

Executive Summary:

Making Peace with the Earth - An Ecofeminist Manifesto

Diverse women from all walks of life are creating a new solidarity, showing that women-led cultures have long existed on this Earth in peace. At the 1996 World Food Summit the DWD declared in the face of industrial agribusiness that food sovereignty must be kept in women's hands - that they were creating unnecessary disease, hunger and ecological destruction. Coming from all over the world, the Diverse Women For Diversity movement has continued to gather and share the belief that differences, contexts, the variety of voices, and the variety of ways that they express care, are key to resisting the imposition of industrial uniformity. It is diverse cultures that will lead the way to the future.

In March 2023, the DWD gathered at the Navdanya Biodiversity Conservation Farm in Dehradun, India to celebrate the unique and rich diversity of life, cultures, food and knowledge, to share the struggles, victories, and actions in defense of the Earth, biodiversity, and food. Over 150 women gathered, from more than 20 countries, from 21 states of India, Latin America, North America, Europe, Japan, Africa, and Australia, among many others. There were farmers, bakers, poets, archivists, indigenous leaders, travelers, fisherwomen, archaeologists, gift economists, geneticists, academics, doctors, mothers, and more. There were women in their twenties and women in their eighties. Sacred Mother Earth was celebrated by planting a Garden of Hope with seeds from all over the world, cooking and sharing Breads of Freedom. Women shared seeds, prayers, music and dance. It was a celebration of Nature, the sacred laws of Ecology, and the regeneration of the Earth Family through women's creativity and power. The celebration also became the space for everyone to reflect on the state of the world and the answers to all the overlapping crises in Mother Earth.

Today, women are again in the vanguard of defending biodiversity, seed freedom, and food sovereignty. Women activists, scientists and scholars are at the forefront of shaping new scientific and economic paradigms to reclaim seed sovereignty and food security across the world. As seed keepers and food producers, as mothers and consumers, women are engaged in renewing a food system that is better aligned with the ecological processes of the earth's renewal, the laws of human rights and social justice, and the means through which bodies may stay well and healthy.

It is time those in power start listening to the women and the small-scale farmers protecting their plants, seeds and cooperating with Mother Nature to live in harmony with the Earth. Food is life, and it will continue to be defended. Diverse women stand for the promotion, protection and practice of diversity: biological, cultural, economic, political, and knowledge. The DWD will continue to share and reaffirm the commons, the knowledges for living, the true science of life, all rooted in ecofeminist and indigenous epistemology.



The world stands at a crossroads for humanity, in this moment of overlapping crises. From this crossroads there are two ways of interpreting and imagining the human relationship to the Earth. On the one hand, there is the worldview that renders nature as mechanical, dead, and as a storehouse of resources for human use has stirred up mass suffering and destruction for all life on Earth. This Mechanistic worldview sees the world as a machine, and not as a self-organized living system. Machines are assembled and controlled externally. Their function is given from outside, such as the production of a specific output. They neither evolve nor adapt. Acting as if the world were a machine leads to a world in which living processes and systems are undermined and destroyed.

Following this worldview leads us down a path of further destruction and results in the thinking that false solutions such as gene editing, fake synthetic foods, and financialization of nature are needed to secure the future. But these false solutions, stemming from the mechanistic view of nature, only works to further separate us from nature, as well as perpetuate the violence from the paradigm of extractivism and 'growth' without limits. These artificial mechanistic modes of food production deny the essential symbiotic relationships between humans, plants, animals and microorganisms and, in turn, deny their potential to maintain and regenerate the web of life.

This worldview has also led to the current and ongoing disappearance of species understood as the "sixth mass extinction", climate change, the loss of livelihood for millions and the destruction of Nature. All in large part due to the unrelenting exploitation of nature for profit. Diversity has been systematically eroded due to industrialized agriculture being based on models of uniformity, monoculture, agrochemicals, and wild land clearing. The more uniform the products, the easier they are to control, sell, and trade, only serving the profits of large companies. The richness of nutrients, stability of ecosystems, natural beauty, and the diversity of tastes fall by the wayside. Life does not belong in the hands of chemical companies but in the hands of peasant ecologists and farmers whose millennia-old expertise is being lost.

The Ecofeminist worldview seeks to reverse this trend, by upending the hierarchies of power that have become institutional, and begin mending the frayed fabric of life. Ecofeminist and Indigenous epistemology and ontology follow the basic ecological principles of Nature's law: the interconnectedness, interrelatedness, and interdependence of all facets of Creation and Life. That Mother Earth is sentient and not isolated from the whole. Indigenous knowledge systems arise out of a deep and long understanding of ecological principles of Nature's Law and ecological sustainability. They have preserved and ensured healthy living systems and their peoples' survival down the ages. This is a vision of interconnection that recognizes that all humans are part of nature, not separate. That sees that nature and women are not objects to be exploited or used by hierarchies of power, and that no human is superior to any other, irrespective of their gender, culture, work and livelihood. Instead it sees us all as one Earth Family of sentient beings, who have the right to live and evolve through love and care.

