**INSPIRATIONBASE**

*A collection of ethical leadership speeches*

Vandana Shiva

**Besides being a physicist, ecologist, activist, editor, and author of numerous books, Vandana Shiva is a tireless defender of the environment. She is the founder of Navdanya, a movement for biodiversity conservation and farmers’ rights. She is also the founder and director of the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Natural Resource Policy. Shiva fights for changes in the practice and paradigms of agriculture and food: “I don't want to live in a world where five giant companies control our health and our food.” Intellectual property rights, biodiversity, biotechnology, bioethics, and genetic engineering are among the fields where Shiva has contributed intellectually and through activist campaigns. During the 1970s, she participated in the nonviolent Chipko movement, whose main participants were women. She has assisted grassroots organizations of the Green movement in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Ireland, Switzerland, and Austria with campaigns against genetic engineering. Shiva has also served as an adviser to governments in India and abroad as well as non-governmental organizations, including the International Forum on Globalization, the Women's Environment and Development Organization, the Third World Network, and the Asia Pacific People’s Environment Network. Source: Centre for Humans and Nature ([link](https://www.humansandnature.org/vandana-shiva)). [NB: Controversy over some aspects of Shiva’s work [link](https://www.europeanscientist.com/en/features/letter-regarding-dr-vandana-shivas-anti-scientific-and-unethical-stances/)]

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| **VS 1*. We Must Fight Back Against the 1 Percent to Stop the Sixth Mass Extinction*** | | | |  |
| Oneness is the recognition that we are part of one planet, and we are one humanity. And unless we live with that consciousness and shape every moment of our production and consumption with that consciousness, we are going to destroy ourselves, which we are. The melting of the glaciers is one of the very severe indicators. The 1 percent, of course, is the symbol of the concentration of wealth under the rules of the neoliberal economies, that are basically, on the one hand, turning every natural resource into a war zone. Even the Venezuelan issue is really a war over oil. But war over seeds, that’s my life’s work, to keep seeds free, because they literally are a war over control of seeds, by a poison cartel of three—Monsanto and Bayer, Syngenta and ChemChina, Dow and DuPont—all of them with their roots in Hitler’s Germany and finding chemicals to kill people. No wonder they’re still killing people. No wonder they’re killing our butterflies and our bees and our pollinators. And every indicator is showing we are not just in a severe climate catastrophe; we are in the sixth mass extinction. And both the species extinction and the climate catastrophe are two sides of the same coin…Roundup is the herbicide that kills everything, but it has been known by the World Health Organization to be a carcinogen. Monsanto attacked the World Health Organization, like they attacked me, like they attack anybody who speaks the truth and tells good science.  I’m talking about the large corporations, but I’m also talking about the mechanisms of the neoliberal economy, which puts in place ways to make the money machine keep growing, at the cost of life of the people and the planet. So, it’s not an accident that we are in an ecological catastrophe, where IPCC, the climate body, as well as the biodiversity convention panel are saying that we have 10 years to change.  The money machine—I name it the “money machine” to talk about the new ways in which money is being created and accumulated. Intellectual property rights and patents is central. It’s a rent-collecting system….You get rid of chemicals, you get rid of fossil fuels, and you start doing organic, all that excess carbon can be pulled back by the plants and put back in the soil, which is why I wrote the book Soil Not Oil. When you put nitrogen-fixing plants, the pulses—you know, everyone’s now talking of plant-based diets, proteins from plants. We did it in India forever with our lovely dal, our pulses. They fix nitrogen nonviolently. You don’t have to blast fossil fuels at high temperature to fix atmospheric nitrogen. The plants have the intelligence to do it, peacefully, and give us good protein, the same way, while fixing the broken nitrogen cycle, which if you look at the planetary boundaries graph, the nitrogen cycle is and the biodiversity system is the most abused. | | | | |
| **Date** | 22/02/2019 | **Source** | Democracy Now ([link](https://www.democracynow.org/2019/2/22/vandana_shiva_we_must_fight_back)) | |

