

Speech by Vandana Shiva

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This speech is also available in [audio on the Alliance's Youtube channel](#)

Thank you very much to all of you who are keeping creativity alive in a period where small publishers weren't supposed to exist just like I have done my little bit of work in keeping diversity alive in farming and agriculture, and defended the freedom of seed and the freedom of food in a time when one company was supposed to control all the seed, when one non-publisher, non-author wants to control all the publishing. And, in fact, they are all clones of each other; they are no different, the Microsofts, the Amazons, the Bayers and the Monsantos—they work, of course, for maximising extraction and profits but they also work to control and extinguish. I do not think you can make profits in a world of diversity and self-organisation without extinguishing diversity itself. It is a central principle. I have been working with diversity, for diversity, for the last five decades now, beginning with the forests, the farms, and when I left academic institutes I took a pledge I would not publish because I saw publishing as a rat race and it was one from your network, Ritu Menon, who started Kali for Women, who persuaded me to write. So I want to thank you all because your network has made me an author. Otherwise I wouldn't be writing. I would be acting, I would be doing science, I'd be doing all the work I do, but I wouldn't be writing, I wouldn't be called an author of books. I wouldn't have written the many books if I didn't have publishers who were sensitive, publishers who had their own networks, publishers who worked with my philosophy of smallness is beautiful, smallness in self-organised form is largeness—it is largeness of mind, it is largeness of heart, it is largeness in terms of expanding the possibilities of humanity and the earth in a time where the dominant economy would like to shrink those possibilities.

I have watched how monocultures entered agriculture and that has been a large part of my own learning. But I have also watched how India the land of the most beautiful clean clothing has ended up being a monoculture of junk clothing; the land of the most beautiful foods has ended up being a monoculture of junk foods. You are keeping quality alive in the area of food for thought like I do my bit in keeping quality alive in food. And it comes from diversity. Diversity is what weaves the web of life. Diversity is not a luxury, it is the very basis of both natural and cultural existence. Those who claim to be creating by extracting from diversity, the diversity and creativity of writers, publishers, of the seed, of the soil, they are, in fact, putting an interesting creation boundary and denying the creativity of those from whom they steal.

This is exactly what colonialism was; this is exactly what continued colonialism is, as I have written in my book, *Oneness vs. the 1%*, which Women Unlimited—and many of you—has published. Diversity is not just vital as the very fabric of social, cultural and ecological existence, diversity is resilience. If you were not as diverse as you are and if you did not publish the diversity of ideas that are necessary for our times not only would you as a publishing network not have the resilience and robustness that is needed, but wouldn't be providing that amazing robustness to society in a period where, like monocultures are destroying the fertility of the soil and creating deserts, and every time I see large numbers of refugees I think of how the possibility of staying home is being destroyed for more and more people whether it's through wars or through the destruction of soil or through its extractivism, of a level where life becomes impossible, you are arresting the desertification of our minds because if we had to live on the diet of the propaganda, on the diet of "big data" as the new oil, on the diet of a monoculture ideal of the world is, humanity will not survive. Humanity is already on the brink of collapse. So, as we resist through our diversity, as we resist through our self defying creativity, no matter how much there is denial of that creativity, the true creativity is in the seed, the true creativity is in the mycorrhizae in the soil, the true creativity is in the beautiful dialogue between our food and our gut. You know, I've basically trained in quantum theory and I was just at a conference on how molecular biology reduced the word to this one way central dogma: that the DNA is the master molecule, and it tells the RNA how to behave which then tells the

protein how to behave, and there is no conversation. But the world is conversation, all life is communication, food is the communication of the soil to the plants, to our gut.

Your publishing is communication, and it is in the niches, in the cracks that the light comes in. You are keeping that light coming for society. So I want to again thank you because I know what it takes to not just stay small but be small in aliveness and connect to other smalls that are equally alive. I see the world very much in the form of self organisation and the central principle of all living systems whether they be organisms, or they be ecosystems, or they be ideas, or living cultures, or living economies, they are all based on self-organisation. External control is an extractive system. All living systems are based on diversity; all living systems are based on the law of return, on circular economies, on sharing and that's why you've created the economy of the future. Amazon is the dinosaur who is going to go, and when the world looks back, publishing will have been kept alive by you. Just as the small efforts that Navdanya, the movement I started, has made in saving seeds. It is what is necessary today in periods of climate havoc. The Monsanto Roundup Ready seeds and Bt toxin are totally failing; it's the climate resilient seeds that nature has given and that our farmers have evolved that are necessary as the cyclones come, the flood tolerant seeds or the drought tolerant seeds... that diversity, as I said before, is our resilience, is our robustness because diversity creates multiple relationships, multiple relationships create synergy and symbiosis, and that is true creativity. That dialogue of cooperation.

Competition is an extinction, competition of the powerful is a deliberate denial first bringing invisibility, then marginalisation, then extinction and extermination, and I believe your conference, as you meet as independent publishers, is part of the large movement that is saying "we will not be pushed to extinction" by a handful of greedy men, who now run the corporations. There are the corporations that used to be then, but today they are all owned by the same billionaires who have their assets in BlackRocks and their assets in Vanguards. The determination to refuse to become extinct is the ultimate will of freedom and creativity, and diversity is freedom, smallness is freedom, self-organisation is freedom. Not in isolation, not in atomistic insulation, but in vibrant networks of mutual support, in vibrant networks of mutual nourishment, and you have done that work in the world of imagination, you have done that work in the world of freedom of expression. When I look at the size of the propaganda machine and I look at your size, I see you are the seeds of freedom for the future. Keep your work strong, we are with you, we are part of you, we are co-creators together.

Thank you.

