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Priya Kapoor

*Portland State University, cgpk@pdx.edu*

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# EL RETO DE UNA DEMOCRACIA PLANETARIA: VANDANA SHIVA Y LA RELEVANCIA DEL FEMINISMO TRANSNACIONAL

## THE CHALLENGE OF AN EARTH DEMOCRACY: VANDANA SHIVA AND THE RELEVANCE OF TRANSNATIONAL FEMINISM

[ PRIYA KAPOOR ]

Ph.D. del College of Communication, Ohio University. M.P.S. en Communication, Cornell University. Profesora asociada de Estudios internacionales en Portland State University. Enseña comunicación intercultural, teoría y cultura críticas, y género, raza y clase en los medios. Investiga los movimientos populares de Asia del Sur, los medios críticos, las formas culturales transnacionales, las praxis feministas y las articulaciones de una identidad cosmopolita.

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## RESUMEN

Este artículo analiza el caso de la activista ambiental y científica Vandana Shiva y su visión de una tierra democrática, al tiempo que examina la teoría feminista. Shiva media múltiples realidades de compañías multinacionales de biotecnología, movilizaciones populares y su propia marca de prácticas feministas. El activismo de Shiva muestra la posición intermediaria de mujeres líderes que deben balancear y comunicar asertivamente las relaciones entre el Estado y las corporaciones, mientras al mismo tiempo reivindican un liderazgo moral.

**Palabras clave:** transnacional, mediación, poscolonial, globalización, medio ambiente, naturaleza, feminismo, género, movimientos sociales, teoría.

## ABSTRACT

While examining transnational feminist theory, this article scrutinizes the case of environmental activist and scientist Vandana Shiva and her vision of an *Earth Democracy*. Shiva mediates multiple realities of multinational bio-technology companies, grassroots mobilization and her own brand of feminist praxis. Shiva's activism shows the in-between position of transnational women leaders who must balance and assertively communicate the relationship between the State and corporations while asserting moral leadership at the same time. .

**Keywords:** transnational, mediation, postcolonial, globalization, environment, nature, feminist, gender, social movements, theory.

*El impacto de la globalización trae como consecuencia la interacción de ímpetus tecnológicos-institucionales hacia la globalización, con fuerzas de 'localización' y contrapeso.*

(Tomlinson, 2002, p. 270).

El término transnacional ha expuesto un singular significado o definición en las últimas dos décadas de discusión académica sobre comunicación global, género, economía y desarrollo internacional. Por un lado, los académicos argumentan que la resistencia transnacional como el movimiento Ocupa en Norte América, el movimiento anticorrupción Anna Hazare, en India y el Zapatismo en México, generalmente surgen desde la base, lo que conocemos como “desde abajo” (Appadurai, 2000; Jones, 2010; Kapoor, 2013). Otro grupo de académicos sostiene que flujos transnacionales que abarcan múltiples naciones son conducidos por las empresas multinacionales “desde arriba”, y que a su vez, se les brinda la autonomía de manejar las leyes y estructuras de la mayoría de los gobiernos de las naciones (Pycroft, 2000; Maltanye & Harmse, 2005; Sanchez, 2006).

Mi punto de vista es que necesitamos ubicar lo transnacional dentro de lo concreto y lo local, creando inspiración desde los movimientos específicos de personas y agentes, quienes, mediante la resistencia, ven más allá de las limitantes dialécticas de los Estados, las fronteras y los límites. También sostengo que las garantías transnacionales han madurado en su matrimonio con el feminismo, al igual que las particularidades de género, cuerpo, capital y con-

trol, pues se teorizaron y fueron estudiados a pesar de su esencia, consistencia y complejidad (Grewal, 2005; Kaplan, 2006; Masters, 2009).

Este artículo presenta el caso de la activista, científica y ambientalista Vandana Shiva, quien medió y negoció múltiples realidades de compañías multinacionales de biotecnología, movilización popular y su propia práctica feminista. Los escritos de Shiva muestran frases de resistencia global, películas y entrevistas a medios de comunicación. Estos son estudiados principalmente por su mensaje de resistencia transnacional. Su trabajo nos ofrece una oportunidad de un mundo justo, donde la naturaleza no es modificada y los recursos son propiedad de las comunidades donde dichos recursos están. A esta visión, Shiva la llama tierra democrática. Este ensayo analiza este concepto, mientras se contextualiza lo transnacional como una noción teórica, especialmente cuando se está acostumbrado a enriquecer el feminismo transnacional.

El capital global, las realidades locales, el género, la resistencia transnacional feminista y la teoría tienen la necesidad de continuamente inmiscuirse en países del sur, donde la planeación nacional es impuesta por el Banco Mundial y el Fondo Monetario Internacional. Su deuda induce a ajustes de políticas estructurales y proyectos a gran escala, que frecuentemente afectan los medios de subsistencia de los pobres. Mientras todavía se recupera la economía desde los tiempos coloniales, sociedades post-coloniales han tenido que poner cuidadosa atención a la globalización de los procesos y sistemas cotidianos, por ejemplo, la comida y las industrias textiles. Industrias que

alguna vez han operado a un nivel de autoayuda (conocidas como casas de campo), donde tradicionalmente, las rutinas enfocadas en los trabajadores, ahora son reemplazadas por multinacionales con intereses corporativos, las cuales van en contra de las costumbres locales o tradicionales.

En el mundo global del sur, el problema del activismo y la agitación espontánea o planeada recae sobre las mujeres, así sea mal paga. Cuando los hombres buscan trabajo en áreas más verdes de pasto urbano, las mujeres se encargan de las fincas, los espacios domésticos, de conservar las semillas y mantener su hogar y sus hijos. Muchas regiones del sur del mundo reportan una mayoría de migración de hombres, invasiones principalmente desde las zonas agrícolas a zonas urbanas o pasando fronteras. El cambio en sus vidas puede venir también de las largas búsquedas de agua potable, por tener que soportar la violencia en el hogar o por la viudez causada por el suicidio de los endeudados esposos agricultores (Sainath, 1996; Sainath, 2010).

### Transnacionalismo se refiere a la cooperación generada entre los ciudadanos de diferentes partes del mundo en proyectos y agendas de justicia social

Por sus economías diversas y fronteras geográficas, el trabajo de los activistas y becarios fue frecuentemente contrarrestado por el término transnacional. Para evitar usar términos como global, internacional, o cosmopolita, transnacional es una palabra compleja y enriquecida, usada con frecuencia en la academia en occidente. Esos términos tienen sus historias y trayectorias tradicionales, de las cuales *transnacional* quiere separarse. El transnacionalismo puede referirse a globalización asimétrica en muchas partes del mundo (Hardt & Negri, 2000). Además, transnacionalismo se refiere a la cooperación generada entre los ciudadanos de diferentes partes del mundo en proyectos y agendas de justicia social. El feminismo transnacional está ligado a una visión neutral y unas categorizaciones apolíticas de feminismos internacionales mundiales, mientras se trata de dar relevancia a las prácticas feministas en un mundo donde los privilegios de una persona son equivalentes a la explotación de otra.

Sugiero prestar especial atención a la fuerza de trabajo físico en el feminismo transnacional, el cual es importante cuando se entiende el trabajo activista de aquellos que toman la movilización del capital global y del Estado. Por ejemplo, se puede ver la complicidad del Estado con el caso de la empresa “The coke” (Coca-Cola) situada en Plachimada, Kerala (India), que rehúsa a servir de forma local a

los intereses domésticos como el derecho a la subsistencia. Por otro lado, están las regiones ricas en suelo y minerales que los indígenas conocen (Shiva, 2002). Acá existe una conexión con las prácticas de agricultura y las movilizaciones locales y revueltas de quienes exigen reformas de Estado, específicamente en prácticas económicas perjudiciales para algunas comunidades. Por esto es importante plantear la siguiente pregunta: ¿qué estudios de feminismo transnacional sobre la inequidad económica y la privación de analizar críticamente la modernidad se pueden adoptar en contextos postcoloniales?