The Ecofeminist paradigm calls for the imperative transition to local, biodiverse, ecological systems that work in harmony with nature, in order to heal ourselves and heal the Earth. From the soil microorganisms, to plants, animals, to food and microbiomes, all are connected through biodiversity. Diversity in food systems, diversity in seed, diversity in food and economies are needed. Just as the biodiversity of life connects all, so does cultural diversity, language diversity, and the diversity of struggles. Diversity is the thread that connects us all.

The Earth is an interconnected web of life. Biodiversity, the variety of all life on the planet, sustained by Earth's ecological system of communication, is the outcome of Nature's true intelligence. Nature's laws and knowledge systems, arising out of deep understanding of ecological principles and sustainability, ensure the continuation of healthy systems. Life creates and maintains life. Living systems have negative feedback loops which keep the conditions of the planet within boundaries that are favorable to life. Climate Change is the result of the rupturing of these boundaries and destruction of knowledge and cultures that live in accordance with the laws of ecology, the laws of Oikos, the common Home.

Climate change and ecological destruction also have a direct tie to human health. The health of the planet and human health are non-separable. The world is facing a planetary climate crisis and health crisis, which is largely the result of the globalized industrial agriculture system. The multiple crises reach from the soil, water and seeds, to the production, processing and distribution of food. Transitioning away from industrial agricultural systems toward ecological systems is not only essential to deterring further emissions and mitigating climate change, it means food and water security, improved livelihoods and jobs, the protection and regeneration of biodiversity and of critical ecological systems, animal well-being, human health, and more equitable socio-economic societies.

A shift from violence to non-violence has become a survival imperative. It is also an ethical and ecological imperative. The word ahimsa or nonviolence does not mean just the absence of war but is a whole new way of living in harmony with each other, with all of creation, with Mother Earth. Gandhi wrote, "The principle of nonviolence necessitates complete abstention from exploitation in any form." Peace with the Earth begins with cultivating non-violent ways of knowing and living, of listening to nature and learning from species who have been here long before us. Nonviolent economies are based on recognizing and respecting the creative contributions by the earth, women, indigenous cultures, farmers and workers.

Making peace with the Earth comes from caring for the health of the planet, her biodiversity, her people and her systems through an Economy of Care that is about life's generosity and the joy of sharing in the gifts of the natural world. Economy should not be an instrument of extraction or of separation, as is the basis of corporate economies and globalized markets. The Economy of Care is an economy based on gifting as a law of nature. Gifting is the holistic model of abundant lifeways which needs to be embedded into the economy of life.



The future of food and the future of life on earth, as well as the solutions to the ecological collapse cannot be found in the logic and hands of those who caused it in the first place. Solutions are in the hands of women, agroecological farmers, social movements and networks that are resisting the disruption of nature and society. The Ecofeminist Economy is about freedom – the freedom of every person, man, and woman, to mother and care for their children, their families, and communities, and ecosystems, and to pass on their knowledge and love of one another and of the Earth, in harmony with the rhythm and cycles of all sentient beings on this planetary home.

Just as Mahatma Gandhi's spinning wheel, the Charkha, became a symbol for freedom, Seed has become a Charkha for the emancipation of all life forms from transnational corporations and the governments they have captured in this period of recolonisation. Seed is self-organized complexity in permanent renewal, regeneration and interconnectedness. The Diverse Women for Diversity call for a celebration of the Seed, symbol of life and of future potentials, recognizing that the revitalization, and conservation of biodiversity is only possible through diverse women, their culture, their needs, and their creativity. Stand for Seed Freedom, freedom of people, freedom of the Earth, and the freedom of every living species. The conservation of diversity is the commitment to let alternatives flourish in society and in nature, in economic systems and in knowledge systems. Diverse Women for Diversity, diverse in culture, race, religion, socio-economic conditions, have one common goal: biological and cultural diversity as the foundation of life on Earth. Stand for self-sufficiency, self-reliance and solidarity, locally and globally.

Call to Action to Make Peace with the Earth

Seed Freedom

Seed is the source of life. It is the self urge of life to express itself, to renew itself, to multiply, to evolve in perpetuity in freedom. Seed is the embodiment of biocultural diversity. It contains millions of years of biological and cultural evolution of the past, and the potential of millennia of a future unfolding. Farmers rights to save, exchange, evolve, breed, sell seed is at the heart of Seed Freedom. Seed sovereignty is threatened by the deliberate transformation of the seed from a renewable, self generative resource to a nonrenewable patented commodity. Sharing and not appropriation should apply to biodiversity and genetic resources as well as to their associated knowledge.

