



Soil Not Oil: Environmental Justice in an Age of Climate Crisis

Vandana Shiva

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With *Soil Not Oil*, Vandana Shiva connects the dots between industrial agriculture and climate change. Shiva shows that a world beyond dependence on fossil fuels and globalization is both possible and necessary.

Condemning industrial agriculture as a recipe for ecological and economic disaster, Shiva's champion is the small, independent farm: their greater productivity, their greater potential for social justice as they put more resources into the hands of the poor, and the biodiversity that is inherent to the traditional farming practiced in small-scale agriculture. What we need most in a time of changing climates and millions hungry, she argues, is sustainable, biologically diverse farms that are more resistant to disease, drought, and flood. In her trademark style, she draws solutions to our world's most pressing problems on the head of a pin: "The solution to climate change," she observes, "and the solution to poverty are the same."

Using Shiva's organization Navdanya—praised by Barbara Kingsolver as "a small, green Eden framed against the startling blue backdrop of the Himalayas"—as a model, *Soil Not Oil* lays out principles for feeding the planet that are socially just and environmentally sound. Shiva then expands her analysis to broader issues of globalization and climate change, arguing that a healthy environment and a just world go hand in hand. Unwavering and truly visionary, *Soil Not Oil* proposes a solution based on self-organization, sustainability, and community rather than corporate power and profits.

A world-renowned environmental leader and thinker, **Vandana Shiva** is the author of many books, including *Earth Democracy*, *Water Wars*, and *Staying Alive*. She is the editor of *Manifestos on the Future of Food and Seed*.

Soil Not Oil: Environmental Justice in an Age of Climate Crisis Details

Date : Published October 1st 2008 by South End Press (first published 2008)

ISBN : 9780896087828

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Format : Paperback 144 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Environment, Politics, Food and Drink, Food, Economics, Sustainability

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From Reader Review Soil Not Oil: Environmental Justice in an Age of Climate Crisis for online ebook

Julia says

It was a bit slow for me to get into this book, but it's really a good one, especially if you already know some basic facts about Monsanto, the WTO, the World Bank, etc. Shiva is a former nuclear physicist from India who has turned into an activist for agrarian reform, an outspoken critic of globalization and carbon trading, and the founder of Navdanya (<http://www.navdanya.org/>), a project that helps farmers in India achieve Earth Democracy. Awesomeness!

If you have trouble getting into the book or are more interested in the "soil" parts, start with the last few chapters.

p. 7: "the transition from oil to soil is a political transition. It is a transition from undemocratic political structures - which impose globalization and a fossil fuel infrastructure on society and force the large-scale uprooting of peasants and indigenous peoples - to a decentralized democracy in which local communities have a say in what happens to their land and their lives."

p.13-14: In biology, the term *development* refers to self-directed, self-regulated, and self-organized evolution from within. In the terms of Chilean scientists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela, systems that self-organize and self-renew are *autopoietic* systems. And in the language of David Pimentel of Cornell, autopoietic systems are based on endosomatic or metabolic energy. If the economic domain were to think of development in the same way, it would lead to a flourishing of biodiversity and cultural diversity. Development would conserve resources and energy while improving human well-being and human welfare. Unfortunately, *development* in economics has the opposite meaning. In economics, development is an externally driven process. It refers to self-organizing, self-regulating systems as "un-developed" and "underdeveloped" and suggests that they should be made dependent on external inputs - external resources, energy, and money....

p.36 instead of a carbon tax on countries, we need a carbon tax on corporations. Quotas reward polluters and don't work; they reward long-distance shipping of goods, etc.

p.37: the speculative economy of global finance is hundreds of times larger than the value of real goods and services produced in the world.
(criticized commodification of everything on the planet, corporate land grabs) "the global economy based on limitless consumerism has a rapacious appetite for natural resources."

