

India: The State of Independence. British Colonialism Replaced by a New Hegemony

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India celebrates its independence from Britain on 15 August. However, the system of British colonial dominance has been replaced by a new hegemony based on the systemic rule of transnational capital, enforced by global institutions like the World Bank and WTO. At the same time, global agribusiness corporations are stepping into the boots of the former East India Company.

The long-term goal of US capitalism has been to [restructure indigenous agriculture](#) across the world and tie it to an international system of trade underpinned by export-oriented mono-cropping, commodity production for the global market and debt. The result has been food surplus and food deficit areas, of which the latter have become dependent on agricultural imports and strings-attached aid.

Whether through IMF-World Bank structural adjustment programmes, as occurred [in Africa](#), trade agreements like NAFTA and [its impact](#) on Mexico or, more generally, [deregulated global trade](#) rules, the outcome has been similar: the displacement of traditional, indigenous agriculture by a corporatized model centred on transnational agribusiness and the undermining of both regional and world food security. The global food regime is in effect increasingly [beholden to unregulated global markets, financial speculators and global monopolies](#).

India of course has not been immune to this. It is on course to be [subjugated by](#) US state-corporate interests and is heading towards environmental catastrophe much faster than many might think. As I outlined in this [previous piece](#), the IMF and World Bank wants India to shift hundreds of millions out of agriculture and has been directed to dismantle its state-owned seed supply system, reduce subsidies and run down public agriculture institutions.

The plan for India involves the mass displacement of people to restructure agriculture for the benefit of western agri-capital. This involves shifting at least 400 million from the countryside into cities. A 2016 UN report said that by 2030, Delhi's population will be 37 million.

One of the report's principal authors, [Felix Creutzig](#), says:

"The emerging mega-cities will rely increasingly on industrial-scale agricultural and supermarket chains, crowding out local food chains."

The drive is to entrench industrial agriculture, commercialise the countryside and to replace small-scale farming, the backbone of food production in India. It could mean hundreds of millions of former rural dwellers without any work (India is heading for 'jobless growth'). Given the trajectory the country seems to be on, it does not take much to imagine a countryside with vast swathes of chemically-drenched monocrop fields containing genetically modified plants or soils rapidly degrading to become a mere repository for a chemical cocktail of proprietary biocides.

The plan is to displace the existing system of livelihood-sustaining smallholder agriculture with one dominated from seed to plate by transnational agribusiness and retail concerns. To facilitate this, independent cultivators are being bankrupted, land is to be amalgamated to facilitate large-scale industrial cultivation and those farmers that are left will be absorbed into corporate supply chains and squeezed as they work on contracts, the terms of which will be dictated by large agribusiness and chain retailers.

Some like to call this adopting a market-based approach: a system in the 'market-driven' US that receives a taxpayer farm bill subsidy of around \$100 million annually.

The WTO and the US-India [Knowledge Initiative on Agriculture](#) are facilitating the process. To push the plan along, there is a strategy to make agriculture [financially non-viable](#) for India's small farms. The result is that hundreds of thousands of farmers in India have taken their lives since 1997 and many more are experiencing economic distress or have left farming [as a result of](#) debt, a shift to cash crops and economic liberalisation.

The number of cultivators in India [declined from](#) 166 million to 146 million between 2004 and 2011. Some 6,700 left farming each day. Between 2015 and 2022 the number of cultivators is likely to decrease to around 127 million.

For all the discussion in India about loan waivers for farmers and raising their income levels, this does not address the core of the problem affecting agriculture: the running down of the sector for decades, spiralling input costs, lack of government assistance and the impacts of cheap, subsidised imports which depress farmers' incomes.

Take the cultivation of pulses, for instance. According to a report in the Indian Express (Sept 2017), pulses production increased by 40% during the previous 12 months (a year of record production). At the same time, however, imports also rose resulting in black gram selling at 4,000 rupees per quintal (much less than during the previous 12 months). This has effectively driven down prices thereby reducing farmers already meagre incomes. We have already witnessed a running down of the indigenous edible oils sector thanks to Indonesian palm oil imports on the back of World Bank pressure to reduce tariffs (India was virtually self-sufficient in edible oils in the 1990s but now faces increasing import costs).