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| **VS 2: *Why the food we eat matters*** | | | |  |
| My dedication and service to the Earth and indigenous communities started nearly five decades ago with [the Chipko movement]. Protecting the Earth and indigenous cultures is more important than ever today because five centuries of colonialism and three centuries of fossil fuel-based industrialism has brought us to collapse. Indigenous people have lived in harmony with nature, respecting the Earth and her limits. They are teachers for survival in a period of extinction.  Yesterday, women from my region in the Himalayas gathered at Navdanya for a millet festival. The Green Revolution [that revolutionised India's farm production in the 1960s-70s] named them "backward" and "primitive" grains. But they [yield] 10 times more nutrition using 10 times less water. Members of Navdanya were calling me during lockdown to say that the Gardens of Hope we started provided food for their families and communities in spite of lockdown. Food and culture are the currency of life. And while we are overwhelmed by disease and death, a living food culture can show the light to the path of life.  For me, food sovereignty is sovereignty over your life, livelihood and health. We are interconnected, therefore food sovereignty is an ecological process of co-creation with other lifeforms. It begins with seed sovereignty: saving and using living seeds. It involves care for the land and soil. We cannot have food sovereignty if we do not feed the soil organisms. Food sovereignty is based on organic farming and avoiding chemicals and poisons. Food sovereignty includes knowledge sovereignty, economic sovereignty and political sovereignty.  Because I grew up in the Himalayas and became a volunteer for Chipko, I learnt the value of biodiversity. I applied this learning to understand why [the state of] Punjab, where the Green Revolution was first imposed, had erupted in violence. I wrote the book The Violence of the Green Revolution and took a pledge to evolve non-violent systems of food and agriculture. This is what I have done since 1984.  I realised that the industrial-colonising West was based on a mechanical mind, a monoculture of the mind. Building on my training and my Himalayan upbringing, I started to cultivate the biodiversity of the mind, and regenerate biodiversity on our farms and [of our] food.  Seed is the source of life. Seed is the source of food. To protect food freedom, we must protect seed freedom. The first thing we did was create community seed banks to reclaim the seed as a common [good], and resist patents on seeds. More than 150 community seed banks have been created which have helped farmers grow more nutritious crops and have climate-resilient seeds in their hands to deal with climate change and climate disasters. I helped write laws that recognise that plants, animals and seeds are not human inventions. We fought cases on biopiracy, the patenting of our biodiversity and indigenous knowledge. Through participatory research, we showed that when you intensify biodiversity instead of chemicals, and measure nutrition per acre instead of yield per acre, we can grow enough nutrition for two times the world population. New research is showing that native seeds have higher nutrition than industrially bred “high-yielding varieties", which are nutritionally empty and full of toxins.  I have realised over four decades of research and action that most farmers of the world are women. They grow food as nourishment, not as commodities. They grow food for health, not disease. Through wars and famines, through floods and droughts, they have kept alive the memory of their seeds and foods. Women have the potential to lead the transition to regenerate the Earth, her biodiversity and our health and nutrition.  All indigenous cultures are stewards of an organic-food approach. Australian Aborigines have farmed for 60,000 years. Small farmers of China and India have been farmers [for] 40 centuries. Sir Albert Howard, who was sent to India in 1905 by the British Empire to improve Indian Agriculture, instead improved the farming of the West by learning organic farming from Indian peasants. As he writes in An Agricultural Testament, seeing how good the indigenous practices in India were, he made Indian peasants his professors.  