

Review: Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability, and Peace

By Vandana Shiva

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Vandana Shiva. *Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability, and Peace*.
Cambridge, MA: Southend Press, 2005. 207 pp. ISBN: 0-89608-745-X
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paper.

Earth Democracy is a movement that "prioritizes people and nature above commerce and profits" (p. 82). Earth Democracy as a phrase is defined a number of times in the book. A full definition is found in "10 Principles of Earth Democracy" (p. 9-11) covering from item one, "All species, peoples, and cultures have intrinsic worth," to ten, "Earth Democracy globalizes peace, care, and compassion." These principles represent a broad sweeping alternative view of a kinder more compassionate future. Earth Democracy builds on previous movements and thinkers, particularly Ghandi.

The author is a writer, speaker, activist, environmentalist, physicist, and director of India's Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology, an institute that promotes farmers' rights, the preservation of agricultural diversity, and freedom of agriculture from multinational seed corporations. These themes are found throughout the book. She is author of many books, including *Water Wars: Privatization, Pollution and Profit* (2002).

The book contains numerous examples, perhaps no more than small starts, of changes that have led to Earth Democracy. The focus is on India, but the ideas and examples can be applied to other countries and cultures as well. The examples use people and organizations that have reclaimed their public places, resources, livelihoods, freedom, dignity, and identities—all things that had been taken from them. To reclaim these areas of life, Shiva uses a model involving the ideologies of living economies, living democracies, and living cultures. Living economies are two economies left out of the globalized market economy, first, the sustenance economy, where "people work to directly provide the conditions necessary to maintain their lives" (p. 17), and nature's economy, where "natural resources are produced and reproduced through a complex network of ecological processes" (p. 16). Living democracies are based on local democracy and self-rule. Living cultures are "based on cultural diversity and recognize our universal and common humanity" (p. 110). The final part of the book introduces Earth Democracy in action with a focus on seed, food and water, and taking back control of

our food systems from corporations and trade regulations.

Shiva takes to task the alphabet organizations of globalization: GATT (General Agreement of Tariffs and Trade, IMF (International Monetary Fund), WTO (World Trade Organization), TRIPS (Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights), and of course, the World Bank. There is a strong anti-market economy bias, particularly capitalism. Her values lie in small producers, local economies, and indigenous knowledge. For some readers, the Earth Democracy movement will seem excessively optimistic, long on idealism and short on pragmatics. On the other hand, Shiva's criticisms represent a good starting point in understanding the negative impact of globalization on developing countries and the environment. Recommended for personal and library collections.

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