p.43: "the solution to climate chaos is not an energy shift - from fossil fuels to nuclear, biofuel, and big hydro. The solution is a paradigm shift: - from a reductionist to a holistic worldview based on interconnections, - from a mechanistic, industrial paradigm to an ecological one, - from a consumerist definition of being human to one that recognizes us as conservers of the earth's finite resources and cocreators of wealth with nature." live by laws other than economic ones: physics, energy/entropy, evolution, justice.

p.60: "The highway and the automobile are symbols of totalitarian cultures: they deny people sustainable and equitable alternatives for mobility and transport."

p.73: Animals: a living energy alternative for mobility (rickshaws, elephants, donkeys, mules, etc).... "Speed is rewarded, even though speed is killing cultures, people, livelihoods, and the planet itself."

p.99: "energy use per kilo of rice is 80 times more in the US than in the Phillipines." "A 450-gram box of breakfast cereal provides only 1,100 kilocalories of food energy but uses 7,000 kilocalories of energy for processing."

p.119: about her Navdanya project:

"The dominant food economy is based on monopolies and monocultures, on industrialization of production and globalization of distribution of a handful of crops - corn, soy, rice, and wheat. This economy has pushed 1 billion people into hunger; another 2 billion into obesity. It is killing species and farmers. One hundred fifty thousand small farmers of India have committed suicide because they were forced to buy costly, unreliable seed every year from corporations like Monsanto, which collect exorbitant royalties."

"After the 2004 tsunami, our self-resistant rice varieties rebuilt the devastated agriculture of Tamil Nadu. Our seeds of *Dehradun* basmati gave us the strength to fight RiceTec of Texas, which had patented basmati rice. Our seeds of native wheat varieties inspired us to fight Monsanto when it patented low-gluten wheat."

Emily says

Even at only 137 pages, this book is too long. It would have been a fantastic New Yorker article. The content—which is part manifesto, part science journal—is compelling but repetitive.

Raahul Khadaliya says

Just started reading will post soon

Constantine says

A favorite author and leading ecofeminist thinker, activist, and speaker, Shiva's recent move from general ecofeminist organizing to specific intersections of the military-industrial complex and food security & preservation issues utilizes her usual concise, clear, and demanding tone for a more just vision of the future.

Megan says

Firstly, this book corrected my misconception that chemical fertilizers contained oil, in some form. I now understand that the production and transport of chemical fertilizers rely on oil. An important difference.

Vandana Shiva writes very clearly about the costs being accrued with relying on reductionist solutions, ignoring the systems involved. The most distressing (for me) being the Intellectual Property Rights, and the associated reduction in biodiversity.

I am convinced that the issues of social justice and food justice are closely connected. And that the burdens

of climate change are going to be (are being) felt most by people who live in the developing countries. As they struggle under trade agreements that leave local populations and economies broken.

This book challenges me in the choices I make, politically, socially, economically. It inspired me to think about how I can create and sustain biodiversity in my life, and reduce my reliance on fossil fuels. While supporting local, sustainable initiatives.

Lexie Folkerts says

Super factual, amazingly intersectional book. This book analyzed every facet of our current climate problems. She discusses agriculture, human rights, ecological well being, climate change, society, economy and more. She encourages a drastic change in our life style encouraging human energy and energy from the sun.

Judi Poulson says

A wake up call. Good book.

Elif says

<http://kitaplikkedisil.com/kitaplar/pe...>

South End Press says

A must-read for anyone who takes the future of the planet seriously, Soil Not Oil dare us to imagine a world where people matter more than profits.

With Soil Not Oil, Vandana Shiva brilliantly reveals what connects humanity's most urgent food crises--food insecurity, peak oil, and climate change--and why any attempt to solve one without addressing the others will get us nowhere.

Condemning industrial biofuels and agriculture as recipes for ecological and economic disaster, Shiva champions the small independent farm instead. With millions hungry and the earth's future at peril, only sustainable, biologically diverse farms that are more resistant to disease, drought, and flood can both feed and safeguard the world for generations to come. Bold and visionary, Soil Not Oil calls for a return to sound agricultural principles--and a world based on self-organization, community, and environmental justice.

