

# Dr. Vandana Shiva's Message for Mother Earth Day, April 22, 2022 – The Earth Is Alive!

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Terra Madre, Gaia, Pachamama, Vasundhara... The Living Earth is a self-organised, self-regulating living system. She is *autopoietic*, writing the poetry of life, creating the symphony of life, through the harmony of every participating living organism, from the microbes to the mammals.

From the molecule, to the cell, to the organism, to ecosystems, and the planet, life is based on non-separation, harmony and quantum coherence. Self-organised resonance with other beings who are self-organised.

*“Life, in the ideal, is a domain that captures and stores energy and mobilises its quantum coherently in perfectly coupled cycles that generate no entropy... In a quantum coherent universe, all beings are both localised as particle/solid objects and delocalised as quantum wave functions spread ultimately throughout the universe. Hence all beings are mutually entangled and mutually constitutive. Thus harming others effectively harms ourselves, and the best way to benefit oneself may be to benefit others”.*

– Mae Wan Ho<sup>[\[1\]](#)</sup>

The Living Earth has evolved the biodiversity of our living planet, from viruses and biomes, to ecosystems, and species for over 4 billion years. Gaia weaves the web of life, the threads and relationships that connect the biodiversity of her Earth Family– *Vasudhaiva Kutumbkam*. Through her biodiversity and biosphere the Living Earth has self regulated her climate, cooling temperatures down from the 290 degree hot planet without life, to 13 degrees. Through the processes of life, the Earth reduced the 98% carbon dioxide rich atmosphere with 4000 ppm carbon dioxide, to 0. 03% at 270 ppm.<sup>[2]</sup>

Mother Earth evolved her sophisticated “carbon capture and sequestration” technology of photosynthesis which allows plants and microbes to capture the sunlight and the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and transform it into oxygen, our breath. Oxygen accumulated in the atmosphere and the earth was transformed from the original heat-trapping CO<sub>2</sub> rich atmosphere to the reduced CO<sub>2</sub> atmosphere through the oxidising process of plants and living organisms. This allowed temperatures to be regulated at levels that support human and other biological life on earth.

Through her biodiversity and biosphere she creates, maintains and sustains, regenerates and renews her **Infrastructure of Life** including the Climate System. Mother Earth is inviting us to participate in her biosphere of microbes and plants, animals in co-creating the harmony that is the symphony of life.

**We are a strand in the Web of Life.**

**We are Children of the Earth, Not her Masters and Owners.**

**We are members of One Earth Family.**

200,000 years ago, the living Earth created the conditions for our species to evolve, sustain ourselves and provide for our basic needs of food, clothing and shelter as members of the

biosphere.

We are alive because the Earth is Alive. Learning to live as part of the biosphere as indigenous people, women, small peasants have done is our work for the Earth, for the human future.

Mother Earth is Living and Has Rights.

*“Mother Earth is an indivisible community of diverse and interdependent beings with whom we share a common destiny and to whom we must relate in ways that benefit Mother Earth”.<sup>[3]</sup>*

Diversity is nature's organising principle, the basis of emergence, evolution, and resilience. Diversity in forms and expressions, flows and relations are how nature creates value and strength. Nature does not create monocultures and uniformity. Nature does not create fences and walls of division and separation, of ownership and private property.

We are a living, conscious strand in the pulsating web of life. We are all members of **One Earth Family**, interconnected through **life**. We are part of the Earth, and not separate from her. We are children of Mother Earth, not her masters and owners. We are among the youngest siblings in the Earth family and have much to learn from our elders, the microbes, and plants.

Nature's gifts are for the sustenance of all beings in the Earth Family, not just for humans. All beings have a right to the Earth's Gifts of sustenance. We are not a privileged species who can take others' share and drive other species to extinction, or deprive our fellow human beings of food and water.

Nature's Economy and the ecological processes of Regeneration that sustain life, is a Commons of Life.

The Earth's biodiversity and soil, land, and water are not "human inventions", they are not the "private property" of a few billionaires and their corporations. They are the commons, the infrastructure of life, not industrial "raw material" to be extracted for profits, or financial assets to be traded.

Every organism, from the smallest microbe to the largest mammal is part of the web of life. All living beings are sentient beings and have intrinsic value and worth. They are not objects to be owned and manipulated. Their value does not come from the market and cannot be reduced to money.

Earth-centred paradigms and worldviews do not put humans at the centre. They do not put the dis-economy of extractivism at the centre. They put life and the living processes that support life at the centre. They put the currencies of life at the centre.

