

The Pandemic is a Portal

Reflection based on Article by Arundhati Roy

Arundhati Roy is an internationally recognized author and political activist whose words express with power, authority and compassion her heartfelt commitment to human rights and the plight of the environment. Recently she published in the *Financial Times* a visionary article entitled 'The Pandemic is a Portal'. Be prepared to be held in the sudden, firm grip of intense and compelling, often disturbing narratives and imagery. Narratives which break open injustice, inequality, corporate malfeasance and environmental degradation.

Arundhati declares that the critical moment has come, the moment when we can walk through a portal, a gateway towards life anew, towards a more radical simplicity. For 'nothing could be worse than a return to normality,' she proclaims, though not without a fight!

In her article, this concluding paragraph in particular, Arundhati raises many points that are also evident in many conversation circles globally, including Edmund Rice communities and networks. Some of these may resonate with your thinking at this time.



What is this thing that has happened to us? It's a virus, yes. In and of itself it holds no moral brief. But it is definitely more than a virus. Some believe it's God's way of bringing us to our senses. Others that it's a Chinese conspiracy to take over the world. Whatever it is, coronavirus has made the mighty kneel and brought the world to a halt like nothing else could. Our minds are still racing back and forth, longing for a return to "normality", trying to stitch our future to our past and refusing to acknowledge the rupture. But the rupture exists. And in the midst of this terrible despair, it offers us a chance to rethink the doomsday machine we have built for ourselves. Nothing could be worse than a return to normality. Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next. We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it.

Listen to Arundhati reading the above passage. Her exquisite gentle delivery contrasts with the enormity of the topics she unfolds for us.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7hgQFaeao0>

Reflection

These past few weeks have provided an opportunity for many of us to reflect more deeply, revising personal life priorities, mindful of and congruent with humanitarian and planetary needs. Many people have noticed that during this time of social distancing new patterns of life have inspired new or renewed connections. Some discuss the raising of consciousness and new life priorities emerging.

Whether in relation to the bigger global narratives or our own personal ones, (probably connected), Arundhati asks?

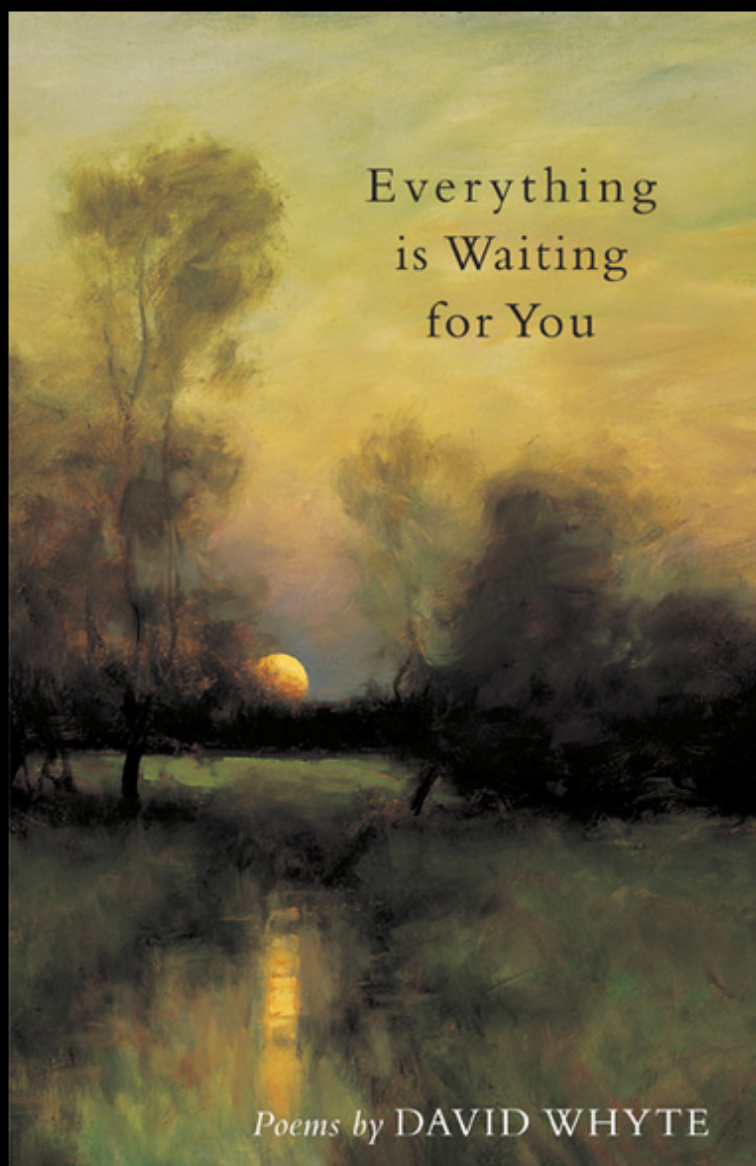
- What is this thing happening to us?
- Will we walk from one world to the next dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us?
- Or will we walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world? And ready to fight for it.
- Recognizing the need and time for change, what strategies do we need to harness?
- What are the questions as David Whyte asks in his poem *Sometimes*, that have no right to go away? Questions that are the gateway to a new emancipation of our understanding!



Leunig just may have the gate we are seeking?

Details of the full article: Arundhati Roy, 'The Pandemic is a Portal'

<https://www.ft.com/content/10d8f5e8-74eb-11ea-95fe-fcd274e920ca>



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SOMETIMES

*Sometimes
if you move carefully
through the forest*

*breathing
like the ones
in the old stories*

*who could cross
a shimmering bed of dry leaves
without a sound,*

*you come
to a place
whose only task*

*is to trouble you
with tiny
but frightening requests*

*conceived out of nowhere
but in this place
beginning to lead everywhere.*

*Requests to stop what
you are doing right now,
and*

*to stop what you
are becoming
while you do it,*

*questions
that can make
or unmake
a life,*

*questions
that have patiently
waited for you,*

*questions
that have no right
to go away.*

- David Whyte