El feminismo transnacional ha surgido de las humanidades y las ciencias sociales como un paradigma que cuidadosamente reconoce lo contemporáneo, la movilidad de ideas, los problemas de género y sexualidad, y que a su vez, trabajando hacia un modelo de justicia social, se hace un enfoque en la intersección de la nación, la clase económica y el origen étnico y de la historia. El feminismo transnacional toma en cuenta la inequidad en la distribución del poder, la cual es residual desde tiempos coloniales, y la violenta formación de Estados modernos en las naciones, cuando solo se toman campos en las humanidades críticamente ligadas con los hechos históricos del colonialismo.

El feminismo transnacional no espera los sagrados propósitos de la *nación*. Las alianzas transnacionales pueden ser ficticias entre participantes fuera del Estado. Esta es la visión de una humanidad justa y solidaria.

La realidad de epistemologías coloniales es abordada en críticas hacia la modernidad por Eisenstadt (2000) y Said (1978). En su extensiva teorización, en *Modernidades múltiples* y en *Orientalismo* respectivamente, estos autores han prestado una atención crítica a la ficción de conocimiento desinteresado dentro de la modernidad. Ignorando la pluralidad de modernidades nacionales, las formas asimétricas de adquirir este ideal moderno y la alta politización natural de la búsqueda del conocimiento y su producción, nos liga a una tendencia a homogeneizar y generalizar sujetos y fenómenos locales. Académicos de los fenómenos transnacionales han alcanzado su estudio desde una estancia anticolonial y poscolonial (Grewal, 2005; Hegde, 1998). A finales del siglo XX, se encuentran escritos sobre transnacionalismo y globalización, al igual que estudios culturales unidos con las ciencias sociales para interpretar estos flujos que conmemoran una gran medida (Guarnizo & Smith, 1998). Desde 1990, hay teorías de la globalización, creadas por Arjun Appadurai, James Clifford, y Homi Bhabha, las cuales promulgan el *transnacionalismo*, y llevan a construir

entendimiento como “Resistencia popular subversiva, desde abajo”. Esta es directamente opuesta al transnacionalismo “desde arriba”, incluyendo el MNC y desafiando la autoridad del Estado (Guarnizo & Smith, 1998, pp. 2).

Para Appadurai, los temas principales son la migración, las transiciones fronterizas y la nación: los feministas están examinando de cerca los movimientos situados, las vidas de héroes anónimos, y los análisis de nuevos modos de supervivencia. En su enfoque radical, estas áreas de estudio traen “contribuciones de la asimetría del dominio, desigualdad, racismo, sexismo, conflictos de clase, y desarrollo irregular en el cual practicas transnacionales están rodeadas y las cuales algunas veces se vuelven incluso perpetuas” (Guarnizo & Smith, 1998, p. 3).

## LA TEORÍA TRANSNACIONAL POR LAS FEMINISTAS

Como se ha mencionado anteriormente, los estudios feministas no se adhieren al transnacionalismo desde abajo o arriba, como se puede leer en los escritos ligados a culturas teóricas de hombres como Clifford, Appadurai y Bhabha (Guarnizo & Smith, 1998). Nagar y Lock Swarr (2010) estudian los escritos de feminismo transnacional de Kaplan y Grewal (2001), con el fin de planear una tabulación de prioridades establecidas por feminismos transnacionales:

- a) En teorizar la migración como un proceso transnacional; b) señalar la irrelevancia del Estado de nación, en la actual fase de globalización; c) como sinónimo para *diasporic*; d) para designar una forma de postcolonialismo, y e) como una alternativa a la problemática global e internacional, articulada, en principio, por el oeste o la segunda ola feminista euro-americana, así como por las corporaciones multinacionales, para las cuales “volverse global” marca una expansión entre los nuevos mercados (Nagar & Lock Swarr, 2010, p.4).

Caplan y Grewal (2001) encuentran limitadas las tropas de internacionales y globales. El feminismo internacional firmemente se adhiere a la nación de fronteras estatales y no mucho al empuje de la globalización, pero las agendas globales feministas son percibidas como soporte de ellas mismas con “agendas feministas del norte y perspectivas por homogenización de los problemas de las mujeres en justicia sociopolítica, especialmente en contextos coloniales y neocoloniales” (Nagar & Lock, 2010, p. 4).

Es de valiosa importancia que el feminismo cosmopolita transnacional ha sido capaz de desarrollar, de forma concreta, estrategias sofisticadas de acción y ha forjado alianzas cruciales en espacios críticos divulgados, en múl-

tiples foros sobre el mundo social, desde 2002, y en las recientes conferencias de las Naciones Unidas (UN, por sus siglas en inglés). Las reuniones en Beijing en 1995 y el foro de ONG’s en 1994, en el Cairo, son la muestra de esa tendencia a la participación de la sociedad civil. Del Foro del mundo social, Janet Conway dice:

Hay una amplia evidencia de feministas que se ven una a la otra dentro y alrededor del WSF, de la medición del espacio proporcionado por el WSF, así como ellos cantan, bailan y gritan en contingentes visibles y un gran número que se une a la organización, metodologías y manejo del foro (p.61).

Las conferencias de las UN, desde el ICPD (Conferencia Internacional de las UN para la población y el desarrollo) del Cairo en 1994, y el Foro del Mundo Social, han recurrido a miles de mujeres de todo el mundo. El foro ONG’s de Beijing recurrió a 30.000 mujeres activistas de todo el planeta. La internalización obtenida de estos puntos de convergencia es que “hay una pluralidad de feminismos transnacionales..., provenientes de diferentes regiones del mundo, expresando diferentes historias políticas y políticas feministas, pero de las cuales hay colaboración activa y gran convergencia” (Conway, 2007, p. 66).

Nunca las mujeres activistas y delegadas han sido expuestas a esa clase de diversidad de mujeres, nacionalidades y propósitos. Mientras los indicadores socioeconómicos e instancias de innumerables formas de violencia epistemológica no han parado hacia la mujer, desde las conferencias, alianzas estratégicas han ayudado a líderes mundiales y trabajadores populares a entender la intersección de redes problemáticas, enlazando lo global, lo político y lo local.

## IDENTIDADES COSMOPOLITAS EN EL FEMINISMO TRANSNACIONAL

En las civilizaciones de occidente, el cosmopolitanismo es atribuido a los griegos y romanos, quienes creían que, a pesar de la afiliación política, todos los seres humanos son parte de una comunidad que necesita ser renaturalizada. Platón y Aristóteles creían que el principio de lealtad de un ciudadano debe ser hacia la ciudad y no hacia los extranjeros o las tierras extranjeras. La etimología de cosmopolita es *kosmopolitias*, una palabra en griego que significa *ciudadano del mundo* (Stanford Encyclopedia, 2006). Las corporaciones multinacionales también han sido llamadas cosmopolitas, por consiguiente, todos los cosmopolitanismos no son iguales. Las corporaciones apuestan por un comercio translocal, por beneficio y poder, “libre de limitaciones nacionales y ataduras” (Williams, 2008). En su ensayo,



*New Statesman*, Arundhati Roy resume todo como términos que significan bien común y han sido transformados por el capital global.

Palabras como progreso y desarrollo se han vuelto intercambiables con reformas económicas, desregulación y privatización. Libertad ha llegado a significar elección. Tiene menos que hacer el espíritu humano que las diferentes maras de desodorante. “Mercados” ya no significa un lugar donde una va a comprar provisiones. El mercado es un espacio vacío donde empresas anónimas hace negocios, incluyendo comprar y vender el futuro. La justicia ha llegado a significar derechos humanos y de esos, como dicen ellos, algún se cumplirán (Roy, 2009, online).