We shall continue promoting participatory breeding, seed saving, and seed sharing, in the name of Seed Freedom. The only option to develop resilience in the face of climate change, is to cultivate diversity. Modern-day industrial seed breeding seeks consistency of plant production, meaning the same plant variety must produce a uniform crop. Farmers, and local and small breeders, especially women, have been plant breeders and seed producers throughout agricultural history. And have bred for consistency through time to build resilience to ensure successful harvest throughout the generations. Therefore, agrobiodiversity for seeds must remain in the hands of small farmers, free to exchange, grow, revitalize and evolve living seed.

Seed Freedom and Biodiversity is the foundation of Food Freedom and Climate Resilience. We commit ourselves to defending seed freedom as the freedom of diverse species to evolve, in integrity, self-organization and diversity.

Climate Resilience

The climate crisis we are facing today is being exacerbated by the industrial food system which is both very vulnerable to climate change and a significant contributor to it. We are witnessing today the attempt by agri-corporations, in conjunction with the World Economic Forum, to hijack the narrative of transition, by manipulating the vocabulary, and propose greenwashed or techno "silver bullet" solutions. We do not accept Industrial Agriculture as a solution to the climate crisis and hunger. We do not recognize false solutions to climate change such as geo engineering, "climate smart" agriculture, genetic engineered "improved" seeds, or "biodiversity offsets".

A global transition to biodiverse and local food and farming systems is key both for mitigating and adapting to climate change and for ensuring food sovereignty, the overall health of ecosystems and people, the generation of livelihoods and healthy economies, the creation of equity and justice. Millions of farmers, seed savers, gardeners, and local communities are already building this alternative rejuvenating the planet, one seed at a time, building the health of ecosystems, generating livelihoods and healthy economies and creating equity and justice.



Health

The Earth is an interconnected web of life. The health emergency we face as a global community is connected to the health emergency the Earth is facing through its steady degradation, the extinction of species and the climate emergency. We call for a holistic and integrated response to the current health emergency. Biodiversity richness in our forests, our farms, our food, our gut microbiome make the planet, her diverse species, including humans, healthier and more resilient to pests and diseases. This means making a transition away from the fossil fuel intensive, chemical intensive, industrialized and now digitized paradigm of agriculture and globalized trade. Such a vision stands as the root cause of our current health crisis and only serves to increase our separation from the Earth. Instead we call for the imperative transition to local, biodiverse, ecological systems of producing and distributing food in order to heal ourselves through healing the Earth.

Food

Food is the source of nourishment and life, not a list of isolated nutrients. Many of us know our food only through numbers: how many calories, how many grams of cholesterol, protein, and fat. But food is more than this. Grown organically, in living soils, with methods that support biodiversity and the health of our environment, nutrient-rich, chemical-free food is the basis for our health, and the basis of our food cultures. Food is not just fuel for our machine-like body. Living food nourishes our minds, connects us to our ancestors, and brings meaning to our lives. We use four of our senses before we lift a utensil. Flavor has the power to remind us of our histories and our relationships. Everyone should be able to be proud of their roots, of their regional specialties, of their unique tastes. We shall work to change the way we think about food in order to put an end to the uniformity of taste. Food is a pillar of our diverse identities, part of our cultures and relationships with Nature. Eating is political. Eating is an ecological act.

Earth Democracy

We commit ourselves to creating participatory living democracies and resist all attempts to hijack our democracies through powerful interests. We will organize on the principles of sharing, inclusion, diversity and the duty to care for the Planet and each other. We make a pact to live consciously as Earth Citizens recognizing that the Earth Community includes all species and all peoples in their rich and vibrant diversity. We will plant gardens of hope everywhere, and sow the seeds of change towards a new Planetary Citizenship and for a new Earth Democracy based on justice, dignity, sustainability and peace.

Diversification and Intergenerational Responsibility

We embrace traditional practices which will allow us to diversify our foods and our production systems without raising energy inputs. We will continue to encourage animal husbandry practices and seasonal foods, we can look to examples like “kacchi ghanis” cold pressed oils and the four ways to produce jaggery, respectively. Working within seasonal parameters and working in partnership with animals will allow us to diversify. We will endeavor to transmit intergenerational knowledge around food preparation by inviting our children, partners, friends, and elders into the kitchen. It is in this space that lessons on food seasonality, medicinal spices, and the delicate flavor balances home-made remedies and recipes are passed from grandmother to mother to daughter.