On the one hand, there is talk of India becoming food secure and self-sufficient; on the other, there is pressure from the richer nations for the Indian government to further reduce support given to farmers and open up to imports and 'free' trade. But this is based on hypocrisy.

Writing on the 'Down to Earth' website in late 2017, **Sachin Kumar Jain** states some 3.2 million people were engaged in agriculture in the US in 2015. The US govt provided them each with a subsidy of \$7,860 on average. Japan provides a subsidy of \$14,136 and New Zealand \$2,623 to its farmers. In 2015, a British farmer earned \$2,800 and \$37,000 was

added through subsidies. The Indian government provides on average a subsidy of \$873 to farmers. However, between 2012 and 2014, India reduced the subsidy on agriculture by \$3 billion.

According to policy analyst **Devinder Sharma**, subsidies provided to US wheat and rice farmers are more than the market worth of these two crops. He also notes that, per day, each cow in Europe receives subsidy worth more than an Indian farmer's daily income.

How can the Indian farmer compete with an influx of artificially cheap imports? The simple answer is that s/he cannot and is not meant to.

In the book '[The Invention of Capitalism](#)', **Michael Perelman** lays bare the [iron fist](#) which whipped the English peasantry into a workforce willing to accept factory wage labour. A series of laws and measures served to force peasants off the land and deprive them of their productive means. In India, we are currently witnessing a headlong rush to facilitate (foreign) capital and turn farmers into a reserve army of cheap industrial/service sector labour. By moving people into cities, it seems India wants to emulate China: a US colonial outpost for manufacturing that has boosted corporate profits at the expense of US jobs. In India, migrants – stripped of their livelihoods in the countryside – are to become the new 'serfs' of the informal services and construction sectors or to be trained for low-level industrial jobs.

Even here, however, India might have missed the boat as it is not creating anything like the number of jobs required and the effects of automation and artificial intelligence are eradicating the need for human labour across many sectors.

India's high GDP growth has been fuelled on the back of debt, environmental degradation, cheap food and the subsequent impoverishment of farmers. The gap between their income and the rest of the population, including public sector workers, has widened enormously to the point where rural India consumes less calories per head than it did 40 years ago.

Amartya Sen and former World Bank Chief Economist **Kaushik Basu** have argued that the bulk of India's aggregate growth occurred through a disproportionate rise in the incomes at the upper end of the income ladder. Furthermore, Global Finance Integrity [has shown](#) that the outflow of illicit funds into foreign bank accounts has accelerated since opening up the economy to neoliberalism in the early nineties. 'High net worth individuals' (i.e. the very rich) are the biggest culprits here.

While corporations receive massive handouts and interest-free loans, they have failed to spur job creation; yet any proposed financial injections (or loan waivers) for agriculture (which would pale into insignificance compared to corporate subsidies/written off loans) are depicted as a drain on the economy.

Making India 'business friendly'

PM Modi is on record as saying that India is now one of the most business-friendly countries in the world. The code for being 'business friendly' translates into a willingness by the government to facilitate much of the above, while reducing taxes and tariffs and allowing the acquisition of public assets via privatisation as well as instituting policy frameworks that work to the advantage of foreign corporations.

When the World Bank rates countries on their level of 'ease of doing business', it means

national states facilitating policies that force working people to take part in a race to the bottom based on free market fundamentalism. The more 'compliant' national governments make their populations and regulations, the more 'business friendly' a country is.

