edition of the 60-page essay fills out the volume with an interview with her on the subject of Ramachandra Guha, an "environmental historian", who devoted many successive Sunday opinion columns to attacking her credibility. She eviscerates him so thoroughly that one can't help but chuckle at her polemicism while wondering if this is how the Indian press works - I feel I would surely have made a lifetime enemy of someone I wrote about so disparagingly, but perhaps she's fine with that.

My only complaint with the essay proper is a needless attempt to use Rumpelstiltskin as some kind of metaphor which (several months later), I can't even recall how it was implemented.

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