

Women's Day 2021 – A Message From Dr. Vandana Shiva

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Over five decades I have witnessed how food imperialism is at the root of violence against the Earth and against women. In India, wherever industrial agriculture has displaced women, women have been reduced to a disposable sex and female foeticide has emerged. I have written about this both in *Staying Alive* and in *Earth Democracy*.[\[1\]](#)

Food sovereignty is the foundation of women's emancipation, because food is the basis of life, food is the currency of life. Henry Kissinger clearly articulated his politics of food imperialism when he declared the "Food is a weapon. Whoever controls food controls people."

For thousands of years, women have contributed to the production of food, conservation of biodiversity, and earth care.

Food sovereignty in women's hands is important for their own emancipation but also for all people and all life on Earth.

In 1996, Maria Mies and I wrote a declaration in Leipzig at the Plant Genetic Resources Conference which was signed by more than 100,000 women for the World Food Summit.[\[2\]](#)

For Women's Day 2021, Women Farmers of Diverse Women for Diversity / The Women's Food Sovereignty Movement has issued a new report, 'Earth Rising, Women Rising: Regenerating the

Earth, Seeding the Future.' [\[3\]](#)

As we have written in 'Earth Rising, Women Rising: "We are a strand in the web of life and the web of biodiversity. We are custodians, breeders and producers of seed. Living seed is our living heritage which we have received in diversity and integrity from our ancestors, and which we have a duty to safeguard and pass on to future generations. "

Seed holds our co-evolutionary potential as part of creation.

Seed sovereignty (Bija Swaraj) is our birth right.

We are reclaiming our seed sovereignty.

Life begins as seed. Food begins as seed.

Healthy food grows from healthy seed.

We are breeding, producing, and sharing our seeds as a commons. Seed is not an invention. Seed is not the intellectual property of corporations. Seed is life. Seed is sacred.

We have created local community seed banks to conserve indigenous seeds and farmers' seed producer groups to multiply and distribute nutritious and climate-resilient, local seeds.

Our indigenous Desi seeds and farmers' varieties have much higher nutritional value than the so-called 'High Yielding Varieties.' These have been bred to adapt to chemicals; are nutritionally empty, contributing to diseases of deficiencies of micronutrients and trace elements; and loaded with disease-causing toxics. Indigenous seeds need less water, are more pest and disease-resistant and more climate-resilient. GMO seeds are toxic, and GMO Bt cotton has not only failed to control pests, but has trapped farmers in debt and driven hundreds of thousands among them to suicide.

The attempts to promote GMOs based on gene editing are

designed to undermine biosafety regulations.

We have rejuvenated our Climate Resilient indigenous seeds.” [\[4\]](#)

I started Navdanya and the Seed Sovereignty and Food Sovereignty movement more than three decades ago when multinational corporations tried to hijack our seed and food through the World Bank’s conditionalities and WTO’s free trade rules.

To my young sisters I send a message of love, care and courage. We have to shed the multiple colonisations of capitalist patriarchy that reduced nature and women to a colonies, and denied their power and creativity. As members of the Earth Family, co-creating with the living Earth, we are powerful, in a non-violent, creative way.

The future is in your hands. Take care of the Earth so she can take care of you.

Dr Vandana Shiva

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References

[\[1\]](#) Vandana Shiva, *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development in India* (New Delhi: Zed Press, 1988). Ibid, *Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability and Peace* (Boston: South End Press, 2005)

[\[2\]](#) *Leipzig Appeal for Women’s Food Security*. 1996, https://www.iatp.org/sites/default/files/Leipzig_Appeal_for_Womens_Food_Security.htm

[\[3\]](#) Diverse Women for Diversity, and Mahila Anna Swaraj. ‘Earth Rising, Women Rising: Regenerating the Earth, Seeding

the Future'. Navdanya, Mar. 2021, <https://www.navdanya.org/site/eco-feminism/the-earth-rising,-women-rising>

[4] Navdanya. *Seeds of Hope, Seeds of Resilience How Biodiversity Makes Agriculture and Communities More Resilient to Climate Change*. 2017, <https://www.navdanya.org/site/climate-change/seed-of-resilience>