The World Bank's 'Enabling the Business of Agriculture' entails opening up markets to Western agribusiness and their fertilisers, pesticides, weedicides and patented seeds with farmers working to supply transnational corporations' global supply chains. Rather than working towards food security based on food sovereignty and eradicating corruption, building storage facilities and dealing with inept bureaucracies and deficiencies in food logistics, the mantra is to let 'the market' intervene: a euphemism for letting powerful corporations take control; the very transnational corporations that receive massive taxpayer subsidies, manipulate markets, write trade agreements and institute a regime of intellectual property rights thereby indicating that the 'free' market only exists in the warped delusions of those who churn out clichés about letting the market decide.

Foreign direct investment is said to be good for jobs and good for business. But just how many get created is another matter – as is the amount of jobs destroyed in the first place to pave the way for the entry of foreign corporations. For example, Cargill sets up a food or seed processing plant that employs a few hundred people; but what about the agricultural jobs that were [deliberately eradicated](#) in the first place to import seeds or the village-level processors who were cynically put out of business via bogus health and safety measures so that Cargill could gain a financially lucrative foothold?



The process resembles what **Michel Chossudovsky** notes in his 1997 book about the 'structural adjustment' of African countries. In 'The Globalization of Poverty', he says that economies are:

"opened up through the concurrent displacement of a pre-existing productive system. Small and medium-sized enterprises are pushed into bankruptcy or obliged to produce for a global distributor, state enterprises are privatised or closed down, independent agricultural producers are impoverished." (p.16)

The opening up of India to foreign capital is supported by rhetoric about increasing agricultural productivity, creating jobs and boosting GDP growth. But India is already self-sufficient in key staples and even where productivity is among the best in the world (as in Punjab) farmers still face massive financial distress. Clearly, productivity is not the problem: even with bumper harvests, the agrarian crisis persists.

India is looking to US corporations to 'develop' its food, retail and agriculture sectors. What could this mean for India? We only have to look at the business model that keeps these companies in profit in the US: an industrialised system that relies on massive taxpayer subsidies and has destroyed many small-scale farmers' livelihoods.

The fact that US agriculture now employs a tiny fraction of the population serves as a stark reminder for what is in store for Indian farmers. Agribusiness companies' taxpayer-subsidised business models are based on [overproduction and dumping](#) on the world market to depress prices and rob farmers elsewhere of the ability to cover the costs of production. They rake in huge returns, while depressed farmer incomes and massive profits for food retailers is the norm.

The long-term plan is for an overwhelmingly urbanised India with a fraction of the population left in farming working on contracts for large suppliers and Walmart-type supermarkets that offer a largely monoculture diet of highly processed, denutritified, genetically altered food based on crops soaked with chemicals and grown in increasingly degraded soils according to an unsustainable model of agriculture that is less climate/drought resistant, less diverse and unable to achieve food security.

Various [high-level reports](#) have concluded that policies need to support more resilient, diverse, sustainable (smallholder) agroecological methods of farming and develop decentralised, locally-based food economies. There is also a need to protect indigenous agriculture from rigged global trade and trade deals. However, the trend continues to move in the opposite direction towards industrial-scale agriculture and centralised chains for the benefit of Monsanto, Cargill, Bayer and other transnational players.

Devinder Sharma has highlighted where Indian policy makers' priorities lie when he says that agriculture has been systematically killed over the last few decades. Some 60% of the population live in rural areas and are involved in agriculture but less than 2% of the annual budget goes to agriculture. Sharma says that when you are not investing in agriculture, you are not wanting it to perform.

It is worth considering that the loans provided to just [five large corporations](#) in India are equal to the entire farm debt. Where have those loans gone? Have they increased 'value' in the economy. No, loans to corporate houses left the banks without liquidity.

'Demonetisation' was in part [a bail-out for the banks and the corporates](#), which farmers and other ordinary folk paid the price for. It was a symptom of a country whose GDP growth was based on a debt-inflated economy. While farmers commit suicide and are heavily indebted, a handful of billionaires get access to cheap money with no pressure to pay it back and with little 'added value' for society as a whole.

