

Our Common Future, Chairman's Foreward (1987)

The Brundtland Commission, formed under the chairmanship of Gro Harlan Brundtland (former Norwegian Prime Minister), was convened by the UN General Assembly in 1983.

Laid the groundwork for the critical 1992 Earth Summit, Agenda 21, and the Rio Declaration

- “since the answers to fundamental and serious concerns are not at hand, there is no alternative but to keep on trying to find them.” **(Have we succeeded in the last two decades? In some domains but not in others?)**
- “perhaps our most urgent task today is to persuade nations of the need to return to multilateralism.” **(What is multilateralism? Unilateralism? Bilateralism?)**
- “The 1972 *UN Conference on the Human Environment* brought the industrialized and developing nations together to delineate the “rights” of the human family to a healthy and productive environment. A string of such meetings followed: on the rights of people to adequate food, to sound housing, to safe water, to access to means of choosing the size of their families.” **(Why would “rights” be in quotes here?)**
- “The environment does not exist as a sphere separate from human actions, ambitions, and needs, and attempts to defend it in isolation from human concerns have given the very word “environment” a connotation of naivety in some political circles. The word “development” has also been narrowed by some into a very limited focus, along the lines of “what poor nations should do to become richer.” **(What are some other effects of terminology on the way we conceptualize things? Does “developed country” evoke a different image than “more developed country”?)**
- **Bhopal Disaster (1984) and Chernobyl Disaster (1986) further underline the need for “global sustainable development”**

Vandana Shiva, *Staying Alive* (1989)

How is this piece different from what we've read so far? What are the various assumptions that Shiva questions and rejects? To what extent do you agree with her analysis?

Shiva, an Indian physicist, activist, and **ecofeminist** is a strong voice in the **anti-globalization movement**

Foreward

- “In the shift from the modernist, competitive and ‘catching up’ orientation of the first generation of feminists to a much more holistic, nurturant and non-dualistic perspective that is beginning to emerge from recent thinking on feminism, this

book may prove to be an important contribution.” **(What is this saying? Why is it relevant to our course?)**

- “Shiva’s effort to organically relate the concerns of ecology with the feminine principle. By doing so she has already broadened the arenas of both the environmental and the feminist movements and given a composite intellectual meaning to both.” **(What are the benefits—and drawbacks—of interdisciplinarity? Is there a difference between being interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary?)**

Introduction

- “Green revolution agriculture has decreased genetic diversity and increased the vulnerability of crops to failure through lowering resistance to drought and pests.” **(why would the Green revolution decrease genetic diversity?)**
- “modern science and development are projects of male, western origin, both historically and ideologically. They are the latest and most brutal expression of a patriarchal ideology which is threatening to annihilate nature and the entire human species.” **(What is this saying? What does Shiva propose as an alternative?)**

Ch. 1: Development, Ecology, and Women

- According to Shiva (and Rosa Luxemburg), “colonialism is a constant necessary condition for capitalist growth.” **(This was definitely true during the British Empire, but do you agree that this is still true today? There are many prominent—and cogent—defenders of trade liberalization and modern globalization who would strongly disagree.**
- **What are the ways in which** “development itself is the problem”?
- “**Maldevelopment** is the violation of the integrity of organic, interconnected and interdependent systems, that sets in motion a process of exploitation, inequality, injustice and violence. It is blind to the fact that a recognition of nature’s harmony and action to maintain it are preconditions for distributive justice.”
- “it is now imperative to recover the feminine principle as the basis for development which conserves and is ecological.”
- “Political struggles of women, peasants and tribals based on ecology in countries like India are far more acute and urgent since they are rooted in the *immediate threat to the options for survival* for the vast majority of the people, *posed by resource intensive and resource wasteful economic growth* for the benefit of a minority.” **(This is a key point, but also a key claim...remember Shiva’s positioning in the anti-globalization movement.)**
- **Separating subsistence living from poverty via dispossession or deprivation...we tend to lump the two together, whereas Shiva is saying they are very, very different.**