Giving back to the Earth for regeneration, and sharing her gifts among others is at the heart of being members of one Earth family.

**Life is a Circular Regenerative Flow. Living is participating in the cycles of life. Caring and Sharing is the Regenerative Economy – *Oikonomia*, or the Art of Living**

Nature's Economy is the economy of life, nourishing all in permanent renewal and regeneration.

Participating in nature's Cycles of Renewal and Regeneration based on the living currencies and flows of energy, food, water, air, life is *Oikonomia*, the Art of Living.

Nature does not work in linear extractive flows of one way taking. Mother Earth works in complex, multiple Living Circular Economies based on ecological cycles of renewal, recycling and the law of return, the law of giving. Living circular economies create economies of permanence through

regeneration and renewal. The Earth's gifts do not get exhausted. Seed becomes plants, plants give seeds. Food is the currency of the nutrition cycle, nourishing all beings in the web of life. Water is the currency in the hydrological cycle, quenching the thirst of the soil, the plants, the animals, the atmosphere.

Nature's Economy is an *autopoietic*, negative entropy economy, unlike mechanical, industrial systems which are *allopoietic*, based on external inputs of energy and resources and create wasted energy as entropy.

Nature's cycles are zero waste and zero pollution systems, unlike the waste and pollution creating industrial systems driven by external energy.

Care for the Earth and her biodiversity is the Real Economy in which we participate, providing for the needs of others in our Earth Family who provide for us.

Cooperation, Mutuality, Synergy are the principles of Nature's Economy, not competition and extractivism. Scarcity is a construct that is used to grab people's lands and resources. The construct of scarcity and greed are the basis of conflicts and wars. Peace flows when all beings cooperate in mutuality and Gift Giving to create abundance and sustenance for all, making conservation and regeneration the basis of living economies and livelihoods.

That is why we pray, "*May the peace of the earth, the air, the atmosphere, the waters, the plants, the trees ... May that peace be with you*".

Cocreating nonviolently with Mother Earth is weaving peace, and providing for the basic needs of food and water, life and livelihoods of the last person. As Gandhi said: "*The Earth has enough for everyone's needs, not for a few people's greed.*"

We have a duty to protect the Earth's living systems and the

infrastructure of life that provides us clean air, clean water and clean food. All beings have the right to the gifts of the Earth. All beings have a right to be alive, and to their share of ecological space. No person, no matter how rich they have become through extractivism, has the right to appropriate the share of others in participation in Nature's Economy, the Economy of Life.

Living is participating in the processes of life.

Living is Commoning. Living is Reclaiming the commons of life and resisting the new enclosures through the financialisation of nature.

### **"The Currency of Life is Life, not Money"**

Mother Earth connects us to her life and the Earth Family through flows of living currencies of energy and breath, water and nourishment.

Currency means flow. It is the flow of life and love through the web of life in nature and society which sustains us as one. As I have often repeated: "The currency of life is life, not money". Food is the currency of life. Water is the currency of life. Breath is the currency of life. Living energy is the currency of life. Care is the currency of life. The diverse currencies of life grow the infrastructure of life so all lives thrive.

The ecological emergency is a consequence of the economy of Greed, of extractivism to make money, and making money the measure of value, and even the measure of being human. It is the basis of inhumanity, of violence and wars against the Earth and against people, in the name of grabbing resources for the market.

Colonial commerce was based on commodification and commercialisation of nature, leaving nothing for nature and local communities. Colonisers grew richer. Nature and

colonised people became poorer.

The disease is now being offered as the cure. Markets and money are being offered as the solution to the ecological catastrophes they have caused. Economic growth, which is merely a measure of how much was extracted from nature and society to convert into money, capital, finances, is being offered as a solution to the ecological crises money-making and extractivism has led to.

The laws of Gaia are the basis of life on earth. They precede production, they precede trade, and they precede the market. The market depends on Gaia. Gaia does not depend on the market. Both the earth and society come first. They are sovereign and autonomous. They cannot be commoditised, and reduced to the market.

In a short 500 years of colonialism, the Robber Barons reduced Terra Madre, Mother Earth to Terra Nullius, dead, Empty Earth, property to be owned, raw material to be exploited. Earth centred communities living in peace with the Earth as part of the Earth were declared "primitive". *Oikonomia*, the Art of Living was violently transformed into *Chrematistics*, the Art of Money Making.

They made the currencies of life disappear and replaced it with money and finance.