Corporate-industrial India has failed to deliver in terms of boosting exports or creating jobs, despite the hand outs and tax exemptions given to it. The number of jobs created in India between 2005 and 2010 was 2.7 million (the years of high GDP growth). According to International Business Times, 15 million enter the workforce every year. And data released by the Labour Bureau shows that in 2015, jobless 'growth' had finally arrived in India.

So where are the jobs going to come from to cater for hundreds of millions of agricultural workers who are to be displaced from the land or those whose livelihoods will be destroyed as transnational corporations move in and seek to capitalise small-scale village-level industries that currently employ tens of millions?

Development used to be about breaking with colonial exploitation and radically redefining power structures. Now we have dogma masquerading as economic theory that compels developing countries to adopt neoliberal policies. The notion of 'development' has become hijacked by rich corporations and the concept of poverty depoliticised and separated from structurally embedded power relations, not least US-driven globalisation policies resulting in the deregulation of international capital that ensures giant transnational conglomerates are able to ride roughshod over national sovereignty.

Across the world we are seeing treaties and agreements over breeders' rights and

intellectual property being enacted to prevent peasant farmers from freely improving, sharing or replanting their traditional seeds. Large corporations with their proprietary seeds and synthetic chemical inputs are trying to eradicate traditional systems of seed exchange. They have effectively hijacked seeds, pirated germ plasm that farmers developed over millennia and have 'rented' the seeds back to farmers

Corporate-dominated agriculture is not only an attack on the integrity of 'the commons' (soil, water, land, food, forests, diets and health) but is also an attack on the integrity of international institutions, governments and officials which have too often been corrupted by powerful transnational entities.

Whereas some want to bring about a fairer, more equitable system of production and distribution to improve people's quality of lives (particularly pertinent in India with its unimaginable inequalities, which have spiralled since India adopted neoliberal policies), US capitalism regards 'development' as a geopolitical tool.

As economics professor **Michael Hudson** said during a 2014 interview (published on prosper.org under the title 'Think Tank Times'):

"American foreign policy has almost always been based on agricultural exports, not on industrial exports as people might think. It's by agriculture and control of the food supply that American diplomacy has been able to control most of the Third World. The World Bank's geopolitical lending strategy has been to turn countries into food deficit areas by convincing them to grow cash crops – plantation export crops – not to feed themselves with their own food crops."

The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) could further accelerate the corporatisation of Indian agriculture. A trade deal now being negotiated by 16 countries across Asia-Pacific, the RCEP would cover half the world's population, including [420 million small family farms](#) that produce [80%](#) of the region's food.

RCEP is expected [to create powerful rights and lucrative business opportunities](#) for food and agriculture corporations under the guise of boosting trade and investment. It could allow foreign corporations to buy up land, thereby driving up land prices, fuelling speculation and pushing small farmers out. If RCEP is adopted, it could intensify [the great land grab](#) that has been taking place in India. It could also lead to further corporate control over seeds.

Capitalism and environmental catastrophe joined at the hip

In India, an industrialised chemical-intensive model of agriculture is being facilitated. This model brings with it the numerous now [well-documented](#) externalised social, environmental and health costs. We need look no further than the current situation in South India and the [drying up](#) of the Cauvery river in places to see the impact that this model has contributed to: an ecological crisis fuelled by environmental devastation due to mining, deforestation and unsustainable agriculture based on big dams, water-intensive crops and Green Revolution ideology imported from the West.



But we have known for a long time now that India faces major environmental problems, many of which are rooted in agriculture. For example, in an open letter written to officials in 2006, the late campaigner and farmer [Bhaskar Save noted](#) that India, next to South America, receives the highest rainfall in the world. Where thick vegetation covers the ground, and the soil is alive and porous, at least half of this rain is soaked and stored in the soil and sub-soil strata. A good amount then percolates deeper to recharge aquifers, or 'groundwater tables'. Save argued that the living soil and its underlying aquifers thus serve as gigantic, ready-made reservoirs gifted free by nature.

Half a century ago, most parts of India had enough fresh water all year round, long after the rains had stopped and gone. But clear the forests, and the capacity of the earth to soak the rain, drops drastically. Streams and wells run dry.