Las mujeres del sur del mundo están asumiendo un liderazgo y posiciones morales para oponerse gubernamentalmente a procesos que ya están embarrados por el colonialismo clásico y la globalización. Y entonces, sus posiciones activistas se caracterizan como estancias de una globalización alterada (apoyando conexiones humanas, pero oponiéndose a la globalización económica). Conservando la red de ideas de la identidad, el cosmopolitanismo y el transnacionalismo, debemos preguntar lo siguiente: ¿cuáles son las condiciones que conectan a ciertas mujeres transnacionales para invocar una comunidad, fuera de sus lugares de origen, y desde alianzas con otros, para servir a intereses de su comunidad local?, y ¿qué lleva a las mujeres líderes transnacionales a alcanzar afuera lo que es más familiar?

El trabajo transnacional feminista de una figura visible como Vandana Shiva, reconocida y respetada en el circuito internacional del activismo, quien transmite resistencia, da conferencias públicas y presentaciones, llega a ser descubierta en este ensayo. Vandana Shiva, Wangari Mathai, Shirin Ebadi y Arundhati Roy representan movilizaciones populares de izquierda en el sur del mundo, mientras exponen la conciencia de las palabras y la conexión a través de su trabajo. Muestran cómo deben verse a gobiernos y corporaciones para exponer a gran escala la explotación de comunidades rurales y tribus en el mismo progreso. Muchas activistas modernas son extravagantes y polémicas y se han convertido en aguerridas figuras porque su fama las pone en oposición a los trabajadores populares que nunca dejan las orillas de su casa por muchas razones.

Shirin Ebadi, en Irán, ha tomado un gobierno autoritario, y está para pelear por la causa de niños, mujeres y personas que fueron represadas, asesinadas, prisioneras sin ninguna causa o representación. A pesar de que hoy en día se encuentra exiliada en el Reino Unido, ella continuó para

ganar el premio Nobel de la Paz, en 2003. Ebadi ha llegado a representar resistencias feministas o “mujeristas”, en un mundo que no acepta formas represivas existentes hacia el gobierno o en él.

Wangari Maathai es conocida por su determinada problemática por la democracia, derechos humanos y conservación del medio ambiente en Kenia. Durante su vida, ella se enfrentó a una inmensa resistencia por su visión de la vida, pero persistió en su trabajo de conservación del medio ambiente. Arundhati Roy, capacitada como arquitecta, enfocó su energía creativa en el teatro y las películas, y se convirtió en *Honoris Causa* por la publicación de la novela *God of small things (El dios de las pequeñas cosas)*. Ella ha usado su fama para mantenerse en el *Narmanda Bachao Andolan*, un movimiento de personas que existe para poner fin a la construcción de grandes empresas, como el Banco Mundial, que estaba desplazando y marginando a muchas comunidades de su forma de vida y sus tierras ancestrales. Vandana Shiva es una física y activista de nacimiento. Fundó el movimiento de *Semillas Seguras*, oponiéndose a las corporaciones transnacionales, donde está cambiando profundamente el significado de intercambio, transacción y forma de vida en las comunidades tradicionales y evitando la venta de semillas estériles, las cuales deben ser compradas por los agricultores con poco capital, a naciones ricas en recursos.

Algunos académicos están en contra de los itinerarios cosmopolitas de quienes con su imagen representan un mal uso del poder y problemas. Nagar y Lock Swarr (2010) escriben que celebridades activistas se muestran por medio de corrientes populares, lo que puede ser negativo para los movimientos de las mujeres, pues causan generalizaciones innecesarias. En esto estoy de acuerdo, excepto por los movimientos anónimos. Algunos de estos no son tomados en cuenta con facilidad en los escenarios internacionales, y figuras cosmopolitas brindan su imagen y nombre a las protestas. Ese es el caso de Shiva. Personalmente encuentro innecesario alargar los propósitos de las celebridades y prefiero los bloques contruidos por ideas de mercado, de libertad y apoyo. Yo entiendo cómo ciertos movimientos se benefician por la notoriedad e imagen de sus más famosos promotores. Hemos de recordar que como producción académica, el activismo es colectivo, a pesar de que una estrella acepte el fruto de la fama como colaboración (Nagar & Lock, 2010). La cultura de las celebridades, aquellas promovidas por los medios de izquierda de occidente y la academia, reta a la narrativa de colaboración que debería ser más explícita para servir a las etapas incipientes de lucha popular (Nagar and Lock Swarr, 2010). Como consecuencia, el activismo de Vandana Shiva es una emprendedora

colaboración que frecuentemente se muestra en los medios de occidente como una iniciativa individual.

Aquí está el por qué el liderazgo de entendimiento transnacional de mujeres como Vandana Shiva es importante. Si mantener su propia identidad es un enriquecedor objetivo, la mayoría de los ciudadanos que pelean en el Sur de Asia son aparentemente convergentes en su misión. La naturaleza del trabajo falla en la falta de oportunidades de la agricultura y en la migración al centro. Éstas han dirigido a un desigual partimiento de la población en las partes urbanas y rurales de la mayoría de las ciudades alrededor del mundo. El suelo urbano y las oportunidades son resignificados por los movimientos rurales y urbanos de las poblaciones. *Rural* no significa vida rústica y de la misma forma, *urbano* no significa oportunidades económicas y progreso. Primero, existe la limitación en acceso a elementos básicos en la vida rural, como el agua potable, tierra fértil, comida, semillas y bosques. Segundo, en un contexto urbano, está el acceso a la educación, medios, casa, salud y otros servicios esenciales. Estos continúan siendo limitados, gracias a sus costos relacionados con problemáticas socioeconómicas.

Importantes líderes locales, muchos de ellos mujeres, se han apropiado de la lucha en favor de los marginados por el derecho a la igualdad de acceso. Nuevos académicos, escritores y líderes de movimientos, se encuentran dentro de un gran territorio cosmopolita, donde se ven en oposición a modos transnacionales de flujo de capital y su impacto en los procesos populares y la gente. El estado de la nación nivela todo con el intercambio de dinero de capital total y tratados de comercio que de alguna forma, son difíciles de imaginar con políticas justas y sociales, donde aumenten el acceso a recursos naturales y urbanos para los ciudadanos. Los Estados han invertido en fuerzas armadas para proteger sus fronteras contra el terror global. Desde ese lado de la enormidad de los discursos nacionalizados, crean temores como el nacimiento de una guerra, para mantener un buen balance entre lo propio y la agencia. Por esta razón, el control del Estado se vuelve una ardua tarea.

La teoría feminista transnacional ha fallado en empatar con el trabajo de activistas femeninos en el sur del mundo. Especialmente, al denunciar la estenosis y las privaciones en el cuerpo de la mujer saliendo del Estado y entre políticas de Estado y desarrollo nacional. Sin embargo, sugiero que las teorizaciones lleguen a la academia, pues éstas son vitales para el entendimiento transnacional y los Estados procesados que afectan a los ciudadanos. Masters (2009)

critica el trabajo de Foucault en biopolíticas y Agamben es su mayor opositor porque ellos no permiten el apropiado reconocimiento o teorización de la fuerza femenina como un sujeto de guerra. Masters (2009) dice que una fusión de cosas juega entre el silencio alrededor de las mujeres y la guerra del terror, y el enfoque de los soldados de EU torturando hombres prisioneros en Abu Gharib ha servido para “desaparecer las violaciones y el abuso sexual de las mujeres en Iraq” (Masters, 2009, p.45). Examinando las historias de guerra y sobre la participación de las mujeres, Masters (2009) muestra el rango de complejidad de la vida y los roles de éstas. No se pueden comprender, decir o tolerar, y por esto mismo, es impropio hacer de ellas una vida desnuda. Irónicamente, las observaciones de Masters son en nombre de las mujeres: “la guerra se paga”.