In 100 years of the Age of Oil, the Robber Barons displaced the living carbon of biodiversity with the counterfeit energy from fossilised dead carbon, disrupting the self regulation of Earth Systems, giving us pollution, wars and climate catastrophe.

Climate Change, the Extinction Emergency, the economic catastrophes and wars are rooted in greed and wars against the Earth and her Peoples. They are rooted in control of life by controlling the flow of seed going from farmer to farmer, the flow of water in a river, the flow of food to nourish all

beings in the food web, the flow of money reflecting embodiment of real goods and resources, the flow of freedom and democracy, of knowledge and information. Controlling the flow is controlling life and freedom. This is how money is made, and power accumulated in the hands of a few.

Now the Robber Barons who gave us oil want to create new markets of carbon, new property in nature's ecological services, by reducing Biodiversity and Nature into financial assets to be owned and traded<sup>[4]</sup>.

In 2021, Rockefeller and the New York Stock Exchange launched Intrinsic Exchange Group (IEG)<sup>[5]</sup> whose mission focuses on "pioneering a new asset class based on natural assets and the mechanism to convert them to financial capital"<sup>[6]</sup>. A new colonialism, a new ownership, a new enclosure of the commons is being worked out by the Robber Barons who do not merely want to own nature, but also her ecological services. The assets include "Biological systems that provide clean air, water, foods, medicines, a stable climate, human health and societal potential"<sup>[7]</sup>.

The Robber Barons of today, the philanthrocapitalists, the Blackrocks and Vanguards, are trying to own and privatise all of nature and our lives. They are mutating into life lords to whom we will have to pay rents to breathe, eat, drink. What nature provides for free as a Gift will now be a commodity we "buy" at high cost and through digital social credits in the new economy which builds on the old colonisation.

The money machine is trying to own the last seed, the last drop of water, the last river, extinguish the last forest and last farm, the last insect and blade of grass. Creating fictitious currencies, and fictitious finance, nature is being reduced to a "financial asset", to be miraculously multiplied to \$4000 trillion.



The 2008 financial crisis was the result of the financial Robber Barons magically expanding the \$90 trillion economy of real goods and services like homes and food into a fictitious \$512 trillion financial economy. The financial economy grew at the cost of millions who were unhoused and unfed as a result. The more the real world is turned into a financial asset, the more homelessness and hunger grows.

Wall Street and the financial asset companies are now seeing a \$4000 trillion fictitious economy of finance by extracting profits from “Nature’s assets”, or the goods and services that the Earth produces. This commodification is an enclosure of the commons of life. It is an attempt to own the last river, the last forest and the last acre of land. It is a recipe to displace and dispossess the real custodians of nature, the indigenous people and small farmers leaving them without access to land, forests and water and their Earth-centred cultures and livelihoods. Hunger, poverty, disposability, and dispossession will grow. This is a violation of Nature’s Economy, Rights of Mother Earth, Rights of all beings and Human Rights.

Creating new algorithms to multiply finances and increase financial resources cannot regenerate the life lost in nature through ecological destruction. You can convert nature into cash through extractivism. But you cannot turn cash into nature.

An African peasant captured the ontological and ecological difference between money and life with a simple metaphor:

*“You cannot turn a calf into a cow by plastering it with mud”<sup>[8]</sup>*

Financialisation of Mother Nature, reducing her to an “asset” and commodity for sale continues the ontological blindness to how Mother Earth creates and sustains life through her *auto-*

*poetic* currencies and life flows.

Money is a mere means of exchange of real goods and services produced through real work. Money mutated into the mysterious construct of “capital”, which could create wealth by denying the creativity of nature, women, farmers, workers, could enclose the commons and own the commons as private property. “Capital” then mutated into “investment”. Investment mutated, through multiple constructions into “returns on investment”, where those who do no real work but control wealth created by exploitation of nature and people accumulate more wealth, and use the wealth to further exploit nature and society. The ecological crisis grows. Poverty, misery, exclusion grows.

Financialisation of Nature is the latest step in the mutation of “invest” from giving care to profits and money making.

The original meaning of “invest” was to make something beautiful, to clothe. A mere ten years after the creation of the East India Company by 1610 the meaning of investment changed from being diverse ways of “clothing “ and “surrounding” to “use money to produce profit” in connection with corporate colonial trade.

It was John Locke who extended it to “circulation of money” to suit the needs of private property, money-centred structures being built by colonial commerce. And the delusion that money is the currency of life has allowed money-making and money-makers to be rewarded and even worshipped, while our sense of interconnectedness is extinguished, and with it our potential for compassion.