Save went on to note that while the recharge of groundwater has greatly reduced, its extraction has been mounting. India is presently mining over 20 times more groundwater each day than it did in 1950. Much of this is mindless wastage by a minority. But most of India's people – living on hand-drawn or hand-pumped water in villages and practising only rain-fed farming – continue to use the same amount of ground water per person, as they did generations ago.

According to Save, more than 80% of India's water consumption is for irrigation, with the largest share hogged by chemically cultivated cash crops. Maharashtra, for example, has the maximum number of big and medium dams in the country. But sugarcane alone, grown on barely 3-4% of its cultivable land, guzzles about 70% of its irrigation waters.

One acre of chemically grown sugarcane requires as much water as would suffice 25 acres of jowar, bajra or maize. The sugar factories too consume huge quantities. From cultivation to processing, each kilo of refined sugar needs two to three tonnes of water. This could be used to grow, by the traditional, organic way, about 150 to 200 kg of nutritious jowar or bajra (native millets).

While rice is suitable for rain-fed farming, its extensive multiple cropping with irrigation in winter and summer as well is similarly hogging water resources and depleting aquifers. As with sugarcane, it is also irreversibly ruining the land through salinization.

Save argued that soil salinization is the greatest scourge of irrigation-intensive agriculture, as a progressively thicker crust of salts is formed on the land. Many million hectares of cropland have been ruined by it. The most serious problems are caused where water-guzzling crops like sugarcane or basmati rice are grown round the year, abandoning the traditional mixed-cropping and rotation systems of the past, which required minimal or no

watering.

Unfortunately, policy makers continue to look towards the likes of Monsanto-Bayer for 'solutions'. Such companies merely seek to break farmers' environmental learning 'pathways' based on centuries of indigenous knowledge, learning and practices with the aim of getting farmers hooked on chemical treadmills for corporate profit (see Glenn Stone and Andrew Flach's paper on [path-breaking and technology treadmills in Indian cotton agriculture](#)).

Wrong-headed policies in agriculture have already resulted in drought, expensive dam-building projects, population displacement and degraded soils. The rivers are drying, farmers are dying and the cities are creaking as a result of the unbridled push towards urbanisation.

In terms of maintaining and creating jobs, managing water resources, regenerating soils and cultivating climate resilient crops, agroecology as a solution is there for all to see. Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka are now making a concerted effort to roll out and scale up zero budget agroecological agriculture.

Solutions to India's agrarian crisis (and indeed the worlds) are available, not least the [scaling up](#) of agroecological approaches which could be the lynchpin of [rural development](#). However, successive administrations have bowed to and continue to acquiesce to the grip of global capitalism and have demonstrated their allegiance to corporate power. The danger is that without changing the capitalist relations of production, agroecology would simply be co-opted by corporations and incorporated into their global production and distribution chains.

In the meantime, India faces huge problems in terms of securing access to water. As Bhaskar Save noted, the shift to Green Revolution thinking and practices has placed enormous strain on water resources. From glacial melt in the Himalayas that will contribute to the drying up of important rivers to the effects of temperature rises across the Indo Gangetic plain, which will adversely impact wheat productivity, India has more than its fair share of problems. But despite this, high-level policy makers are pushing for a certain model of 'development' that will only exacerbate the problems.

This model is being driven by some of the world's largest corporate players: a model that by its very nature leads to environment catastrophe:

"... our economic system demands ever-increasing levels of extraction, production and consumption. Our politicians tell us that we need to keep the global economy growing at more than 3% each year – the minimum necessary for large firms to make aggregate profits. That means every 20 years we need to double the size of the global economy – double the cars, double the fishing, double the mining, double the McFlurries and double the iPads. And then double them again over the next 20 years from their already doubled state."
– [Jason Hickel](#)

While politicians and bureaucrats in Delhi might be facilitating this economic model and all it entails for agriculture, it is ultimately stamped with the logo 'made in Washington'. Surrendering the nation's food sovereignty and the incorporation of India into US financial and geopolitical structures is the current state of independence.