## El feminismo transnacional toma en cuenta la inequidad en la distribución del poder, la cual es residual desde tiempos coloniales

El transnacionalismo, por medio de procesos corporativos y de comunicaciones, ha cambiado nuestro entendimiento de la importancia de crear una guerra. Esta se lleva a cabo entre Estados soberanos y con armas. Para presidentes de Norte América, la guerra es distante (a pesar de que el 9/11 cambió la perspectiva). La promoción de la guerra en los medios la hace ver más cerca (Kaplan, 2006). Como consecuencia, los procesos transnacionales hacen la experiencia de eventos remotos más inmediatos y locales, e intensifica nuestra complicidad en esta fácil ingestión, sea con la guerra, salvando las ballenas, la conservación de la naturaleza, o el rango de inquietudes cosmopolita de lo metropolitano. Kaplan llama a esto “la red de entretenimiento de medios militares e industriales” (Kaplan, 2009, pp. 694) o la total inmersión de los ciudadanos modernos de occidente en un mercado que adapta herramientas y tecnologías de uso militar a la vida diaria.

### VANDANA SHIVA COMO ACTOR TRANSNACIONAL

Examinando el trabajo de Shiva, yo lo analizo como un discurso de élite de causas transnacionales, relacionadas con feminismo y ecología. Este es creado mediante políticas locales, haciéndolo notable a una población internacional cosmopolita más grande.

Vandana Shiva, la fundadora del movimiento la Semillas Seguras, se ha apoyado de la industria de ingeniería genética y corporaciones como Monsanto. Su trabajo de una vida, el que sin duda alguna es muy completo, adhiere profundamente a las filosofías del cosmopolitanismo ideal, de compartir contextos económicos, históricos, y coloniales en un mundo con fronteras porosas y cambiantes, además de alianzas políticas. Mientras Shiva comparte la luz con otras celebridades feministas como Arundhati Roy, sus imperios de influencia son diferentes. Las dos emplean estrategias que apelan a las políticas públicas para tomar acción, ya sea en contra de la corporaciones de ingeniería genética que hace a los campesinos depender de fertilizantes, esterilizadores de semillas y pesticidas o, como en el caso de Roy, tomando el caso del desplazamiento rural de personas en contra del Banco Mundial, el FMI o llamando a la reducción de armas nucleares en la India, Pakistán y Estados Unidos. Roy también ha cuestionado la objetividad de la Corte Suprema en un caso de agitación y la complicidad de EU en la guerra, o el terror en serias charlas y serios escritos de prensa populares. La agenda variable y confusa de Roy siempre la lleva a una pérdida de simpatía

cepto de una tierra democrática, la visión de Shiva de equidad está a punto de cambiar estructuras e instituciones, una revolución desde la base.

En su libro del mismo nombre que el artículo mencionado, Shiva (2008) presenta evidencia suficiente para asegurar que comemos petróleo; el petróleo es parte de todos los procesos de crecimiento, empaque y transporte de comida. Shiva recuerda el tenebroso símbolo de la vaca como ejemplo de un estilo de vida de biodiversidad. Mientras la vaca representa un estilo de vida que cree en la preservación de recursos existentes y preservados, su respeto es reemplazado por un carro. Un carro representa la absorción de la economía del combustible, donde se refleja nuestra necesidad de viajar a grandes distancias para trabajar en zonas urbanas. La modernidad transnacional tiene éxito a la espalda de un mundo holístico y rural, que cuidadosamente cultiva su comida, y realiza minuciosamente cada tarea que no estaría en ninguna mente urbana. Lo sagrado de la vaca es evocado en una forma diferente en *Stolen Harvest* (Shiva, 2000). Shiva demuestra cómo el sacrificio de la vaca por carne y leche ha empobrecido el suelo y eliminado el excremento como un importante fertilizador en áreas de agricultura. Este animal simboliza la disfunción de economías centradas en lo corporativo, que alimentan ganado con grano híbrido, dieta plástica de fibra y carnes infectadas que llevan a enfermedades, como la de las vacas locas (Shiva, 2000).

## Las mujeres del sur del mundo están asumiendo un liderazgo y posiciones morales para oponerse gubernamentalmente a procesos que ya están embarrados por el colonialismo clásico y la globalización

entre sus compañeros activistas y audiencias ciudadanas.

Shiva es física nuclear por entrenamiento y siempre deriva su legitimidad como líder internacional desde sus credenciales académicas de ciencias especializadas. La razonabilidad crítica de un científico hace más fácil, para una mujer del tercer mundo, mantener su audiencia. Shiva ha escrito y entrado principalmente en casos de problemas ambientales, lidiando con derechos de propiedad intelectual, biodiversidad, biotecnología, bioética, ingeniería genética y cómo estas estructuras organizadas y legalizadas afectan nuestro medio ambiente y la forma de vida de los indígenas.

En un artículo en *Alternatives Journal*, titulado *Soil not oil*, "Tierra no petróleo", Shiva (2008) hace un llamado a un estilo de vida que no apoye a la industria petrolera. Ella hace un fuerte énfasis en cambiar el paradigma dentro de la industria de la energía y la agricultura, mediante maneras amigables con la naturaleza, usando una mezcla juiciosa de indicadores cuantitativos y narraciones reflexivas para reforzar su punto. Invocando el cambio climático y el con-

cepto de una tierra democrática, la visión de Shiva de equidad está a punto de cambiar estructuras e instituciones, una revolución desde la base. De igual manera, esta autora enlaza la modificación genética y las patentes de semillas con ingeniería genética para la desestabilización de una economía agricultora. En esencia, la seguridad alimentaria y la comida democrática no pueden llevarse a cabo. El único elemento extraído más esencial que el combustible es el agua. En *Guerras de agua* (Shiva, 2002), la escasez global de este elemento se vuelve su tema de investigación. Mientras en 1998, veintiocho países experimentaron problemas por el agua, está estimado que para el 2025, el doble de ese número de países van a experimentar la misma problemática. Los humanos iniciaron el abuso del medio ambiente. La deforestación, la minería, el papel hecho de las plantaciones de eucalipto, la financiación de pozos entubados mal diseñados por el Banco Mundial, son todas las razones para el desgaste de esta tan vital razón de bienestar y subsistencia.

En *Globalización de nuevas guerras* (2005), Shiva construye la lógica de tratados de libre comercio para hacer más exitosas las mega corporaciones responsables por las hambrunas. Lo corporativo espera la dictadura de precios de



la comida a nivel global. Los granjeros y las comunidades granjeras siguen endeudadas, ya que sus cultivos son vendidos sin obtener ningún beneficio o ganancia. La deuda por semillas estériles los mantiene pobres y al borde del suicidio.

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## THE CHALLENGE OF AN EARTH DEMOCRACY: VANDANA SHIVA AND THE RELEVANCE OF TRANSNATIONAL FEMINISM

[ PRIYA KAPOOR ]

*The impact of globalization thus becomes, more plausibly, a matter of the interplay of an institutional-technological impetus towards globality with counterpoised 'localizing' forces.*

(Tomlinson, 2002, p.270)

The term transnational has defied a singular meaning or definition over the last two decades of usage in scholarly discussions of global communication, gender, economics and international development. On one hand scholars argue that transnational resistance such as Occupy in North America, Anna Hazare anti-corruption movement in India and Zapatismo in Mexico, usually emerge at the local grassroots level, in a sense “from below” (Appadurai, 2000; Jones, 2010; Kapoor, 2013). Another set of scholars contend that transnational flows that span multiple nations, are led by multinational companies (“from above”), that are allowed the autonomy to overrule the trade laws and strictures of most nation-states (Pycroft, 2000; Maltanye & Harmse, 2005; Sanchez, 2006; ). My own view is we need to locate the transnational within the concrete and the local, drawing inspiration from specific people’s movements and exemplary stakeholders who, through resistance, transcend the constraining dialectic of nation-states, borders and boundaries. I also contend that transnational scholarship has matured in its marriage with feminism as the particularities of gender, body, capital and control get theorized and scrutinized despite their evanescence, messiness and complexity (Grewal, 2005; Kaplan, 2006; Masters, 2009).

