

Can Spirituality Save the World?

Georgian Triangle Lifelong Learning Institute

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Section One: What is spirituality?

Spirituality is an attempt to understand and conform to an “unseen order” that is considered ultimate.

- Has cognitive and practical dimension
- Has individual and social dimensions
- Can be religious or secular (SBNRs, etc.)
- Is pluralistic, dynamic and fluid
- Connects and divides
- Is morally ambiguous: inspires for good or evil
- Is a solution to a problem

Section Two: Vandana Shiva on Spirituality, Ecofeminism, and Industrial Farming

1. Resistance to the Green Revolution and Globalization

Vandana Shiva's response to Industrial Farming

- 1982 creates Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology
- 1991 creates Navdanya (“Nine Seeds”)
- 1993 recipient of the Right Livelihood Award
- 1998 launches Diverse Women for Diversity, an international version of Navdanya
- 2001 Bija Vidyapeeth, (Earth University), School and organic farm

2. India's “Green Revolution”
 - a. Positive gains and negative consequences
 - b. Spiritual and cultural decline: loss of “swaraj” (self-determination)
3. Bio-technology Industry's Agenda
4. Vandana Shiva and saving seeds as a form of swaraj
5. Vandana Shiva and Eco-feminism: critique of “patriarchal capitalism”

Vandana Shiva and Ecofeminism: critique of patriarchal capitalism

- Industrial farming is masculinist: arises out of patriarchal Western philosophy of control
- Moves from organic cooperation with nature to control over nature
- Shifts control from villagers and locals to government and international capital
- Shifts control from farmers (mostly women) to politicians and corporations (mostly men)

Four false assumptions in patriarchal capitalism

- We are separate from nature
- Nature is dead matter, raw material for industrial exploitation
- Indigenous cultures are inferior and primitive
- Nature and cultures need improvement through manipulation and external inputs

6. Spirituality is a solution to a problem

Section Three: Thich Nhat Hanh and Pope Francis on the Ecological Crisis

Engaged Buddhism and the ecological crisis

1. Who is Thich Nhat Hanh?
2. Engaged Buddhism: The Four Noble Truths reconsidered
3. Engaged Buddhism and the Ecological Crisis
4. Thich Nhat Hanh, modernity, and the environmental crisis
 - a. The three poisons: delusion (forgetfulness), anger, and greed
5. The cure is mindfulness: Interbeing
6. Interconnectedness and ecology

Pope Francis, Saint Francis and the ecological crisis

1. Who is Pope Francis?
2. *Laudato Si'*! (2015) and *Laudate Deum* (2023)
3. The problem: climate change and the suffering of the poor
4. Approach to nature as "resource"
5. St. Francis as model for an I-Thou relationship to creation
6. The new sin of idolatry

Further reading

Vandana Shiva, *Monocultures of the Mind*
----- *Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply*
----- *Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability, and Peace*
Also explore: Navdanya.org

Thich Nhat Hanh, *Peace is Every Step*
----- *The World We Have*
----- *Love Letter to the Earth*
Also explore: Plumvillage.org

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*!
----- *Laudate Deum*
Also explore: Vatican.va

Vaughan-Lee, Llewellyn, ed. *Spiritual Ecology: The Cry of the Earth* (a collected volume)

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