

THE AMORAL MORALIST

• By Dr. M.N. Buch

Arundhati Roy, who had her share of fame through her book, “God of Small Things” has since then decided to opt for notoriety. Obviously fame is fleeting but notoriety is long lasting if one assiduously cultivates it. However, in order to do so one has to be prepared to put one’s conscience on hold, abandon morality and embrace amorality with vim and vigour. Arundhati’s latest ploy for being in the news is a public statement that she prefers Maoist violence to Gandhian nonviolence, she intends to throw in her lot with the Maoists and, if necessary, go to jail for this. She has thus made a public statement in favour of violence which is aimed at the innocent.

What makes Arundhati what she tries to project herself to be? Obviously somewhere deep down in her psyche is a streak of sadism which delights in inflicting pain and, perhaps, even a hint of masochism which welcomes pain inflicted on oneself also. I have known her since she was a student in the Delhi School of Planning and Architecture and I was the head of the Delhi Development Authority. She then befriended Gerard D’Cunha whom I knew because his father, a high-ranking State Bank of India officer, was our tenant at Bhopal. Gerard became famous for designing Nritya Gram for Pooja Bedi at Bangalore, a well-known centre for the promotion of Indian classical dance. Whether Arundhati and Gerard were married or not I do not know, but after she became bored with Gerard she abandoned him.

I came to know Arundhati better because when I was Director, National Institute of Urban Affairs, (NIUA), my editor, Sonu Krishna, brought Arundhati to me for a job. She served with NIUA for about a year and a half. She used this opportunity to become close to Sonu’s husband, Pradeep Krishna and I learnt to my horror that after I had left the institute that Arundhati broke up Sonu’s marriage, moved in with Pradeep and denied Sonu access to her own two lovely daughters. Sonu was heartbroken and driven to alcohol. I had gone to Delhi on tour and Sonu came to meet me. I was shocked to see the state in which she was. I gave her dinner and when I offered to drop her home she said that she did not want to be alone but wanted to be with me. Naturally I could not keep her with me in the India International Centre and virtually forced her to go home. On return to Bhopal on the next day news awaited me that Sonu was dead. I told my wife about the incident and she said that I should have kept Sonu regardless of the eyebrows that would be raised so that at least her last night on earth would not be spent in lonely terror. I am narrating this incident because I hold Arundhati and her utterly selfish concern for no one but herself as largely contributing to the decline and death of Sonu. Incidentally, I believe that Arundhati has now broken up with Pradeep Krishna also.

This is not a puritan’s critique of the personal life of the four people mentioned above. I do not care what people do together if they do not hurt anyone. Obviously, under the guise of being a champion of the downtrodden Arundhati takes a devilish delight in hurting anyone who comes in contact with her. She is not the only activist in India. There is much of what Medha Patkar says with which I disagree, but I respect and admire her immensely for the unselfish sacrifices she has made in order to awaken our collective conscience to the fact that many development projects displace people and that it is our national responsibility to look after them and assure them benefits from the project as we do for those who live in the command of a project. She does this not in order to gain publicity but because she has a very strong streak of Gandhian morality in her. I would say the same for Aruna Roy who left the comfort of IAS to take up the cause of the voiceless. I have had many differences with her, but I respect

her innate integrity and decency. Dr. Verghese Kurien is a person with whom I have had monumental fights, but I revere him because he proved that in a country where we only find excuses for not doing something he actually did things and made India the greatest producer of milk in the world.

If it is a dam to be opposed Arundhati Roy will come there, provided there is media coverage and there are her foreign friends with her. If Naxalism will keep her in the news she embraces that creed. I am absolutely certain that if neo-Nazism were to become the flavour of the day Arundhati would be in the forefront of the movement.

Incidentally, this great champion of the downtrodden has herself, together with Pradeep Krishna, encroached on forest land in Pachmarhi and built a house there. If trees are cut in the process or the sentiments of those who believe in abiding by the law are hurt, that is grist to her mill. What is important is instant gratification of Arundhati's ego and the Devil take the hindmost!!
