

terrorism as cannibalism

By Vandana Shiva

The year 2001 will be etched in our memory as a year in which the vicious cycle of violence was unleashed worldwide. Of the Taliban bombing the two thousand year old images of peace, the Buddhas of Bamiyan. Of terrorists blowing up the World Trade Center on September 11, and attempting to blow up the Indian Parliament on December 13. Of a global alliance bombing out what remained of Afghanistan after two decades of super power rivalry, and civil war. Of Pakistan and India threatening to go to war as 2001 gave way to 2002.

Why is violence engulfing us so rapidly, so totally? Why has violence become the dominant feature of the human species across cultures? Could the violence characterizing human societies in the new millennium be linked with violent structures and institutions we have created to reduce society to markets and humans to consumers?

Animals of any species tend to become violent when they are treated with violent methods. Pigs love to placidly root in the fields, wallow in the mud and grunt to each other. However, when denied this freedom in factory farms (where they are confined in

overcrowded, steel-barred crates or multiple stacked cages known as battery cages), pigs become bored, stressed and anxious. They start gnawing cages, picking on each other, biting each other's tails and ears and resorting to what agribusiness industry has called "cannibalism."

Pigs are not cannibals. When they start to display cannibalism, the normal question industry should be asking is why are pigs behaving abnormally. The organic movement and animal liberation movement has raised the question and found the answer in the violent methods of factory farming. In humane farming pigs have been liberated and allowed to roam and roll in the mud. Stopping violence against animals is the best way to stop their violent behaviour.

Violence has become a luxury the human species cannot afford if we are to survive. Non-violence has become a survival imperative.

Industry has a different solution to "cannibalism" induced by the concentration camp conditions of factory farms. Operators of pig factories chop off the tails of week old piglets without any anaesthetics to prevent other pigs from chewing them off. They also remove eight teeth with wire cutters. Male piglets have their testicles cut off to reduce their aggression in crowded areas. There is a similar maiming of other animals raised in factory farms; for example, the beaks of chickens are burnt off, and the horns of cows are removed.

Humans are animals. As a species we too have basic needs — for meaning and identity, for community and security, for food and water, for freedom. Could terrorism be the human equivalent of the abnormal behavior of "cannibalism" animals exhibit under factory conditions?

Cultural security, economic security, ecological security and political security are all being rapidly eroded. Could the violence being unleashed by humans against humans be similar to the violence pigs, chicken and





cattle express when denied their freedom to roll in the mud, peck for worms, and roam outside the confines of animal factories?

Could the coercive imposition of a consumer culture worldwide, with its simultaneous destruction of values, cultural diversity, livelihoods, and the environment be the invisible cages against which people are rebelling, some violently, most non-violently?

Could the "war against terrorism" be equivalent to the detoothering, debeaking and dehorning of pigs, chickens and cattle by agribusiness industry because they are turning violent when kept under violent conditions? Could the lasting solution to violence induced by the violence of captivity and enslavement for humans be the same as that for other animals — giving them back their space for spiritual freedom, ecological freedom, for psychological freedom and for economic freedom?

The cages that humans are feeling trapped in are the new enclosures which are robbing communities of their cultural spaces and identities, and their ecological and economic spaces for survival. Globalisation is the overarching name for this enclosure.

Greed and appropriation of other people's share of the planet's precious resources are at the root of conflicts, and the root of terrorism. When President Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair announced that the goal of the global war on terrorism is for the defense of the American and European "way of life", they are

declaring a war against the planet — its oil, its water, its biodiversity.

A way of life for the 20 percent of the earth's people who use 80 percent of the planet's resources will dispossess 80 percent of its people of their just share of resources and eventually destroy the planet. We cannot survive as a species if greed is privileged and protected and the economics of the greedy set the rules for how we live and die.

Reclaiming our freedoms and spaces from the new enclosures is as essential to us as it is to other animals. Animals were not designed to live imprisoned in cages. Humans were not designed to live imprisoned in markets, or live wasted and disposable lives if they cannot be consumers in the global market. Our deepening dehumanisation is at the root of growing violence. Reclaiming our humanity in inclusive, compassionate ways is the first step to peace.

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Peace will not be created through weapons and wars, bombs and barbarism. Violence will not be contained by spreading it. Violence has become a luxury the human species cannot afford if we are to survive. Non-violence has become a survival imperative.

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