Final thoughts

Neoliberalism and the drive for urbanisation in India have been underpinned by unconstitutional land takeovers and the trampling of democratic rights. For supporters of cronyism and manipulated markets, which to all extents and purposes is what economic 'neoliberalism' across the world has entailed (see [this](#), [this](#) and [this](#)), there have been untold opportunities for well-placed individuals to make an under-the-table fast buck from various infrastructure projects and privatisation sell offs.

According to the Organisation for Co-operation and Economic Development, the doubling of income inequality has made India one of the worst performers in the category of emerging economies.

Unsurprisingly, therefore, struggles (violent and non-violent) are taking place in India. The Naxalites/Maoists are referred to by the dominant class as left-wing extremists who are exploiting the situation of the poor. But how easy it is to ignore the true nature of the poor's exploitation and too often lump all protesters together and create an 'enemy within'. How easy it is to ignore the state-corporate extremism across the world that results in the central state abdicating its redistributive responsibilities by submitting to the tenets of Wall Street-backed 'structural adjustment' pro-privatisation policies, free capital flows and largely unaccountable corporations.

Powerful (mining) corporations are shaping the 'development' agenda in India and have signed secretive Memorandums of Understanding with the government. The full backing of the state is on hand to forcibly evict peoples from their land in order to hand it over to mineral-hungry industries to fuel a wholly unsustainable model of development. Around the world, this oil-dependent, urban-centric, high-energy model of endless consumption is stripping the environment bare and negatively impacting the climate and ecology.

In addition to displacing people to facilitate the needs of resource extraction industries, unconstitutional land grabs for Special Economic Zones, nuclear plants and other projects have additionally forced many others from the land.

Farmers (and others) represent a 'problem': a problem while on the land and a problem to be somehow dealt with once displaced. But food producers, the genuine wealth creators of a nation, only became a problem when western agribusiness was given the green light to take power away from farmers and uproot traditional agriculture in India and recast it in its own corporate-controlled image.

This is a country where the majority sanctifies certain animals, places, rivers and mountains. It's also a country run by Wall Street sanctioned politicians who convince people to accept or be oblivious to the destruction of the same.

Many are working strenuously to challenge the selling of the heart and soul of India. Yet how easy will it be for them to be swept aside by officialdom which [seeks to cast them as 'subversive'](#). How easy it will be for the corrosive impacts of a rapacious capitalism to take hold and for hugely powerful corporations to colonise almost every area of social, cultural and economic life and encourage greed, selfishness, apathy, irretrievable materialism and acquisitive individualism.

The corporations behind it all achieve hegemony by altering mindsets via advertising, clever

PR or by sponsoring (hijacking) major events, by funding research in public institutes and thus slanting findings and the knowledge paradigm in their favour or by securing key positions in international trade negotiations in an attempt to structurally readjust retail, food production and agriculture. They do it by many methods and means.

Before you realise it, culture, politics and the economy have become colonised by powerful private interests and the world is cast in their image. The prevailing economic system soon becomes cloaked with an aura of matter of factuality, an air of naturalness, which is never to be viewed for the controlling hegemonic culture or power play that it really is.

Seeds, mountains, water, forests and biodiversity are being sold off. The farmers and tribals are being sold out. And the more that gets sold off, the more who get sold out, the greater the amount of cash that changes hands and the easier it is for the misinformed to swallow the lie of Wall Street's bogus notion of 'growth' – GDP.

If anyone perceives the type of 'development' being sold to the masses is actually possible in the first instance, they [should note](#) that 'developing' nations account for more than 80% of world population but consume only about a third of the world's energy. US citizens constitute 5% of the world's population but consume 24% of the world's energy. On average, one American consumes as much energy as two Japanese, six Mexicans, 13 Chinese, 31 Indians, 128 Bangladeshis, 307 Tanzanians and 370 Ethiopians.

