

Vandana Shiva

Person: Vandana Shiva

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Description Vandana Shiva is one of the world's leading contemporary environmental activists and the winner of the 1993 Right Livelihood Award — otherwise known as the "alternative Nobel Peace Prize." She is widely described as a "radical scientist" who has been trained in both physics and the philosophy of science. Her activist work explores the impacts of economic liberalization on the lives of Third World people, with a particular emphasis on the plight of farmers and women in rural regions of India. She is the author of many books, including *Staying Alive*, *The Violence of the Green Revolution* (1993), *Monocultures of the Mind* (1993), *Biopiracy: The Plunder of Nature and Knowledge* (1997), *Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply* (1999), and most recently, *Water Wars: Privatization, Pollution, and Profit* (2001).

Shiva is the head of Navdanya: A Movement for Biodiversity Conservation and Farmer's Rights, a national program in India established to fight Western seed monopolies in the Third World. She also serves as the director and founder of the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology (RFSTE) in New Delhi, a foundation established in 1982 as an independent initiative to perform participatory and interdisciplinary research with rural Indian communities. The RFSTE focuses on the conservation of biodiversity and the protection of individual rights against economic liberalization.

Shiva is perhaps best known for her protests against corporate patents (or exclusive rights) that are placed upon natural resources, a practice that she terms "biopiracy." According to Shiva, this corporate patenting is the world's most modern form of colonialism. She is renowned for her work opposing the increasingly widespread use of monocultural production on a global scale — a form of production that sacrifices vital ecological diversity for corporate profit. Much of her work investigates the devastating ecological and psychological consequences that such forms of production have upon local communities. She targets Monsanto, McDonald's, and Pepsi, among innumerable other corporations, all of which she argues threaten to destroy the traditional land management practices, and subsequently the lifestyles, of Third World communities.

At the forefront of Shiva's activism is the need for a global shift toward an "earth democracy" that respects the essential right of all individuals to have access to the commons. From this perspective, the commodification of nature must be rethought and understood not as a corporate right but rather as an extreme abuse of our shared global resources. Shiva

advocates for a sustainable ethics of production and consumption that fiercely opposes the corporatization of natural resources. At the root of this ethic is a deep respect for women's traditional knowledge of land management and food cultivation practices that corporations deem to be archaic and unproductive.

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