This article presents the case of environmental activist and scientist Vandana Shiva as she negotiates multiple realities of multinational bio-technology companies, grassroots mobilization and her own brand of feminist praxis. Shiva’s writings, statements at global resistances, films and media interviews are studied for insights drawn about her transnational resistance work. Her work offers us a chance for a just world where nature is not commodified and resources are owned by communities in which they reside. Shiva calls this vision earth democracy. This paper visits this concept while contextualizing transnational as a theoretical concept, especially when used to enrich transnational feminism.

### GLOBAL CAPITAL, LOCAL REALITIES, GENDER AND TRANSNATIONAL RESISTANCE

Feminist resistance and theory have needed to continually evolve in countries of the South where national planning is dictated by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Their debt-induced structural adjustment policies and grandly-scaled projects often impinge upon the livelihood of poor folk. While still recouping self and economy from colonial times, postcolonial societies have had to especially pay close attention to the globalization of quotidian processes and systems, for instance food and textile industries. Industries that had once operated at the self-help level (known as cottage); where classically, worker-centered transactions and routines are now unceremoniously replaced by globally-controlled multinational corporate interests which are at odds with local custom.

The burden of activism and agitation—spontaneous or planned falls on the shoulders of women, in the global South, as it is overwhelmingly unpaid. Women tend the farmlands, the domestic spaces, conserve seeds, bear children and keep hearth and home when men search for work in greener urban pastures. Several regions of the global

### My own view is we need to locate the transnational within the concrete and the local

South report majority migrations of men, occupied prior in agricultural work, to urban areas in their own countries or across the borders. Women notice a substantial change in the quality of their existence. The change to their lives may come from walking further to fetch potable water, by bearing the brunt of domestic violence, or of widowhood due to the suicide of their debt-ridden farmer husband (Sainath, 1996; Sainath, 2010).

Activist work and scholarship whose scale traverses diverse economies and geographical boundaries is often collapsed under the term transnational. Transnational is a complex and rich term used often in the Western academy to escape often used terms such as global, international and cosmopolitan. Those terms carry their histories and traditional trajectories from which *transnational* wants to separate. Transnationalism may refer to asymmetrical globali-

zation in many parts of the world (Hardt and Negri, 2000). Transnational also refers to collaborations created among citizen actors from disparate parts of the world on social justice agendas and projects. Transnational feminism then sheds the neutral-seeming and apolitical categorizations of global, international and world feminisms while trying to give relevance to feminist praxis in a world where one person's privilege parallels another's exploitation.

I suggest that paying attention to the extant body of work in transnational feminism is important when understanding the activist work of those who take on mobilization of global capital, and the state itself. The state, as in the case of The Coke Company situated in Plachimada, Kerala, India, refused to serve local, domestic interests thereby choking the right-to-livelihood (and depleting the aquifers) in regions otherwise rich in soil, minerals and indigenous knowhow (Shiva, 2002). The connection to agricultural practices, root and tether local mobilizations and agitations whose demands are the reformation of state-led economic practices that is onerous for communities. Raising the following question is important here: How does transnational feminist scholarship take on the matter of economic disparity and deprivation, of critiquing modernity, in postcolonial contexts?

Transnational feminism has emerged within the humanities and social sciences as a paradigm that carefully acknowledges the contemporary, mobility of ideas, problematizing gender and sexuality and working toward a model of social justice, while foregrounding the intersection of nationhood, economic class, ethnicity and history. Transnational feminism takes on inequitable legacies of power, residual from colonial times, and the violent formation of modern nation states, when only select fields within the humanities critically engage with the historical fact of colonialism. Transnational feminism does not hold *nation* and its purposes sacred. Transnational alliances can, after all be forged between non-state actors. This vision is one of a shared, just, humanity.

The reality of colonial epistemologies is addressed in critiques of modernity by Eisenstadt (2000) and Said (1978). In their extensive theorizations in *Multiple Modernities* and *Orientalism* respectively, Eisenstadt (2000) and Said (1978) have brought critical attention to the fiction of disinterested knowledge within modernity. Ignoring the plurality of national modernities; the asymmetrical ways of acquiring this modern ideal and the highly politicized nature of knowledge-seeking and production leads assiduously to a tendency to homogenize and overgeneralize subject and local phenomena.

Scholars of transnational phenomena have approached their study from an anti-colonial or postcolonial stance (Grewal, 2005; Hegde, 1998). In the end-of-the-20<sup>th</sup> century writings on transnationalism and globalization, Cultural Studies converges with the Social Sciences to interpret these flows as largely celebratory (Guarnizo & Smith, 1998). Theories of globalization by Arjun Appadurai, James Clifford, and Homi Bhabha from the 1990s yielded *transnationalism*, a construct understood as "subversive popular resistance 'from below'" which is directly opposed to transnationalism "from above" involving MNCs disrupting the authority of the State (Guarnizo and Smith, 1998, pp. 2). While Appadurai et al's main topics are migration, border transitions, and nation: the feminists are closely examining situated movements, lives of unsung heroes, and analysis of new modes of surveillance. These areas of study bring into sharp focus the "enduring asymmetries of domination, inequality, racism, sexism, class conflict, and uneven development in which transnational practices are embedded and which they sometimes even perpetuate" (Guranizo & Smith, 1998, p.3).

## THE TRANSNATIONAL THEORIZED BY FEMINISTS

Feminist scholarship, as mentioned earlier, does not adhere to the transnationalism-from-above-or-below typology identified in the writing of leading male cultural theorists, Clifford, Appadurai and Bhabha (Guarnizo & Smith, 1998). Nagar and Lock Swarr (2010) study the transnational feminist writings of Kaplan and Grewal (2001) to outline a tabulation of priorities established by transnational feminisms:

"a) in theorizing migration as a transnational process b) to signal the demise or irrelevance of the nation-state in the current phase of globalization c) as synonym for *diasporic* d) to designate a form of postcolonialism; and e) as an alternative to the problematic of the global and the international, articulated primarily by Western or Euro-American second-wave feminists as well as by multinational corporations, for which 'becoming global' marks an expansion into new markets" (Nagar & Lock Swarr, 2010, p.4).

Caplan and Grewal (2001) find the tropes of international and global to be confining. International feminisms firmly adhere to nation-state borders and not as much to the push and pull of globalization, whereas global feminist agendas are perceived as aligning themselves with "northern feminist agendas and perspectives and for homoge-



nizing women's struggles for sociopolitical justice, especially in colonial and neocolonial contexts" (Nagar & Lock Swarr, 2010, p.4).

It is worthy of note that transnational cosmopolitan feminisms have been able to develop, in concrete ways, as sophisticated strategies of action and have forged crucial alliances at critical spaces carved out at the multiple World Social Fora since 2002, and the recent United Nations' Conferences. The Beijing NGO Forum, 1995, and the Cairo ICPD, 1994, are of note as they set the trend of civil society participation. Of the World Social Forum, Janet Conway says:

"there is ample evidence of feminists finding each other in and around WSF, of seizing the space provided by the WSF as they sing, dance, shout and demonstrate in visible contingents and large numbers and contest the organization, methodologies and management of the forum (p.61)."

The UN conferences since the ICPD Cairo (International conference of the UN on Population and Development) in 1994 and the World Social Forum have drawn on thousands of women from the world over. The NGO forum in Beijing drew over 30, 000 women activists from all over the world. The insight gained from these points of convergence is that "there is a plurality of transnational feminisms..., emerging from different world regions, expressing distinct political histories and feminist politics, but which are actively collaborating and appear broadly convergent" (Conway, 2007, p.66). Never had women activists and delegates been exposed to that kind of diversity of women, nationality and purpose. While socio-economic indicators and instances of myriad forms of epistemic violence have not ceased for women since the conferences, strategic alliances have helped world leaders and grassroots workers understand the intersecting networks of issues tying together the global, the political, and the local.