Consider that the Earth is 4.6 billion years old and if you scale this to 46 years then humans have been here for just four hours. The [Industrial Revolution began just one minute ago](#), and in that time, 50% of the Earth's forests have been destroyed.

We are using up oil, water and other resources much faster than they can ever be regenerated. We have also poisoned the rivers, destroyed natural habitats, driven species to extinction and altered the chemical composition of the atmosphere – among many other things.

Levels of consumption were unsustainable long before India and other countries began striving to emulate a bogus notion of 'development'. The West continues to live way beyond its (environmental) limits.

This wasteful, high-energy model is tied to what ultimately constitutes the plundering of peoples and the planet by powerful transnational corporations. And, as we see all around us, from Libya and Syria to Afghanistan and Iraq, the outcome is endless conflicts over fewer and fewer resources.

The type of 'progress and development' and consumerism being sold makes beneficiaries of it blind to the misery and plight of the hundreds of millions who are deprived of their lands and livelihoods. In Congo, rich corporations [profit from war and conflict](#). And in India, tens of thousands of militias (including in 2005, [Salwa Judum](#)) were put into tribal areas to [forcibly displace](#) 300,000 people and place 50,000 in camps. In the process, rapes and human rights abuses have been common.

If what is set out above tells us anything, it is that India and other regions of the world are suffering from internal haemorrhaging. They are being bled dry from both within and without:

“There are sectors of the global population trying to impede the global catastrophe. There are other sectors trying to accelerate it. Take a look at whom they are. Those who are trying to impede it are the ones we call backward, indigenous populations – the First Nations in Canada, the aboriginals in Australia, the tribal people in India. Who is accelerating it? The most privileged, so-called advanced, educated populations of the world.” – [Noam Chomsky](#).

Underpinning the arrogance of such a mindset is what [Vandana Shiva calls](#) a view of the world which encourages humans to regard man as conqueror and owner of the Earth. This has led to the technological hubris of geo-engineering, genetic engineering and nuclear energy. Shiva argues that it has led to the ethical outrage of owning life forms through patents, water through privatization, the air through carbon trading. It is leading to appropriation of the biodiversity that serves the poor.

And therein lies the true enemy of genuine development: a system that facilitates such plunder, which is presided over by well-funded and influential foreign foundations and powerful financial-corporate entities and their handmaidens in the IMF, World Bank and WTO.

If we look at the various western powers, to whom many of India's top politicians look to for inspiration, their paths to economic prosperity occurred on the back of colonialism and imperialist intent. Do India's politicians think this mindset has disappeared? The same mentality now lurks behind the neoliberal globalisation agenda hidden behind terms and policies like 'foreign direct investment', 'ease of doing business', making India 'business friendly' or 'enabling the business of agriculture'.



Is India willing to see [Monsanto-Bayer, Cargill and other transnational corporations](#) deciding on what is to be eaten and how it is to be produced and processed. A corporate takeover spearheaded by companies whose character is clear for all to see:

“The Indo-US Knowledge Initiative in Agriculture with agribusinesses like Monsanto, WalMart, Archer Daniels Midland, Cargill and ITC in its Board made efforts to turn the direction of agricultural research and policy in such a manner as to cater their demands for profit maximisation. Companies like Monsanto during the Vietnam War produced tonnes and tonnes of 'Agent Orange' unmindful of its consequences for Vietnamese people as it raked in super profits and that character remains.” – [Communist Party of India \(Marxist\)](#)

Behind the World Bank/corporate-inspired rhetoric that is driving the overhaul of Indian agriculture is a brand of corporate imperialism which is turning out to be no less brutal for Indian farmers than early industrial capitalism was in England for its peasantry. The East India company might have gone, but today the bidding of elite interests (private capital) is being carried out by compliant politicians, the World Bank, the WTO and lop-sided, egregious back-room trade deals.

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Colin Todhunter is a frequent contributor to Asia-Pacific Research.

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