Colonialism and industrialism have destroyed the Earth and indigenous cultures through four false assumptions. First, that we are separate from nature and not a part of nature. Second, that nature is dead matter, mere raw material for industrial exploitation. Third, that indigenous cultures are inferior and primitive, and need to be “civilised” through civilising missions of permanent colonization. Fourth, that nature and cultures need improvement through manipulation and external inputs. Green Revolution, GMOs, gene editing are rooted in this false assumption. I wrote Earth Democracy to show that globalisation had created deregulated commerce and unleashed limitless greed, which was leading to economies of ecocide and genocide. Electoral democracy financed by billionaires and corporations had transformed democracy from being of the people, for the people, by the people into a political system run of the corporations, for the corporations, by the corporations. And by creating scarcity and competition, it had created culture wars. So, I evolved the concept of Earth Democracy on the basis of my philosophy and practice that we are part of the Earth, and human freedom and human wellbeing depends on other species. We are not superior to other species, we are inter-beings. Anthropocentrism is a violent construct. Earth Democracy allows us to shift from economies and cultures that kill and democracies that are dead to living economies, living democracies, living cultures of the Earth, sharing her abundance, respecting her limits.  We were divided by colonialism. We have been divided by gender, race, religion, class. But we are part of the Earth and food is the currency of life. A food system that is at war with the Earth is also at war with our bodies.  Across the world, especially in times of the pandemic, there is a growing consciousness that the multiple energies we are living through have their roots in an unjust, non-sustainable industrial-globalised food system. And solutions to all the crises lie in creating local, biodiverse, poison-free, chemical-free food systems that increase nourishment for all beings while reducing our ecological footprint. | | | | |
| **Date** | 28/01/2021 | **Source** | BBC interview ([link](http://www.bbc.com/travel/story/20210127-vandana-shiva-on-why-the-food-we-eat-matters)) | |

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| **VS 3*.*** *Vandana Shiva: Bill Gates’s Book Is Rubbish! / Under the Skin with Russell Brand* | | | |  |
| […] I normally don’t read rubbish but when they want to be rulers through rubbish, I read it. And it’s lovely because he [Bill Gates] says the greenhouse gases from factory farms are not because of factory farms and putting animals in prisons, but it’s because the cows were the problem, they had four stomachs. And the four stomachs make the methane. No, you walk behind a good cow on a grazing pasture, she’s not stinking. He goes even further. Talk colonization. He has put the Indian plow that has existed for ten thousand years, and says, “This primitive technology must go.” I call this the future technology of a partnership between our bodies, the body of the Earth, and the body of the animals, realizing that we are not masters, but we are there to serve for what Gandhi called “bread labor.” The labor of our body in the service of the Earth, in the service of community. So we are for sure at an epic moment where everything wrong is being given a new life, just at the time when the world was waking up and said, “Oh, you know, this dissection doesn’t work, lack of faith doesn’t work, desacralization doesn’t work.” That’s precisely when everything is being crushed again. And I think this is happening, Russell, because of our arrogance; that we have created such immunity for ourselves. We’ve destroyed every international law, we’ve destroyed all democracy, we’ve locked people into fear. No one can hold us to account. I mean look at the debate right now on the GMO question in Europe, where we created laws on GMO regulation, and they want to knock it down, and Bill Gates again is financing the lobbies for that deregulation. So there’s an arrogance that can’t be touched. And, you know, the British Empire had that arrogance that the sun never sets on the British Empire - and it set. I think if we realize that we live in a powerful world full of energy, and that energy is a creative energy of the universe, and our part is the spiritual power of aligning ourselves, which we call Ṛta and the right action. You know, that’s what Dharma is: aligning yourself with that power. Then we are very powerful. And these people who think they are beyond all accountability can be brought to account. We just have to ensure that none of us allow our ego to overtake us, none of us allow hate and division to become the way we start to think, and third, none of us ever give up the power we have. We are powerful beings in a powerful world.  […] I think the first very important gift of the Vedas is to recognize that the universe is divine. The smallest grass, the tiniest rivulet is an expression of the divine. And that’s why it’s not an accident, you know, we hold our rivers sacred except now with industrialism and urbanization we are polluting them. Our trees, our tulsi, the seeds. And can you imagine, this is so touching to me, when I go to the villages, women will do sacred ceremonies with indigenous seed. They will never use a hybrid seed for a sacred ceremony. For a sacred ceremony with animals, they will only use the indigenous cows with the hump. They will never use a Jersey cow. It’s quite amazing. No one told them. But they have that understanding of integrity, and what the sacred means. It means to treat without violation. To hold the integrity. So we live in a divine universe, and the energy of this universe is a divine feminine: Shakti. We call her Shakti. And Nature Prakriti is her first action. And that’s why, even though we have, you know, we’ve said Maya as play but no Maya as an illusion. Maya as play when you realize you are in a sacred universe. But the part that has always been a very, very powerful idea from Upanishad, it’s from Isha Upanishad, and this Upanishad […] says, “We live in a sacred universe which is for the wellbeing of all. Enjoy her gifts without greed. Taking more than your share is theft.” So they have defined as theft taking more than your share, which is why India for ten thousand years lived a very high level of living without taking from anyone else. But it wasn’t just as a civilization. Each individual. And we never adopted anthropocentrism because we had all these antidotes that we are part of a web of life, we are part of one Earth family. And, you know, it’s that thinking. And where did I get it? I didn’t begin with the texts, Russell. I began with my life in the villages where ordinary women were practicing this. So this caused me saying this, “Let me go read a text.”I ran to the text, following the practice of very ordinary people. That’s why when people say, “Oh, here is now a consumerist culture,” I say, “You’re looking at a thin slice of consumerism. There’s an ocean out there that is only surviving because there’s spiritual beings.” You know, millions had to go home on the day of the lockdown of the corona. You might have seen the march of the migrant workers. They could not have walked a thousand miles without a deep, deep resolve within them and a deep sense of their inner resources and not giving up hope. Otherwise they’d be committing suicide in the city. They did not commit suicide. They walked with babies in their arms. I think the other part that, for me, is extremely important, because, you see, part of the dualisms that have been created is the idea that there’s spirituality and there’s materialism, right? But India and our thinking and our Vedas and our Upanishads have constantly sacralized the material world. So because I work on food now over the last 36 years, not through choice, you know, I did my PhD on non-separability in quantum theory, and it’s 84 and Punjab and Bhopal that made me look at agriculture. Why were we practicing agriculture in a way that kills thousands in Bhopal and thirty thousand people in Punjab? Where does this violence come from? And then I wrote *The Violence of the Green Revolution*. And since then I’ve been going deeper and deeper into the food question. And I just want to share two or three of the really inspiring parts of a sacred relationship with food. Which is what they want to break right now. It’s been broken partly with industrialism. But now with the digitalization, they would like to end it forever. And that’s where we can recover it. So the first is, everything is food. Everything is food in the Vedas. And if you think of it ecologically, what is the nutrition cycle but the movement of food? So everything is food. An ecological cycle is the movement of food, and that’s why I call food “the currency of life.” Second, the highest duty is to grow and give good food in abundance. It’s your Dharma. It’s just been put into a Dharmic text into the Mahabharata […]. And the worst sin is to let someone go hungry in your neighborhood, not grow good food, and worse, sell bad food. So we’ve got to bring to the center of our everyday life the rituals that make life sacred. Our breath. You know, why is Pranayama so important? Why is breath so important? Because breath is what connects us to the world. Water connects us to the world. Food connects us to the world. These are not “fuels,” you know. Food as a fuel for a machine they call the body. You know this Cartesian construct has so outlived this time, and the digital barons are trying to give it a little longer life. You know, they’re putting their foot on the accelerator and say, “Go more, Cartesian.” And we have to say, “No, go more spiritual, go more interconnected, go more celebrate free through the abundance we can create.” | | | | |
| **Date** | 13/4/21  Accessed on 18. Apr. 2021 | **Source** | Russell Brand on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3_8owv2dtP0>), min. 1:26 – 4:18, 6:11 – 12:33; close captioning available. | |