Youth

Youth are valuable contributors to diversity. We recognize the need for alternative flows of information and communication. Our mission to self-organize requires that we are able to communicate our values not just within an echochamber, but to a new generation of women, farmers, climate activists, and citizens of the world. Another way to facilitate the intergenerational sharing of food wisdom is by developing institutions of ecological teaching and learning. From creating a food garden of hope, to cooking a meal, to cultivating a diversity of seeds across and within species. It is important to get young students of all ages involved in learning about food and agroecosystems from seed-to-table.

Festivals

We will collect and communicate our traditional knowledge and stories of creation. Storytelling and celebrations are valuable means of re-embedding ourselves in Nature. In India, many traditions or festivals occur at a seasonal turning-point, which allows us to locate our daily work, in a sacred and cosmic context. In other parts of the world there are ecologically-rooted traditions as well, such as the many agricultural folk festivals in Italy, and these are the stories we are committed to continue telling. Youth can be inspired and excited through the revival of songs, celebrations and festivals having to do with agriculture, and part of welcoming youth into the conversation is encouraging them to sing their songs and dance their dances as well.

Biocultural Stewards

Women and farmers keep systems of biodiversity alive. It is necessary to preserve the communities that allow biodiversity to thrive by recognizing and supporting these stewards. Farming communities must be recognized as collaborative guardians and managers of ecosystems. Through the use of holistic, agro-ecological technologies we may bring about a more equitable, more sustainable, and healthier Planet. To fight hunger, we need a fair distribution of food, land, and wealth. There is enough food in the world for everyone; unfair ownership, competitive conditions, monopolies, man-made conflicts, lack of infrastructure and education, are the root causes of world hunger.



In order to begin to reverse the urgent biodiversity extinction crisis, it is fundamental to recognize that the biodiversity of our planet is inextricably linked to the traditional knowledge and regional practices that make up our bio-cultural heritage. Once biodiversity is recognized as the biocultural heritage of indigenous peoples, women and small farmers we will understand that it is only through the perseverance of these peoples, their languages, their knowledge and wisdom, and their practices that the degradation of biodiversity can be avoided. We as a collective gathering of women see sharing, cooperation, non-violence, and holistic education as the path to a hunger-free and abundant world.

Economy of Care

Local living economies of Care protect the Earth, create meaningful work and provide for our needs and wellbeing. Care of the Earth regenerates Nature's resources, biodiversity and economy that provide us with life and sustenance. Economies of care are based on circular economies, of giving, reciprocity, sharing and mutuality – the Law of Return. Economies of care are based on reclaiming the commons and public goods – care of the Earth and sharing of the Earth's common resources: the commons of seed and biodiversity, of water and land, of food and nourishment; and the public goods and services that societies have evolved through common responsibilities and common rights: knowledge, democracy, health, education, energy, transport, and shelter. Privatization, patents and enclosures of the commons are a failed system of a colonial process based on extraction and greed and have no place in economies of care. We endeavor to create producer-consumer networks that localize food systems and encourage coexistence, self-sufficiency, loving care, and enable rural economies to thrive. We look up to our Japanese sisters with the Seikatsu club who, every day, organize the purchasing of diverse, clean and GMO-free produce for 420,000 households. Local living economies of care are based on reclaiming, recovery, and rejuvenating through localisation and decentralization to reduce the ecological footprints, increase economic opportunities and wellbeing of people and communities, and enhance community cohesion. We will not participate in production and consumption systems, including industrial food and agriculture, that destroy the Earth's ecological processes, her soils and biodiversity and displace and uproot millions from the land.

Rights of Nature

Mother Earth intrinsically has rights. We have to recognise and live according to her laws. The denial of Nature's rights has led to destruction of Nature and now threatens the very conditions of human survival. In an ecologically interconnected world, denial of the rights of Nature translates into denial of human rights, as the same constructs that lead to violence against Nature and her destruction, are the basis of violence against fellow human beings. One of the most destructive allowances of extraction based economies is for man to treat Nature like a storehouse of resources. We must recognize that Nature's rights are People's rights, and we have a duty to protect both.

Oneness vs Separation

There are two ways to see the human relationship to the Earth. Through a vision of interconnection that recognizes that all humans are part of Nature, not separate. That sees that Nature and women are not objects to be exploited or used by hierarchies of power, and that no human is superior to any other, irrespective of their gender, culture, work and livelihood. We are one interconnected and interdependent humanity living on planet Earth. Or we can fall into the trap of separation and domination, as is the basis of capitalist and mechanistic thinking which rules us today. Mechanistic knowledge sees the world as a machine, not as a self-organized living system. Machines are assembled and controlled externally. Their function is given from outside, such as the production of a specific output. Acting as if the world were a machine leads to a world in which living processes and systems are undermined and destroyed. We must instead recognize that we are a single Earth Family, united in diversity, oneness and the duty to care for the Earth.

