

DWD: Vandana Shiva, globalization, violence

Diverse Women for Diversity

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The Violence of Globalisation

"Protection" has become a dirty word in the era of free markets and globalisation. But, says VANDANA SHIVA, the spread of liberalisation has only led to new forms of violence against humanity. Excerpts from her testimony at the Women's Court, South Africa, on March 8.

WE thought we had put slavery, holocausts and apartheid behind us - that humanity would never again allow dehumanising and violent systems to shape the rules by which we live and die. Yet globalisation is giving rise to new slavery, new holocausts, new apartheid. It is a war against nature, women, children and the poor. A war which is transforming every community and home into a war zone. It is a war of monocultures against diversity, of big against small, of war time technologies against nature.

Technologies of war are becoming the basis of production in peacetime. Agent Orange, which was sprayed on Vietnam, is now being sprayed on our farms as herbicide along with Round up and other poisons. Plants and animals are being genetically engineered, thus making our fields sites of biological warfare. And perverse intelligence is being applied to terminate life's cycles of renewal by engineering "Terminator" seeds to be sterile.

As the violence grows, the stress on societies, ecosystems and living beings is reaching levels of breakdown. We are surrounded by processes of ecological and social breakdown.

Witness the events of our times which are now front page news. Cows in Europe being subject to bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), millions of animals being burnt as foot and mouth disease spreads due to increased trade, farmers in India committing suicide in thousands, the Taliban destroying their heritage by vandalising the Bamiyan Buddhas, a 15-year-old boy Charles Andrew Williams shooting his classmates in a Californian high school, ethnic cleansing.

All these are wars of peacetime, occurring in our daily lives and the last expression of violence in a system which has put profit above life, commerce above justice, ethics and ecology as violent technologies.

Cows are herbivores, they are not meant to eat their own carcasses. But, in an industrial system of factory farming globalised under free trade rules of agriculture, it was

"efficient" to grind up the meat of infected sheep and cows and turn it into cattle feed. This has spread BSE among cattle - a disease that can be transmitted to humans.

Children should be playing with their friends. Schools are not supposed to be war zones. But a culture of guns and violence, combined with one that has focussed so exclusively on commerce and economic growth and material accumulation, has left future generations uprooted and unanchored, afraid and violent. Our children are robbed of childhood. In Iraq, 12 children die every hour because of a trade embargo. In other regions, children are being pushed into prostitution or warfare - the only options for survival when societies break down. Across the Third World, hunger and malnutrition has grown as a result of structural adjustment and trade liberalisation policies.

During 1979-81 and 1992-93, calorie intake declined by three per cent in Mexico, 4.1 per cent in Argentina, 10.9 per cent in Kenya, 10.0 per cent in Tanzania, 9.9 per cent in Ethiopia. In India, the per capita cereal consumption declined by 12.2 per cent for rural areas and 5.4 per cent for urban areas. Denying food to the hungry and feeding the markets is one of the genocidal aspects of globalisation. Countries cannot ensure that the hungry are fed because this involves laws, policies and financial commitments which are "protectionist" - the ultimate crime in the globalisation regime.

Denying medicine to the ill so that the global pharmaceutical industry can make profits is another aspect of genocide. Under the Trade Related Intellectual Property agreement of the World Trade Organisation, countries have to implement patent laws granting exclusive, monopolistic rights to the pharmaceutical and biotech industry. This prevents countries from producing low cost generic drugs. Patented HIV/AIDS medicine costs \$15,000, while generic drugs made by India and Brazil cost \$250-300 for one year's treatment. Patents are, therefore, literally robbing AIDS victims of their lives.

However, in the world order of globalisation dictated by commerce, greed and profits, it is providing cures through affordable medicine that is illegal. India, Brazil and South Africa have been taken to the WTO Court (the Dispute Settlement Mechanism) because they have laws that allow low cost medicine to be produced.

At the World Court of Women, we declare that laws that force a government to deny citizens the right to food and the right to medicine are genocidal. Globalisation is a violent system, imposed and maintained through use of violence. As trade is elevated above human needs, the insatiable appetite of global markets for resources is met by unleashing new wars over resources. The war over diamonds in Sierra Leone, over oil in Nigeria has killed thousands of women and children.

The transfer of people's resources to global corporations also makes states more militaristic as they arm themselves on behalf of commercial interests, and start wars against their own people. Violence has been used by the government against tribal people

in areas where Bauxite is mined in Orissa and in Koel Karo, where the building of a large dam was stopped.

But it is not just non-renewable resources like diamonds, oil and minerals which global corporations want to own. They want to own our biodiversity and water. They want to transform the very fabric and basis of life into private property. Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) on seeds and plants, animals and human genes are aimed at transforming life into the property of corporations. While falsely claiming to have "invented" life forms and living organisms, corporations also claim patents on knowledge pirated from the Third World. The knowledge of our mothers and grandmothers is now being claimed as inventions of western corporations and scientists. The use of neem (*Azadirachta Indica*) as pesticide and fungicide, was claimed to be an invention by the U.S.D.A. and W.R. Grace. India challenged it and got the patent revoked. The seeds and plants of basmati have been claimed as inventions by a U.S. corporation called Ricetec. And these are only some examples of biopiracy which will lead to the absurd situation where the Third World pays for knowledge that evolved cumulatively and collectively. From the Women's Court, we declare that patents on life and patents based on biopiracy are immoral and illegal. They should not be respected because they violate universal principles for reverence for life and the integrity of a culture's knowledge systems.

We will not live by rules that are robbing millions of their lives and medicines, their seeds, plants and knowledge, their sustenance and dignity and their food. We will not allow greed and violence to be treated as the only values to shape our cultures and our lives. We will take back our lives, as we took back the right. We know that violence begets violence, fear begets fear, peace begets peace and love begets love. We will reweave the world as a place of sharing and caring, of peace and justice, not a market place where sharing and caring and giving protection are crimes and peace and justice are unthinkable. We will shape new universals through solidarity, not hegemony.

Women's worlds are worlds based on protection - of our dignity and self respect, the well-being of our children, of the earth, of her diverse beings of those who are hungry and those who are ill. To protect is the best expression of humanity. Those who have tried to transform "protection" into a dirty word, the worst crime of the global market place, see the protection of health, nutrition, livelihoods all call for trade sanctions and "punishment" by the W.T.O. and the World Bank.

To those who have tried to make the protection of life a crime we say echoing Archbishop Tutu: "You have already lost. You need to get out of the way so that we can protect each other, our children and life on this planet." The future does not belong to the Merchants of Death - it belongs to the Protectors of Life.

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