Maryam says

My main criticism of this book is stylistic. The earth is referred to as Gaia and feminine pronouns are used for earth/nature/etc., and while I understand this, it may influence some readers to dismiss the book as new-age/hippie-ish, despite its otherwise factual tone, which brings me to the other stylistic issue - this book reads like the author is more used to writing scientific papers (which isn't a surprise when you consider the author's background) and might put off readers who expect more of a pop-science book. However this is what I liked about the book - the heavy citations and real-world examples to back up statements and the author's obvious involvement and experience with how these issues affect her community. The book is mostly illustrated with specific and India-based examples, which I appreciate as at the moment I would rather read more in-depth perspectives about environmental justice from different cultures rather than one of the myriad books that approach it from a general, westernised viewpoint and peppered with casual, 'global' examples.

Jennifer says

Vadana Shiva has a knowing voice throughout the book. If you're completely clueless about global climate issues, this is easy to pick up to begin educating yourself.

Row Dela Rosa Yoon says

I was drawn to read this book when the State Government of Western Australia announced to convert vast tracks of land into sugar cane plantation-- as if the State is not satisfied with the expansive mining operations going on there. The plantation is not intended to produce food, but rather to produce bio-fuels. Agricultural crops are turning into bio-fuels.

From Asia to South America to Africa, farms are converted into industrial purposes-- which according to Shiva has been creating food shortages and environmental degradation.

Here's a review from "wildflower boy" at Amazon.com which I strongly agree with:

In her latest book, Vandana Shiva, a leading opponent of water privatization and biotechnology, takes on the energy and transportation sectors, exposing how the oil industry is causing climate chaos and food insecurity. She also condemns industrial biofuels like ethanol and biodiesel, arguing that the mass production of genetically engineered monoculture crops like corn and soy is robbing the poor of land and food. Furthermore, tropical rainforests which are crucial carbon sinks are being bulldozed to plant soy and palm plantations, killing these delicate ecosystems along with the indigenous peoples that inhabit them. While trading in one's automobile for an oxcart, donkey, or bicycle may seem like a bizarre idea to most middle-class white folks in the global north, such sustainable alternatives are the norm for millions of people in Latin America, Asia, and Africa and should be embraced by everyone concerned about climate stability. I, personally, found Vandana Shiva's childhood recollections of riding an elephant to school totally delightful! Given the frightening reality of peak oil, global warming, and the worldwide agrarian crisis, this is an extremely important and thought-provoking book. Please read it and do what you can to support decentralized, small-scale, biodiverse, local, organic food systems and sustainable, carbon-neutral transportation alternatives!

<http://www.amazon.com/Soil-Not-Oil-En...>

Grant says

A serious must read for anyone who loves being alive. We are in fact in a crisis and the knowledge is out there and can be accessed. Shiva's writting is both unique and heartfelt.

michelle says

while shiva's work was my introduction to ecofeminism, this is actually the first book of hers i've read (or finished, anyway)

vitally important, although it does at times feel lacking in nuance— i would love to know more about what she thinks the transitional stage to earth democracy would be like, for one. i would love to know more about if she thinks existing biotechnology could be used for good during this transitional stage, for another (because i most definitely do)

don't know if i'm giving it four stars, really; it took me so long to finish the damn thing i can't remember. it might be a 3.5

Valerie says

I haven't read this book yet, but went to see Dr. Vandana Shiva speak at the University of New Mexico last night. Farmers in the state of New Mexico are trying to preserve their natural, heirloom seeds for the state's very unique crop: the New Mexico chile.

Corporations and federal government are trying to include unique crops such as the New Mexico chile in a program for genetic modification to make them climate hardy and pest resistant with petrochemicals and genetic mutations, all the while imperiling biodiversity in our global foodshed.

As a cornerstone of the Slow Food and organics movements in the 80s and 90s (and a doctor of astrophysics), Ms. Shiva is a passionate, convicted, knowledgeable speaker who really lit my fire about contributing to the food security and sovereignty cause. I look forward to reading her work for the first time to keep the fire glowing....