## COSMOPOLITAN IDENTITIES IN TRANSNATIONAL FEMINISM

Cosmopolitanism in Western civilization is attributed to the Greeks and Romans who believed that regardless of political affiliation all human beings are part of a community that needs to be nurtured. Plato and Aristotle believed that a citizen's first loyalty should be toward the polis or city not toward foreigners or foreign lands. The etymology of cosmopolitan is *kosmopolites*, a word in Greek that

means *citizen of the world* (Stanford Encyclopedia, 2006). Multinational corporations have also been called cosmopolitan therefore all cosmopolitanisms are not the same. Corporations stand for translocal commerce, profit and power; "free from national limitations and attachments" (Williams, 2008). Arundhati Roy's essay in the *New Statesman* summarizes how terms that signified common good are now transformed by global capital.

"Words like progress and development have become interchangeable with economic reforms, deregulation and privatization. Freedom has come to mean choice. It has less to do with the human spirit than it does with different brands of deodorant. "Markets" no longer means a place where you go to buy provisions. The market is a de-territorialized space where faceless corporations do business, including buying and selling futures. Justice has come to mean human rights and of those, as they say, a few will do" (Roy, 2009, online).

Women from the global South are assuming leadership and moral positions to oppose governmentalist processes that are already muddled by classical colonialism and globalization. And so, their activist positions are characteri-

## Transnational also refers to collaborations created among citizen actors from disparate parts of the world on social justice agendas and projects

zed as alter-globalization (supporting human connections but opposing economic globalization) stances. In keeping with the web of ideas such as identity, cosmopolitanism and transnationalism, we are compelled to ask: what are the conditions that lead certain transnational women to invoke a community, outside of their own place of origin, and form alliances with others, in order to serve the interests of their local community? What drives transnational women leaders to reach outside of what is most familiar?

The transnational feminist work of a visible figure, Vandana Shiva, recognized and respected in the international circuit of activism, direct resistance, public lectures, and presentations comes under scrutiny for this paper. Just as Vandana Shiva, Wangari Mathai, Shirin Ebadi and Arundhati Roy also represent leftist grassroots mobilizations in the Global South, while espousing a worldly consciousness and connectedness through their work of taking on governments and corporations alike to expose mass scale exploitation of rural-based and tribal communities in the name of progress. Many modern day activists are flamboyant and

pugnacious and have become embattled figures because their fame often places them in opposition to grassroots workers who never leave their home-shores for a plethora of reasons.

Shirin Ebadi has taken on an authoritative Sharia government in Iran to fight for the cause of children, women, and persons who were repressed, killed, imprisoned without cause or representation. Even though she is in exile in the UK now, she went on to win the nobel peace prize in 2003. Ebadi has come to represent feminist or womanist resistance in a world that does not accept existing forms of repressive government and governance. Wangari Maathai is known for her tireless struggle for democracy, human rights and environmental conservation in Kenya. In her lifetime she faced immense resistance for her vision of life but persisted in her work on conservation of the environment. Arundhati Roy, trained as an architect and found her creative energy in theatre and film, became *cause celebre* with the publishing of her novel *God of Small Things*. She has used her fame to stand for the Narmada Bachao Andolan, a peoples' movement to halt the building of large, World Bank funded dams that was displacing and

image of their most famous advocate. Activism, like academic production, is collective even though one star bears the fruit and fame of that collaboration (Nagar and Lock Swarr, 2010). Celebrity culture, even if endorsed by the Western left media and academia, undermines the narrative of collaboration that ought to be made explicit to serve fledgling stages of grassroots struggle (Nagar and Lock Swarr, 2010). Therefore, the activism of Vandana Shiva is a collaborative enterprise that often gets showcased by Western media as her individual initiative.

Here is why understanding transnational leadership of women such as Vandana Shiva is important. If maintaining selfhood and identity is a worthy goal, most citizen-centered struggles in South Asia are seemingly converging in mission, toward highlighting the constrained material access of denizens. Nature of work, that is, lack of agricultural opportunities and migration to urban centers has already led to an unequal split in population in the urban and rural parts of most cities around the world. Urban lands and opportunity is stressed due to rural to urban movement of populations. *Rural* does not signify bucolic life in the same way *urban* does not signify economic

opportunity and promise. First, the constraint in access to basic elements in the lives of rural folk, such as potable water, arable land, food, seeds, and forests. Secondly, in an urban context, access to affordable education, media, housing, health and other essential services remain limited due to their

costs and related socio-economic class issues. Remarkable local leaders, many of them women, have taken up cudgels on behalf of those disenfranchised for the right to equal access. Emergent scholars, writers, and movement leaders find themselves thrust onto a larger cosmopolitan arena where they see themselves in opposition to modes of transnational capital flow and its impact upon grassroots processes and people. Nation-states flush with money from global capital exchange and trade agreements are somehow unable to imagine social, welfare policies to improve access to natural and urban resources for its citizens. Nation states have invested in the armed forces and weapons to protect its borders against global terror. In the face of the enormity of nationalized discourses such as the war-on-terror, to keep a fine balance between self, agency, and state controls becomes an arduous task.

Feminist transnational theory has failed to catch up with feminist activist work in the global South. Especially when denouncing the strictures and privations on the female body emerging from state and inter-state policies of

### Women from the global South are assuming leadership and moral positions to oppose governmentalist processes that are already muddied by classical colonialism and globalization

disenfranchising several communities from their livelihood and ancestral lands. Vandana Shiva, a physicist and activist of seeds founded the seed save movement opposing transnational corporations whom are profoundly changing the means of exchange, transaction, and livelihood in traditional communities by advocating sterile seeds that have to be purchased by farmers in capital-poor but resource-rich nations.

Scholars warn against cosmopolitan itinerants whose image overpowers the struggle they stand for. Nagar and Lock Swarr (2010) write that celebrity activist showcasing with regards grassroots movements can be deleterious to the success of the women's movement causing unnecessary generalizations and I agree except that faceless movements do not get noticed easily in the international arena, and cosmopolitan figures provide a face and a name to a struggle. While I personally find it unnecessary to forward the purposes of celebrity-ism, the building blocks of which are facile marketed ideas of freedom and advocacy. I understand how certain movements benefit from the notoriety and

national development, or state-supported aggression such as war. Even though I suggest that theorizations come late to academia, they are vital to the understanding of transnational and state processes that affect citizen actors. Masters (2009) critiques the work of Foucault on bio-politics and Agamben's magnum opus *Homo Sacer* because they do not allow for the adequate recognition or theorization of the feminine body as subject of war. Master's (2009) says that "a mixture of things plays into the silence surrounding women and the war on/of terror, and the focus on US female soldiers torturing male prisoners at Abu Ghraib has served to make "disappear" the rape and sexual abuse of women in Iraq" (p. 45). In examining war stories about participating women Master's (2009) shows that a range of complexity about women's lives and roles in war cannot be comprehended, told, or tolerated therefore rendering them absent in bare life. And ironically, Master's observes, it is in women's name that war is waged.

Transnationalism, via corporate and communications processes, has also changed our understanding of the seriousness of engineering a war. War is waged between sovereign nation states with armies. For residents of Northern America, war is distant (although 9/11 changed that perception). Media consumption makes war seem closer and localized (Kaplan, 2006). Therefore, transnational processes make the experience of remote events more immediate and local, but intensifies our complicity in its easy mass mediated consumption be it war, saving the whales, conservation of nature, or the range of metropolitan concerns of the cosmopolite. Kaplan calls it the "military-industrial-media-entertainment network" (Kaplan, 2009, pp. 694) or the total immersion of modern-Western citizens in a market that adapts gadgets, knowhow and technology in military use to everyday life. The GPS, satellite streaming of war incidents, and surveillance technology are the most common forms of everyday individual use.

## VANDANA SHIVA AS TRANSNATIONAL ACTOR

In examining Shiva's work, I scrutinize how an elite discourse of transnational causes, related to feminism and ecology is created by invoking local politics, yet making it noticeable to a wider international cosmopolitan activist population.