For them ‘Invest in the planet’ means extract the last drop of life from the Earth Systems, extract the last freedom from humans and other species to be sustained by the earth, her flows, her currencies.

We need to return to the original meaning of “invest”, as clothing, and making beauty. We need to clothe the Earth with

biodiversity of trees on our farms and forests, biodiversity of crops in our fields and gardens. We need to intensify biodiversity, to intensify photosynthesis, to intensify nature's flows of life. We need to plant seeds and care for the living soil so the seed, soil and sun can intensify the flow of their living energies, healing broken cycles. We need to invest Love, Care and Compassion to Regenerate the Earth and stop the wars against the Earth and her peoples.

Peace, sustainability and justice call for an end to wars against the Earth in our minds, our lives.

The Colonial Age has enslaved our minds and broken our relationship with the Earth. The Fossil Fuel Age has fossilised our minds and hearts, making us helpless cogs in the oil machine, the money machine, cogs the machine is ready to substitute with robots and AI.

Mother Earth is waking us up to break free of the anthropocentric arrogance that makes rich and powerful humans blind to nature's life, creativity, technologies, economy and allows them to deny us our rightful share and place as Earth Beings in Mother Earth's Economy of Life to ensure life and well being, food and water for all.

As money and finance becomes more removed from nature's economy and the real economies of sustenance that people create, as finance multiplies mysteriously, gets concentrated in the hands of a few billionaires, their Asset Management Funds, and the corporations they own, it is time to remember the prophecy of the Cree Native Americans.

*"When the last tree is cut down, the last fish eaten and the last stream poisoned, you will realise that you cannot eat money. "*

## **Seeding Our Common Future with Mother Earth**

We are biological beings, ecological beings, earth beings,

inter beings, spiritual beings. We are one Earth Family. Seeds are not machines. Plants are not machines. Animals are not machines. We are not machines. Our minds are not machines. We are conscious, intelligent caring beings with a potential to imagine and cultivate a future of peace and non violence, of abundance and well being.

Life is self-organised complexity and intelligence in constant evolution, interaction, change and emergence. From the seed I have learnt the power of *autopoiesis*, organised from within. Biodiversity of Seeds and Plants have been my teacher of abundance and freedom, of cooperation and mutual giving.

Seed, uncontaminated seed, Bija, Seme, Semilla- is the source of life, of regeneration and abundance. Seed renews and multiples. Seed Regenerates. On its own. Forever and ever and ever... Seed embodies the continuity of evolution.

From the Seed we can learn self-organisation, co-creation, regeneration. We can return to Earth to grow life in diversity and participate in the flow of life to provide for our needs. At a time when the Robber Barons have plans to own all of nature, all of the Earth, and force us to buy our needs, we need to follow the example of my sisters in Chipko who reminded us that the forests were not timber mines, they were sources of soil, water, and oxygen. They declared they would hug the trees to protect them and not let them be cut.

On Mother Earth Day and every day we live and breathe, whoever we are, where we are, let us hug Mother Earth in gratitude for the breath, food, water, life she gives and declare our deep love for life.

## **Mother Earth is Not for Sale**

When I started the movement for Seed Freedom for saving seeds I travelled the country to create awareness about the Intellectual Property laws of Gatt/WT0 through which corporations wanted to own seed as property. The tribals of

Chattisgarh who evolved 200,000 varieties of rice told me how seed is a commons which has to be regenerated through sharing. Rice is called Akshat, the unbroken, the timeless, the breath of life. They asked me to return and join them for the festival of Akti, Akshaya Tritiya, a festival for celebrating the unbroken cycle of life, not as observers, but as participants in the cycle of regeneration and care. In a prayer that is said at Akshaya Tritiya, Mother Earth gives us instruction that the purpose of our lives is love and compassion for all beings.

*“Relating to all living beings through love and compassion is the purpose of life”*

‘सर्वजन्तुस्यैव हि भूतानां प्रणामं प्रणम्य’- (संस्कृत-36/18)

सर्व जन्तु (सर्व जन्तु) सः सर्वान् जन्तून् सः सर्वान् जन्तून् सः सर्वान् जन्तून् सः सर्वान् जन्तून् सः

David Korten awakens us to the potential we have to participate in the, “joyful exhilaration that comes from fulfilling our responsibility to share in the care of life”<sup>[9]</sup>

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