Vandana Shiva, the founder of the Seed Save movement has taken on the genetic engineering industry and corporations such as Monsanto. Her life's work, which is in no way complete, adheres deeply to the philosophies of ideal cosmopolitanism, of shared economic, historical,

and colonial context in a world with porous and changeable boundaries and political alliances. While Shiva shares the limelight with other celebrity feminists such as Arundhati Roy, their realms of influence are disparate, they both employ strategies that engage in rousing an already politically-involved public to take action whether it be against the genetic engineering corporations that make farmers dependent on fertilizers, sterile seeds and pesticides or as in Roy's case, taking up the cause of rural displaced populations against large, World Bank and IMF funded dams, or calling for a reduction in nuclear weapons in India, Pakistan and the US. Roy has also questioned the objectivity of the Supreme Court in a sedition case and the US complicity in the War on/of Terror in a series of talks and popular press writings. Roy's diffuse and ever-changing agenda often leads to a loss in sympathy among fellow activists and citizen audiences.

Shiva is a nuclear physicist by training and often derives her legitimacy as an international leader from her science-specific academic credentials. The reasonableness of a scientist in critiquing scientific rationale makes it easier for a third world woman leader to hold her audience. Shiva has written and agitated mainly on environmental matters dealing with intellectual property rights, biodiversity, biotechnology, bioethics, genetic engineering and how these legalized organized structures affect our environment and the livelihood of indigenous people.

Shiva (2008), in an article in *Alternatives Journal* titled *Soil not Oil* advocates a lifestyle that does not lend support to the petroleum industry. She makes a powerful case for shifting the paradigm within the energy and agriculture industry by advocating ways that are earth-friendly using a judicious mix of quantitative indicators and reflective narrative to enforce her point. Invoking climate change and the concept of Earth Democracy, Shiva's vision of equity is about changing structures and institutions, a revolution from the ground up. In her book of the same name as the article, Shiva (2008) presents enough evidence to assert that we indeed eat oil. Oil is part of every process in the growing, packaging, and transporting of food. Shiva recalls the sacred symbol of the cow as a reminder of a bio-diverse way of life. While the cow stands for a pace and lifestyle that believes in preserving existing resources, its worship is replaced by that of the car. A car stands for our absorption with an oil economy where we rely on our need to travel long distances for work in urban areas. *Soil not oil* becomes an important motto and credo for urban living. Transnational modernity succeeds on the back of a more holistic rural world that carefully grows its food, and performs every menial task that the mind of a modern urban denizen dare

not be occupied with. The sacredness of the cow is invoked in a different way in *Stolen Harvest* (Shiva, 2000). Shiva demonstrates how the desecration of the cow for meat and milk have impoverished the soil and eliminated cow dung as important fertilizer in agricultural areas. The cow stands for the dysfunction of corporate centered economies that feed cattle hybrid grain, plastic as diet-roughage, and infected meats that lead to mad cow disease (Shiva, 2000). Shiva links genetic modification and patenting of seeds, genetic engineering to the destabilizing of an agricultural economy. In essence, food security and food democracy cannot be achieved.

The only mined and harvested element more essential than oil is water. In *Water Wars* (Shiva, 2002) the global scarcity of water becomes the subject of investigation. Whereas twenty-eight countries experienced water stress in 1998, it is estimated that by 2025, double that number of countries are expected to experience the same stress. Human initiated abuse of the environment, deforestation, mining, paper making eucalyptus plantations, widespread funding of water-spewing tubewells by World Bank are all reasons of depletion of this very vital reason for our wellbeing.

### **Founded the seed save movement opposing transnational corporations whom are profoundly changing the means of exchange, transaction, and livelihood in traditional communities by advocating sterile seeds that have to be purchased by farmers in capital-poor but resource-rich nations**

In *Globalization's new wars* (2005) Shiva deconstructs the logic of Free Trade by making the successful mega-corporations responsible for famine and hunger. The corporate hold on food allows the dictation of food prices globally. The farmers and the farming communities remain in debt as their crops are sold for no gain or profit. The crushing debt of sterile seeds keeps them poor or driven to suicide.

Shiva has, in books, disparate journals, popular press, and media forums critiqued corporate control of elements that are essential to our very existence—seeds, soil, water, oil. She makes key concepts in the environment, central to our lives, such as climate change, usufructuary nature of water, biodiversity, green capitalism, carbon trading and eco-imperialism. The inveigling of these terms into our repertoire has concrete benefits because these terms become meaningful at the level of everyday talk and dis-

course. While Shiva's books tell us about her philosophical treatises on philosophy, her media presence speaks more to the grassroots work she is involved in at Navdanya (an NGO headed by Shiva).

Shiva plumbs, at different times in her research, extant scientific knowledge on bio-technology and bioethics juxtaposed with stark, heart-rending ways in which agricultural communities suffer due to the imperatives of modernity and the dictates of globalization. Without her riveting prose there would be one less voice and substantially reduced visibility for those who live in some of the poorest regions of the world and are remote if only in their ability to access media, education and political institutions.

Shiva often uses the earth and its bounty (soil, water, rivers, air) without problematizing the social construction of terms that fall under the rubric of nature or the environment. Baviskar (2008) however, has questioned how the conceptual term *natural resources* rolls from the lips of scholars without being mindful about the binary world-views presupposed in the terms *nature* and *resource*. *Nature*

suggests the nature/culture dichotomy wherein nature is untamed, signifying human desire. *Resources* invokes an image of well managed human capital. The two polarities, namely, nature and resource, according to Baviskar, "rest upon assumptions about space and territory, and how they relate to collectivities in the past, present, future" (p.8). Baviskar notes in her critique of natural resources as a government-

alist discourse that these cultural formations have always been in flux and fraught with contention. Shiva's work in the Seed Save agitations and Roy's work with Narmada Bachao Andolan, (NBA), further scrutinizes the ways in which nature and resources still remain embattled when nation-state and corporate entities combine forces to create a cultural shift in the ways in which citizens think about national progress and development. Shiva and Roy's work draw on indigenous struggles that have maintained a steady momentum for the number of related mobilizations it has spawned in recent three or so decades. The Chipko environmental movement of the 70s, in the North Indian state now known as Uttarakhand, was Shiva's starting point as activist. The Narmada Bachao Andolan, a struggle to agitate against World Bank funded mega dams on the Narmada river displacing millions from ancestral lands, has been the cornerstone of Roy's activism.



Shiva, in one of her earlier books *Ecofeminism* (Mies and Shiva, 1993) takes on the Nature question within feminism, forming a powerful collaboration of ideas and partnership across nations and histories. Mies and Shiva (1993) predate recent feminist calls for collaborative practices within activism and academics (as have Nagar and Lock Swarr, 2010). It is an influential book, partly because of its scope and partly because, in the nineties, it filled an important gap in feminist literature though thereafter became vulnerable to critiques of essentialism. *Ecofeminism* (Mies and Shiva, 1993) bridged the chasm of North-South partnership in feminist writing. More importantly it showed how women's lives in agricultural and urban communities are closely linked to symbolism that is essentially female—the earth and its ecology. The project also stands in for a critique of post-1950s' international development juggernaut that rode rough shod over postcolonial nations, divorcing rigorous analysis of gender, sustainable agriculture, poverty and economic class from state planning.

Given the recent skepticism against mother earth philosophies, Gaard (2011) questions what is to be gained from doubting and discarding the scholarship on ecofeminism. Scholarship on ecofeminism, Gaard (2011) contends, lends important language, momentum, and precedence to current movements in global gender justice, climate justice, sustainable agriculture, affordable housing, and health care. In a more recent essay, Milstein and Dickinson (2012) introduce an androcentric-gynocentric dialectic exposing values of masculinity as dominating over a more feminine construction of nature. These anthropocentric and androcentric values are employed when describing whale families, ant colonies or more simply a family of trees. The study shows that despite the feminine essentialism of ecofeminist perspectives, it is the material reality of a masculinized global economy that holds sway over nature/culture constructions (Milstein & Dickinson, 2012).

## AN EARTH DEMOCRACY

Shiva's most powerful and forceful idea thus far is that of an Earth Democracy. As a term it draws upon and coalesces with other terminology and slogans that she has proposed previously such as soil-not-oil (Shiva, 2008) or water democracy (Shiva, 2002). In *Ecofeminism* (Mies and Shiva, 1993) and *Staying Alive* (Shiva, 1988) she revives Hindu goddess symbolism to demonstrate how worship and conservation of rivers, soil and seeds is part of the same continuum. Shiva invokes goddess culture even though worshipping the goddess is not as mainstreamed as text-based Hindu traditions. Yet goddess worship is vital and widespread in South Asia. However, the language of

democracy seems to invite the modern nation-state, in the coinage of earth-democracy. *Earth* precedes *democracy* therefore Shiva seeks to combine the sacred-modern principles of earth that is coded as the supreme mother, and democracy, which brings in equitable principles of modern governance.

Combining the sacred and the profane is an effective political tactic. The earth/democracy binary draws upon indigenous principles of respect for nature while acknowledging that philosophies of democracy underscore modern virtues of equality, representation and shared governance.

In an earth democracy, as envisioned by Vandana Shiva, food, seeds, soil and water are not transformed into a corporate enterprise that steals the wealth of indigenous people globally. Furthermore, the right to grow their food and conserve seeds must be in the hands of local communities. Globally, we are on the brink of mismanagement of water and food resources. Corporations such as Monsanto provide an easy route for nations to provide its citizens with plentiful food but the health and social costs are too high. The nationalist struggles between Israel and Palestine must be understood as a serious battle for its precious and sacred waterways that will not be shared. Water corporations that commodify basic drinking water stand to benefit in nations with an agricultural economy, where traditionally water is subsidized and free for its poorest agricultural workers and farmers. In an earth democracy, justice is meted by placing land, food and water resources in the hands of its stewards and community members. Selling of life's basics as expensive commodities is a crime, as is the selling of these commodities to those for whom they are useless. An example would be the vast number of farmer suicides in India resulting from the inability of the farmer to pay back loans used for buying sterile seeds from corporations such as Monsanto. These sterile seeds were bought instead of growing crops that traditionally yielded self-generating seeds that were then carefully conserved by the women-folk of the village. Changing a village's agricultural economy to a cash-based market economy has extracted a high price among inhabitants of rural India and around the world with similar agricultural practices.

## MORAL LEADERSHIP OR ELITISM: THE VITAL IN-BETWEEN DOMAIN OF TRANSNATIONALISM

The bigger issues such as large hydel dams, dam refugees, bio-ethics, GMO seeds and bio-technology that Shiva and Roy speak out about remain unresolved matters within

the public sphere. Issues of gender and equity are contingent and difficult to settle within the unique postcolonial context of South Asia. Transnational activists are a global phenomenon and represent the interests of historically marginalized subaltern, rural, and tribal populations. They negotiate a contentious global arena of national, corporate MNCs, and local interests, therefore, it is easy to shine the spotlight on transnational activists. Their writings and call-for-action may seem to come from a position of relative privilege. However, charges of privilege need to be carefully contextualized because activists of the global South may not enjoy the same racial, economic, or political privilege as their counterparts in the West. Postcolonial histories and their subaltern status are important signifiers of their identity. Their socio-political alliances in the western world allow them means to showcase their individual work and passion while seemingly removing them, for prolonged periods of time, from a grassroots and local context. Privilege is often confined to receiving invitations for delivery of keynote addresses, paid talks, sponsored travels to prominent European and North American venues. Transnational activist leaders are assured an audience base that is committed to keeping certain issues such as the environment, human rights and social justice alive in the public and political imagination. Those remain the few effective ways to remain visible in widely accessed news streams, or to be written up in proceedings of conferences, and to receive follow-up invitations from newsgroups for interviews and writing contracts. Transnational activists have traveled to every major city in the world, especially in North America, via several world leader lecture series, an honor traditionally reserved for prominent international scientists, to give rousing mass audience talks. Often these public talks have very rudimentary and controlled question and answer sessions at the close which ensures that their political statements go unchallenged. Remaining in this way, in the public eye, has come with its own brickbats and criticisms for Roy and Shiva. A large number of cosmopolites in the West form meaningful alliances supporting similar resistances as in Shiva's home country, India. There is the Oregon farmer's resistance to genetically modified beet seeds, echoing and taking inspiration from the Bt brinjal movement against Monsanto in India (Abdelgawad, 2012).

Popular culture is determinedly circulated through a vast number of, what has come to be known as the Culture Industries (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1957). Just as the Culture Industries, such as the ones situated in Los Angeles or New York, make sure that certain genres of music remain recurrent in the public imagination through effective marketing and ceaseless promotion. In the same way, prominent

talk circuits ensure that the general public is able to understand the politics of the speaker. For instance, Shiva talks of the global practices of Monsanto while at the Occupy Monsanto demonstrations and her speeches get recorded in social media, but anything too involved with deep local geography-specific realities would lose her crowd. While Shiva and Roy seem to come to the issues they espouse in seriousness and in earnest, their international connections and exposure have not particularly changed the lot of their constituency or the specific causes they represent back home, in substantive ways. It has however, given rise to an elite cadre of women leaders within grassroots work in South Asia. Instead of easy cynicism, one can argue though that activist work takes a long time to bear fruit.

In contrast, not many women in prominent positions in Indian politics, namely, the administrative cadre, the diplomatic corps, academics, and local activism enjoy the same opportunity and media coverage as Shiva and Roy. There are many local leaders that enjoy the support of local constituencies but have no means to travel widely with their message. While there is a very active audience following for transnational women leaders who can act as voice and conscience of local struggles, there are only a few women who have the right kind of profile that commands respect among an elite audience as global leaders. From Roy and Shiva's example, it would seem that women who emerge as leaders, need, an *enfant terrible* status with governments of the countries that they hail from. An oppositional status ensures that they are able to speak from an alternate position of authority with the ability to equally match the status of national, politically elected leaders.

The labels transnational leaders, such as Shiva, acquire for their activist skills also go a long way in making work seem overly populist and therefore disingenuous. "Time Magazine identified Dr. Shiva as an environmental *hero* in 2003 and *Asia Week* has called her one of the five most powerful communicators of Asia" (Wikipedia, 2011). Within the circles of grassroots activism, to be identified by *Time* and *Asia Week* as a hero does not always count for Kudos. The honor is usually associated with a certain kind of dubious celebrity success.

In the end, transnational feminist alliances show us that simply opposing the purveyors of globalization, namely, the corporate entities, is not the only task at hand. Even civil society alliances need caution. In recent years several grassroots movements and mobilizations have redefined themselves and registered as non-profit agencies or NGOs. Over time, dependence on foreign funding, political pressures, and the lack of continued local monetary support has often compromised the original movement (Kamat, 2002).

Globalization's workings in postcolonial societies, complicates the position of the feminist activist who can no longer work in opposition to the state alone. Globalization, in a postcolonial nation, seeks to tap into elite structures and institutions while employing an already subaltern population to serve as the new working class. The garment factory fire that took the lives of over 1,100 persons in Bangladesh in April 2013 is a powerful example of the government of a nation dependent upon MNCs (Walmart etc.) and industry, in this case, the garment industry for its foreign currency reserves. In typical self-serving fashion, the garment industry owners have effectively advocated on their behalf for laws against unionization of garment workers (Harris 2013).

Given these realities, exacerbated by postcolonial power dynamics, the feminist activist must negotiate her stakeholder standpoint in order to clearly position herself vis-à-vis the corporate machinery and the state which may, at different historical moments, be an ally and at other times, an adversary. The feminist activist in a transnational age is in an in-between position *and* must bear moral leadership at the same time.